

# **HERITAGE ASSESSMENT**

**Leaside Business Centre  
43-45 Gillender Street  
London E14 6RN**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report has been prepared for Poplar HARCA in support of an application for planning permission for the development of the Leaside Business Centre at 43-44 Gillender Street, incorporating Bromley Hall and Poplar Library, both listed buildings, together with new buildings for a mix of residential and commercial use. The site is located within the Limehouse Cut Conservation Area
- 1.2 This report meets the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and other regional and local policies regarding information requirements for applications for consent involving designated heritage assets and for development affecting a conservation area.
- 1.3 The purpose of the report is to describe and assess the significance of the site and its buildings and to assess the impact of the application proposals on that significance.
- 1.4 This report should be read together with other submitted reports including the design and access statement and application drawings prepared by Stockwool architects, and the Historic Environment Assessment prepared by MOLA.

## 2 PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 2.1 The relevant national and local planning policies are summarised as follows. Section 1 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Act imposes a duty on the Secretary of State to compile or approve a list or lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest ('listed buildings') as a guide to planning authorities when carrying out their planning functions.

The Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings, published by the Department of Culture Media and Sport (revised 2018) states that:

- Grade I buildings are of exceptional special interest;
- Grade II\* buildings are particularly important buildings of more than special interest;
- Grade II buildings are of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them.

### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 2.2 The Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in March 2012 and supporting Planning Practice Guidance in 2014. The 2012 NPPF has been revised and a new NPPF was published in July 2018 (MHCLG 2018). The NPPF 2018 was subsequently revised in February 2019.
- 2.3 The NPPF sets out planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment, including listed buildings and conservation areas and uses a number of terms that are defined in a glossary in Annex 2 including:
- **Heritage asset:** A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
  - **Significance (for heritage policy):** The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be

archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

- **Setting of a heritage asset:** The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

2.4 In paragraphs 189-192 the NPPF sets out the approach local planning authorities are to take when determining whether to grant planning permission or other consents for a proposal that affects the significance of a heritage asset. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. Local planning authorities should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

2.5 In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

2.6 In paragraph 196 the NPPF states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

- 2.7 Paragraph 197 of the NPPF states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgment will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
- 2.8 Paragraph 201 states that not all elements of a Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 195 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 196, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area.
- 2.9 The key to sound decision-making is the identification and understanding of the differing, and perhaps conflicting, heritage impacts accruing from the proposals and how they are to be weighed against both each other and any other material planning considerations that would arise as a result of the development proceeding.

### **The London Plan**

- 2.10 The current Strategic Development Plan framework is provided by the London Plan 2016, Consolidated with Alterations Since 2011. Further Alterations to the London Plan (FALP) were adopted 10 March 2015.

### **Policy 7.8 Heritage assets and archaeology**

#### **Strategic**

**A** London's heritage assets and historic environment, including listed buildings, registered historic parks and gardens and other natural and historic landscapes, conservation areas, World Heritage Sites, registered battlefields, scheduled monuments, archaeological remains and memorials should be identified, so that the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance and of utilising their positive role in place shaping can be taken into account.

**B** Development should incorporate measures that identify, record, interpret, protect and, where appropriate, present the site's archaeology.

#### **Planning decisions**

**C** Development should identify, value, conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assets, where appropriate.

**D** Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.

### **Policy 7.9 Heritage-led regeneration**

#### **Policy**

##### Strategic

**A** Regeneration schemes should identify and make use of heritage assets and reinforce the qualities that make them significant so they can help stimulate environmental, economic and community regeneration. This includes buildings, landscape features, views, Blue Ribbon Network and public realm.

##### Planning decisions

**B** The significance of heritage assets should be assessed when development is proposed and schemes designed so that the heritage significance is recognised both in their own right and as catalysts for regeneration. Wherever possible heritage assets (including buildings at risk) should be repaired, restored and put to a suitable and viable use that is consistent with their conservation and the establishment and maintenance of sustainable communities and economic vitality.

### **Draft London Plan 2017**

- 2.11 The current 2016 consolidation Plan is still the adopted Development Plan. However, consultation on revisions to the Plan was open until 2nd March 2018, and the Draft New London Plan is a material consideration in planning decisions.

**Policy HC1 “Heritage conservation and growth”** of the Draft New London Plan relates to London’s historic environment:

**A** Boroughs should, in consultation with Historic England and other relevant statutory organisations, develop evidence that demonstrates a clear understanding of London’s historic environment. This evidence should be used for identifying, understanding, conserving, and enhancing the historic environment and heritage assets, and improving access to, and interpretation of, the heritage assets, landscapes and archaeology within their area.

**B** Development Plans and strategies should demonstrate a clear understanding of the historic environment and the heritage values of sites or areas and their relationship with their surroundings. This knowledge should be used to inform the effective integration of London's heritage in regenerative change by:

- 1) setting out a clear vision that recognises and embeds the role of heritage in place-making
- 2) utilising the heritage significance of a site or area in the planning and design process
- 3) integrating the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their settings with innovative and creative contextual architectural responses that contribute to their significance and sense of place
- 4) delivering positive benefits that conserve and enhance the historic environment, as well as contributing to the economic viability, accessibility and environmental quality of a place, and to social wellbeing.

**C** Development proposals affecting heritage assets, and their settings, should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to the assets' significance and appreciation within their surroundings. The cumulative impacts of incremental change from development on heritage assets and their settings, should also be actively managed. Development proposals should avoid harm and identify enhancement opportunities by integrating heritage considerations early on in the design process.

## **Local Planning Policy**

### **Tower Hamlets Core Strategy Development Plan**

- 2.12 The Tower Hamlets Core Strategy Development Plan was adopted in 2010. A new Local Plan has been drafted and was sent to the government for review in 2017. Until the new document is approved, the 2010 core strategy remains valid.
- 2.13 Policy SP10 in Chapter 6 'Designing a high-quality city' of the Tower Hamlets Core Strategy Development Plan (Tower Hamlets Council, 2010) includes Policy S.DH3: Heritage and the historic environment. Relevant parts of this policy include:

Proposals to alter, extend or change the use of an historic asset or proposals that would affect the setting of a heritage asset will only be permitted where: a. they safeguard the significance of the heritage assets, including its setting, character, fabric or identity; b. they are appropriate in terms of design, height, scale, form, detailing and materials in their local context; c. they enhance or better reveal the significance of assets or their settings;

Applications affecting the significance of a heritage asset will be required to provide sufficient information to demonstrate how the proposal would contribute to the asset's conservation.

Alterations, extensions or changes of use, or development in the vicinity of listed buildings will be expected to have no adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest, including their settings.

Significant weight will be given to the protection and enhancement of the borough's conservation areas, including their setting. Development within a conservation area will be expected to preserve or, where appropriate, enhance those elements which contribute to their special character or appearance. There will be a presumption in favour of the retention of unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of a conservation area. Planning applications should explore opportunities from new development within conservation areas and their setting to enhance or better reveal their significance.

### 3 HISTORY OF THE SITE

#### Early history

- 3.1 Bromley Hall formed part of the Lower Manor of Bromley, which may have been created as a subsidiary of the Manor of Bromley after the Norman Conquest. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century the Lower Manor was given to Holy Trinity Priory, London, but it is unclear how long they retained ownership, or for what purposes the land was used. From 1395 it was owned (or possibly tenanted) by Lord Devereux and his successors, passing to John Blount in 1509 and owned thereafter by a series of gentry and aristocrats, notably Sir William Cecil who briefly owned the manor from 1549-1552.
- 3.2 Until recently, Bromley Hall was assumed to have been the manor house of the Lower Manor, but there is no documentary evidence that a manor house proper – i.e. the residence of the lord of the manor - ever existed. A building survey by the Museum of London Archaeological Service (2002) suggests that the ‘moat’ shown on 18<sup>th</sup> century maps may have been a remnant of a medieval moated house, or alternatively a channel serving a tide mill of which a number existing along the River Lea in the medieval period. The survey concludes that the present building most probably originated as a late 15<sup>th</sup> century tower house for display and entertainment rather than a permanent residence. Dendrochronological dating of timber framing at first-floor level has provided a time range of 1482-1495. Chalk foundations however indicate the presence of an earlier medieval structure whose purpose is unknown.
- 3.3 The Tudor building would originally have risen to three or more storeys, with half - octagonal angle turrets and a semi-enclosed staircase within the north wall, features which still survive. It was extensively remodelled as a dwelling house in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century when it was reduced to two storeys with sash windows and a steep hipped roof containing an attic. During restoration work in 2005, Tudor wall paintings were discovered and other contemporary features which have enhanced our understanding of the evolution, historical significance and rarity of Bromley Hall.

**1700-1945**

- 3.4 In 1720 the estate was rented by the owner George Nicholls to Benjamin Ollive and Joseph Talwin who set up a calico printing works. The estate was owned from 1793 by the eminent calico printer Joseph Foster.
- 3.5 The area was not mapped in any detail until John Rocque's Survey (1746) which shows that Bromley Hall had a projection at the north end of the rear (east) elevation (Appendix 2.1 Fig. 1).
- 3.6 A detailed estate plan of 1761-2 provides a key to each building. By this time new service wing (named The Kitchen etc.) been added to the south side of the house on a staggered plan projecting eastwards beyond the rear elevation of the main house, while the existing north-east projection (here named 'The Pantry' and 'Coal Holes') had been extended eastwards with a 'Brewhouse and Cellar'. The private garden stretched eastwards to the River Lea (Appendix 2.2 Fig. 1)
- 3.7 The calico works comprised an extensive complex of buildings and sheds located to the south and west of Bromley Hall and a series of cuts (water channels) named 'The Moat'. The ponds shown on the plan to the south-east of the house may be earlier features. The land to the west of the estate was occupied by fields and orchards.
- 3.8 The northern section of the present Gillender Street was at this time an access road into the estate connecting with the main road (later St Leonard's Street) running north to Bromley-by-Bow. The estate was bounded to the east by the River Lea, to the north and west by a road whose alignment is perpetuated by the present Mallory Close, Uamvar Street and St Leonards Road, and to the south (approximately) by the site of the present Joshua Street.
- 3.9 An estate plan of 1799 suggests that rear extensions to Bromley Hall had gone, but this may be inaccurate as they appear on Walker's map (1812) and the pantry and coal hole structures survived until the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Appendix 2.2 Fig. 2).
- 3.9 In 1823 the estate was acquired by Hugh MacIntosh who occupied Bromley Hall, although Foster would retain a property interest, and cotton bleaching continued in the vicinity until at least 1859. An estate plan of 1830 shows that many of the factory buildings had gone and the moat largely filled in. The southern extension to Bromley

Hall had been removed while another extension had been added to the east elevation. Immediately to the south of Bromley Hall was a series of houses with rear gardens. These comprised a one and two-storey range of cottages, a villa later named the 'Manor House', a terrace of four houses known as Manor Cottages and a pair of villas. Bromley Hall retained a large rear garden to the east and south-east as far as the River Lea (as depicted on the OS map of 1869). The road was still a cul-de-sac, providing access to what would have been a pleasant residential enclave in a semi-rural setting (Appendix 2.2 Fig. 3).

- 3.10 In 1841 Bromley Hall and its garden were sold and the remainder of the estate was sold and developed incrementally after 1850, initially for a few higher-status villas - most notably Manorfield House opposite Bromley Hall - an indication of the area's attraction as a rural retreat, but this would soon change radically.
- 3.11 The 1869 OS first edition (Appendix 2.1 Fig. 2) shows that Bromley Hall has a narrow access passageway between its south wall and the adjacent dwelling. An L-shaped conservatory is shown on the rear. The former Bromley Hall estate was now partially developed: Zetland Street laid out; the southern tip of the estate built up with terraces and Church of St Michael and All Angels, built in 1864, occupied the south-west corner. The private road was now part of Brunswick Road continuing southwards to East India Docks, while the wider area to the south and west was now a dense grid of terraces housing workers in the docks and the many industries that had sprung up in the area. The North London Railway branch to Poplar Docks, opened in 1846, skirted the western boundary of the Bromley Hall estate. To the north, the enormous Four Mills Distillery had been built.
- 3.12 The 1894 OS map (Appendix 2.1 Fig. 3) indicates that Bromley Hall's rear conservatory had been replaced by a single-storey extension and a smaller conservatory inserted into the southern passageway (as shown on a Survey of London plan of 1900 and a photograph of c1930). The former Bromley Hall estate, including the short-lived Manorfield House, was now built over with terraced housing and indistinguishable from its dense urban surroundings. To the east, St Leonard's Wharf, a large oil depot, occupied most of Bromley's Hall's former garden. A photograph of 1890 shows the cottage to the south of Bromley Hall as a plumber and gas fitter's premises (this building had gone by the next OS edition of 1916; Appendix 2.1 Fig. 4). In 1899 Bromley-by-Bow was absorbed into the new Metropolitan Borough of Poplar.

- 3.13 In 1889 Bromley Hall became a nurses' home for the Regions Beyond Missionary Union, and in 1914 it was purchased by the Royal College of St Katharine, a London charitable institution of medieval origin, for use as a paediatric training centre. A single-storey extension was built on the south side of Bromley Hall c1927, containing a ward with an internal inspection window and an artificial sunlight department. The College subsequently acquired the 'Manor House' to the south.
- 3.14 Poplar Library was built in 1904-5 to the design of Squire, Myers and Petch, on the site of Manor Cottages (Appendix 3 Figures 4,5 and 6). To the north of Bromley Hall, Brunswick Road Fire Station was built by the London County Council in 1911, possibly to the design of W.E. Brooks, who was responsible for the very similar 1907 Tooting Fire Station. The site immediately to the north of Bromley Hall remained undeveloped until the inter-war period when a large brick single-storey shed was built adjacent to the south side of the fire station.
- 3.15 The area suffered extensive bomb damage in WWII and in 1940 Bromley Hall received blast damage and stood empty and boarded up for several years. The buildings to the south were also damaged, the 'Manor House' being the worst affected (Appendix 2.1 Fig. 5; Appendix 3 Figures 8 and 9)

### **Post 1945**

- 3.16 The post-war period saw the drastic transformation of the immediate and wider context of Bromley Hall. The house was refurbished c1951, having lost all its rear extensions. The site of the bomb-damaged 'Manor House' became a garage (Tyler's) behind a petrol station forecourt; Tyler's also owned a new building south of Poplar Library on the site of the pair of villas shown on the c1830 plan, the last of the group to be demolished.
- 3.17 In the 1960s the network of Victorian streets to the west of Brunswick Road were comprehensive demolished to make way for local authority housing estates, and the Blackwall Tunnel Northern approach road (A12) was constructed along the course of Brunswick Road, retaining one stretch of the original road – now named Gillender Street - along the east side of the dual carriageway.

- 3.18 Poplar Library closed in 1981 and stood derelict until its refurbishment in 2002 as live-work units by The Regeneration Practice for Heritage of London Trust (Operations). It was leased to Leaside Regeneration which went on to acquire and refurbish Bromley Hall in 2005.
- 3.19 The former Tyler's garage, which had been used as a carpet warehouse since 1997, was demolished to make way for Leaside Regeneration's temporary headquarters. The site immediately to the south of the library (Nos. 46-51 Gillender Street) was redeveloped in 2012 as a five-storey office block.

### **Summary**

- 3.20 As maps and estate plans show, Bromley Hall had an open setting which it retained throughout the lifespan of the calico works. Extensions had been added to the south elevation of the house by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. By c1830 Bromley Hall formed part of a virtually continuous range of houses fronting a private road, which would in turn be absorbed into Brunswick Road, a main thoroughfare to the East India Docks and by 1897 to the Blackwall Tunnel.
- 3.21 From c1850-1880 the former Bromley Hall estate was absorbed into the dense urban environment of London's East End. The post-war period saw a second drastic transformation of its setting with the erasure of the surrounding Victorian townscape and the construction of the A12. Both Bromley hall and the former Poplar Library became isolated monuments stranded in a 'no man's land' of industrial and recycling sites, and the site between them occupied by Tyler's garage. (Appendix 3 Figures 10, 11 and 12).

## 4 THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

- 4.1 The site lies to the south of the Limehouse Cut, between the busy Blackwall Tunnel Northern Approach Road and the River Lea (Bow Creek). Gillender Street pre-dates the Blackwall Tunnel Approach Road (A12), being a surviving fragment of the former Brunswick Road that connected Bromley-by Bow with the East India Docks to the south. Gillender Street follows the original line of Brunswick Road at this point and is set back from the Blackwall Tunnel Approach behind a grassed island with several mature trees.
- 4.2 At the north end of the peninsula new development has already begun or is in course of planning. This currently consists of the completed three blocks of the Lock Keepers scheme, and the proposed redevelopment of the Barratt Industrial Estate with a further three blocks including two towers of 16 and 20 storeys respectively.
- 4.3 Proceeding from north to south, the first building of note is 23 Gillender Street (Dowgate Wharf), the remains of a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century brick warehouse composed of a four-storey range and a two-storey range. Both have windows set within tall arched recesses separated by full height brick piers and with heavily modelled cornices. Part of the two-storey building has been lost in creating a later opening, leaving one isolated bay at the north end. Although currently vacant and in a neglected state of repair the remaining buildings are good examples of a warehouse of that period.
- 4.4 The next building is 24 Gillender Street, a massive inter-war former bonded warehouse extending across the full width of the site to the River Lea frontage. The frontage follows the undulating curve of the road, which gives the large mass of the building added interest. The street elevation (largely rebuilt in the 1960s after war time bomb damage) has a strongly expressed concrete frame with alternating red and yellow brick infill panels and bands of glazing giving a clear horizontal emphasis. It also has a strongly defined cornice line. The street elevation of the building conveys a strong sense of the modern movement in its handling of concrete frame, brick and glass.
- 4.5 The former LCC Fire Station of 1911 at 25-37 Gillender Street is a strongly contrasting building with an elevation exhibiting the 'Arts and Crafts' style favoured by the LCC at that time. The fire station on the ground floor, with three wide openings for the appliances, is clad in brown glazed bricks. The domestically scaled upper floors

are in a red brick and feature three shallow canted bay windows in white on the three upper floors, the outer two beneath triangular brick gables, the central section beneath a projecting bracketed eaves. The tall pitched roof contains four prominent chimney stacks. The building benefits from being in use following conversion to studio spaces. (Appendix 4 Fig.1)

- 4.6 South of the fire station is large single-storey shed forming part of the site between the fire station and Bromley Hall, with a blank brick wall facing the street and a corrugated roof sloping back into the site. The low building, combined with the curve in the alignment of Gillender Street, means that the rendered north elevation of Bromley Hall can be clearly seen. The building, together with the wide expanse of tarmac forming the adjoining site entrance and the immediately proximity of the A12 in front of the building, all combine to detract badly from the setting of Bromley Hall. (Appendix 4 Fig. 2)
- 4.7 Bromley Hall (43 Gillender Street) is described in more detail elsewhere but in the context of the site and its setting the brickwork and proportions of the front (west) elevation, especially the polygonal corner tower and coved eaves indicate a building of exceptional interest. The west elevation has four timber sash windows on the upper floor and three on the ground floor with the entrance door set within an arched, timber panelled opening beneath a small pediment supported on brackets. Iron spear head railings run along the full length of the frontage. The south elevation is also rendered and, set back from the west elevation, is a single storey brick extension dating from the 1920s. (Appendix 4 Fig. 3)
- 4.8 The site frontage is 'book-ended' between Bromley Hall and the former Poplar Library (45 Gillender Street), a 1904 building designed in the Beaux Arts style with a symmetrical stone front elevation with just a short side return. The main elevation consists of two floors above a deep rusticated basement, surmounted by an attic with balustrade. The four recessed centre bays are divided by giant engaged Ionic columns. The main entrance is at the south end of the building, beneath a pedimented porch supported on blocked columns. The basement windows face onto a shallow area protected by railings.
- 4.9 The site frontage is open, with vehicular access from the main road for car parking and servicing for the temporary offices, dating from 2004, located at the back of the

site in bright red containers with porthole windows. The appearance of the open site frontage detracts from the setting of both of the listed buildings. (Appendix 4 Fig. 4)

- 4.10 Adjoining the south end of the library is a more recent building of four storeys with a six- storey corner tower that returns on the south elevation. The anonymous four storey elevation has small rectangular windows set in dark grey cladding panels and the corner tower of the six-storey element is clad in blue/grey cast glass units. This building is an unfortunate element on the street frontage and a poor neighbour to the listed building, having no relationship to its neighbour or sympathetic approach in either height, massing or materials.
- 4.11 To the south of this building the A12 frontage consists of a ramp and steps leading to a pedestrian underpass behind which are various sheds and open land currently housing scrap metal dealers and similar uses although the large site has recently been given planning approval for redevelopment. The view south along the A12 is dominated by traffic and towers, including the Balfron tower, in the distance. The open site frontage is largely hidden from view by Bromley Hall (Appendix 4 Fig. 5). Looking north along the A12 the site frontage is more apparent whilst Bromley Hall is seen in the context of the taller buildings to the north (Appendix 4 Fig. 6).
- 4.12 On the west side of the A12 the appearance of the entire area was radically changed following the creation of the dual carriageway road in the early 1970s. The earlier by-law streets of terraced houses were badly hit by bombing in WW2 and the surviving streets were swept away by the redevelopment of the area in the 1960s and 1970s. The residential blocks are separated from the road by a line of garages and substantial planting. The road acts as a visual and physical barrier with no relationship between the east and west sides.

## **Summary**

- 4.13 The frontage to Gillender Street has former warehouse buildings of local historic interest, notable as surviving remnants of the industrial past of the area. The grade II listed former LCC fire station is also of interest, a building very much in the style of the LCC work of the early twentieth century. Bromley Hall and the former Poplar Public Library are the most significant buildings both historically and architecturally.

- 4.14 The alignment of Gillender Street, set back from the A12 behind a landscaped island with trees, provides a more protected setting for the warehouse buildings and fire station, as well as a view of the north elevation of Bromley Hall.
- 4.15 Bromley Hall and Poplar Library 'book-end' the site but are exposed to the A12 and their setting is compromised by adjoining buildings as well as the poor-quality street frontage of the open site, used principally for car parking and access to the container offices.
- 4.16 The adjoining sites on the east side of the A12, between the road and the river (Bow Creek), have been mainly used as car breakers yards and recycling depots, with a correspondingly poor environmental quality. However, this is now changing with more new redevelopment schemes, including residential towers under way or planned.

## 5 THE CONSERVATION AREA – DESCRIPTION AND HERITAGE ASSETS

### Character and Appearance

- 5.1 The history and character of the Limehouse Cut Conservation Area has been described in detail in the conservation area appraisal and management plan published by LB Tower Hamlets. The conservation area is described in the appraisal as being “dominated by the waterscapes of the broad Canal, the River Lea and Bow Creek, and is characterised by the relationship of the buildings within it to the water. The buildings are diverse and span the history of the area from its largely rural origins, through medieval times when the buildings were associated with the River Lea, through its industrial heyday when the Canal and the River were commercial thoroughfares, to the present day when the waterways are enjoying a renaissance and evolving as an important resource for leisure and amenity. Much of the built fabric dates from that era when the canal was heavily industrialised and sat in a densely urbanised area.”
- 5.2 The conservation area appraisal defines the character of the Conservation Area as being “comprised of those elements which are special to the canal and river environment, including the brick lining of the canal, the towpath and key buildings and revetment walls adjoining the waterways, which because of their important history, architectural value and robust industrial aesthetic are felt to make a positive contribution to the significance of the Limehouse Cut Conservation Area.”
- 5.3 The appraisal also identifies four groups of buildings that as a result of their character and proximity to the water and one another contribute positively to the Conservation Area, one of these groups being the buildings in South Bromley (Bromley-By-Bow). “The northern section of the Conservation Area includes the dramatic peninsula between the River Lea and Bow Creek and important remnants of South Bromley separated from the main Hamlet of Bromley by the creation of the Limehouse Cut and isolated further by the extension of the East Cross Route. Included within this cluster are a number of important buildings along Gillender Street, which is the surviving southern part of St Leonard’s Street and the northern part of Brunswick Road. Of these perhaps the most architecturally important are Bromley Hall and Bromley Public Library.”

## Heritage Assets

- 5.4 The area's designated heritage assets include four buildings included on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest and two locally listed buildings. Refer to Appendix One for the list descriptions.

### Listed buildings

#### **Bromley Hall (Grade II\*)**

- 5.5 Bromley Hall formed part of the Lower Manor of Bromley by Bow and is believed to date from c1490. One of the oldest brick houses in London, it is thought to have originated as a Tudor tower house, which was remodelled and reduced in height c1700. The house has since undergone numerous alterations and refurbishments, including restoration after WW2 bomb damage. While largely of c1700 appearance, significant features of the original Tudor building have survived including external brickwork and the characteristic angle turrets. During restoration works in 2005 further historic evidence was uncovered which has enhanced our understanding of Bromley Hall's evolution and its historical significance and rarity both in a regional and national context.

#### **Poplar Library (Grade II)**

- 5.6 The former Poplar public library was built in 1904-5, designed in a classical Beaux Art style by Squire, Myers and Petch. It was closed in 1973 and remained empty until refurbished in 2002 as offices in combination with a new block of live-work units to the rear.

#### **Former LCC Fire Station, 38 Gillender Street (Grade II)**

- 5.7 Dating from 1909-11, the former LCC fire station housed fire appliances on the ground floor whilst the upper floors provided flats for firemen's families. The building is in the 'Arts and Crafts' style favoured during this period by the LCC. It is a highly regarded and well-preserved example of an early twentieth century fire station. Converted to studios in the 1990s it retains its distinctive architectural qualities and a strong municipal presence.

**Warehouse, 23 Gillender Street (Dowgate Wharf) (Grade II)**

- 5.8 This is an impressive late 19<sup>th</sup> century warehouse group representing the only surviving buildings of John Currie and Company's Four Mills Distillery. The taller four storey building was the still house, and the two-storey building was the spirit store. Part of the building, the bonded warehouse, was demolished leaving a gap in the street elevation. Both buildings have a heavy corbelled cornice and windows with flat arches set within tall brick arches.

**Locally listed****21-22 Gillender Street**

- 5.9 21-22 Gillender Street is a pair of late 19th Century terraced properties, built after the adjoining distillery had closed and substantially altered and extended since the mid twentieth century. The building is to be retained as part of the redevelopment of the site known as the Barratt Industrial Estate, granted planning permission in 2018.

**24 Gillender Street**

- 5.10 24 Gillender Street is a massive mid-1930s bonded warehouse designed by Hal Williams and Company. The building has an exposed reinforced concrete frame with alternating red and yellow brick infill panels and bands of glazing giving a clear horizontal emphasis to the street elevation which follows the curve of the road alignment. The building was partially destroyed by bombing action in WW2, as shown in photographs dating from the 1950s, and was subsequently rebuilt.

**Summary**

- 5.11 The character of the conservation area is mainly defined by those elements relating to the canal and river environment, including the towpath and certain key buildings.
- 5.12 The buildings on the Gillender Street frontage are not directly related to the canal context but make a positive contribution to the conservation area because of their history, architectural value and robust industrial aesthetic.

## 6 SIGNIFICANCE

6.1 Significance is recognised as ‘the sum of the cultural and natural heritage values of a place’ and is defined in the NPPF as “the value of the heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historical. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also its setting”. Setting by itself is not a heritage asset but its importance lies in its contribution to the significance of a heritage asset. Setting relates to the surroundings in which a place is experienced, which is in turn formed by its local context embracing present and past relationships to the adjacent landscape or townscape.

6.2 In assessing significance the following graduations are proposed in the British Standard 7913 (Guide to conservation of heritage buildings);

*Heritage value:*

- Very high – important at national to international levels
- High – important at regional or sometimes higher
- Medium – usually of local value but of regional significance for group or other value
- Low – of local value
- Negligible – adds little or nothing to the value of the site or detracts from it.

6.3 In assessing the significance of the application site and its buildings the following factors are of relevance:

- The significance of the individual buildings
- The historic context and its relevance to significance
- The contribution of the current setting and its impact on significance

6.4 Bromley Hall is listed at grade II\* and is accordingly of very high significance. Poplar library is listed grade II and is of high significance. The other structures on the site are of negligible significance.

6.5 Bromley Hall appears today as a free standing building but the history of the site indicates that Bromley Hall was, for much of the last two hundred years, part of a group of buildings and that for much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was at the northern end of a terrace of houses and cottages that lasted until the early/mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, the

setting of the site has changed radically from its historic context to one dominated by the A12 dual carriageway, industrial and warehouse buildings and open sites used for waste recycling and other uses.

### **Bromley Hall extension**

- 6.7 The application scheme proposes the removal of the 20<sup>th</sup> century extension to Bromley Hall and its replacement with a new building infilling the open frontage of the site. The architectural and historic significance of the extension is considered as follows.
- 6.8 The single storey extension on the south side of Bromley Hall dates from the mid-1920s when it was occupied by the Royal College of St Katharine. The extension housed a ward with an internal inspection window and an artificial sunlight department. The architect is unknown. (Appendix 4 Fig. 5)
- 6.9 Bromley Hall was listed in 1950 and the short list entry mentions but does not describe the extension. The extension is a single-storey three-bay building slightly set back from the front elevation of Bromley Hall, occupying the site of an earlier cottage that was also set back from the frontage. It is built in dark brown stock brick, laid in English bond. Window arches consist of a simple row of brick headers, with a single tile creasing course above. Above the front and rear entrances is a circular window. A modest degree of architectural decoration is provided in the moulded red-brick pediments above the windows on the front elevation, which also have simple brick aprons, and a string-course continuing around the flank wall. The early-Georgian style sash windows date from the recent restoration. The flat roof is lit by large modern roof lights. The bomb which fell in 1940 caused blast damage to the rear elevation of the extension. The interior has been modernised and retains little if any original fabric.
- 6.10 The style of the extension is in the spirit of late-17<sup>th</sup> century English domestic architecture which was revived in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century by architects of the Arts and Crafts and Domestic Revival movements. The style was widely employed in both residential and public buildings, a typical feature being the round window or oculus as seen here. In this instance, the building clearly takes its cue from Bromley Hall, which was remodelled c1700. The use of brick headers rather than gauged brickwork to the windows and door arches, however, suggests that this

was a relatively low-budget construction, and the level of craftsmanship overall is typical of that of a competent builder of the period.

**Architectural significance.**

- 6.11 The extension is a well-mannered inter-war addition to Bromley Hall which respects the architectural idiom, proportions and materials of the historic building, but is overall of low architectural significance.

**Historic significance**

- 6.12 The connection with the Royal College of St Katharine confers a measure of interest on the extension and also forms an interesting episode in the history of Bromley Hall itself. This use was relatively short-lived, however, and typifies the history of many large old houses in London's rural fringes which fell into institutional or commercial uses as the area became urbanised and declined in social status. Little remains within the present fabric to illustrate this past use which is therefore of low historic significance.

**Summary**

- 6.13 The site has two buildings, Bromley Hall and Poplar Library, that are each of high architectural and historic significance.
- 6.14 The historic context of Bromley Hall and Poplar Library, and of the wider site, has disappeared and the overall effect of the changes in the surrounding area has been highly detrimental to the setting of the listed buildings.
- 6.15 The extension to Bromley Hall is of low architectural and historic significance, and its removal would not detract from the significance of the listed building.

## 7 APPLICATION PROPOSALS

7.1 Full details of the application proposals are set out in the drawings and Design and Access Statement prepared by Stockwool Architects. The proposals involve the following principal elements:

- Removal of the 1920s extension on the south side of Bromley Hall and of the temporary offices at the rear of the site;
- The introduction of a frontage building in the gap between Bromley Hall and Poplar Library, also forming a controlled access to the rear of the site;
- Development of the rear of the site with a new residential building and an enclosed garden.

7.2 The existing single storey brick extension to Bromley hall is to be replaced with a fully glazed, double height link block forming an entrance and reception space to the commercial accommodation in both Bromley Hall and Poplar Library. The new glazed link will have a smaller footprint than the existing extension.

7.3 The proposed new frontage building will provide controlled access to the rear of the site as well as linking the new reception area with the existing commercial space within Poplar Library. The elevation is divided into five bays each infilled with a screen of vertical steel louvres. The height of the facade aligns with the cornice level of the adjoining Poplar Library, with the second-floor windows set back.

7.4 The new residential block at the rear of the site has been designed to complement the materials and character of the historic buildings, as well as to reflect the historic character of and context of the conservation area. The three-storey block closest to Bromley Hall has a flat roof and is clad in grey brickwork set out within a carefully controlled grid, echoing that of the frontage block. The other three-storey and five-storey elements have pitched roofs and metal cladding in a colour that matches the louvres of the frontage block.

7.5 The existing hard surfaced yard in the centre of the site will be converted into a landscaped garden, protected from the major road by the frontage block, providing a

sheltered aspect and enhanced setting to the rear elevation of Bromley Hall and a suitable setting for the new residential development.

## **8 IMPACT OF THE PROPOSALS**

8.1 The principal issues arising for the identified heritage assets are addressed below.

### **Bromley Hall**

8.2 The issues regarding the removal of the existing single storey brick extension have been covered in part 6 of this report, with the conclusion that its removal would not harm the architectural or historic interest of Bromley Hall. There are no internal alterations proposed to Bromley Hall and the impact of the proposals is limited to the building of the new glazed link and this raises the following issues:

- The treatment of the south flank wall when the existing extension is removed;
- The detailing of the junction between the new glazed link and the flank wall;
- The proposed new door opening at first floor level.

8.3 Archive photographs show that both the north and south flank walls of Bromley Hall have been rendered and ruled out to represent stonework courses for a long time, certainly as far back as the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This may have been because of the mixed age and condition of the brickwork. It is also apparent that the position and size of window openings has changed over time, again as shown on archive photographs of different dates. Given the history of the building it is not proposed to change the existing appearance of the south wall and any exposed areas of brickwork, or damaged areas of rendering, will be carefully repaired with a matching material.

8.4 Whilst the new glazed link will directly abut the historic building, the structure will be fully independent of Bromley Hall and the foundation design will also take this into account.

8.5 The proposed door at first floor utilises an existing window opening, carefully widening and extending this down to floor level. In principle this should not result in wider damage to historic fabric. An exploratory investigation will be made before

opening up the doorway and a drawn and photographic record made of the existing condition.

- 8.6 Detailed drawings and a method statement regarding the demolition of the existing extension and construction of the new glazed link will be submitted for approval.

### **Poplar Library**

- 8.7 There are no proposals to alter the listed building either internally or externally. The impact of the application scheme is limited to the north end of the former Library building, in order to create a link at ground floor level with the new frontage building.
- 8.8 The proposal utilises the existing narrow lightwell at the north end of the building which is currently hidden from view behind a blank screen wall. (Appendix 4 Figs. 7 and 8). This space is of minimal significance. The link will be achieved by bridging the lightwell and creating a wider opening in the south wall of the lightwell. The design ensures that the new frontage building maintains a clear gap with the corner of the listed building, preserving the short return of stonework on the corner.
- 8.9 Detailed drawings of the proposed alterations to the lightwell including the new bridge link will be submitted for approval.

### **Summary**

- 8.10 The impact of the application proposals on the historic fabric of Bromley Hall are limited to the south flank elevation. It has been established that the removal of the existing single storey extension would not detract from the significance of the historic building. The proposed glazed link would be visually subordinate to the listed building and be recessed further back from the front of the building than the existing extension. The provision of a new door at first floor level utilises an existing opening and involves minimal change to the surrounding fabric.
- 8.11 The impact of the application proposals on the listed former Poplar Library building are minimal and are limited to the creation of a link at ground floor utilising an existing light well currently hidden from view.

## Impact on the Conservation Area

### Retention of heritage assets

- 8.12 The application proposals will have no impact on the heritage assets facing Gillender Street to the north of the site. The proposed scheme both retains and provides a new and appropriate setting for Bromley Hall and Poplar Library, the most significant of the existing buildings on the site. There will be no impact whatsoever on the wider Limehouse Cut Conservation Area.

### Demolition

- 8.13 The removal of the existing extension to Bromley Hall, which is itself of limited significance, will enable a satisfactory link to be achieved with the proposed new frontage building.
- 8.14 The removal of the container structures that house the temporary offices will not have a negative impact on the significance of the site as a whole.

### New development

- 8.15 The proposed new frontage building, together with the glazed link, follows the building line of Poplar Library which is set well back from the front of Bromley Hall, maintaining the predominance of Bromley Hall when seen from both the north and south.
- 8.16 The height, scale and proportions of the new frontage building respects the height and scale of the listed buildings. The architectural design of the new frontage building draws on the industrial character of existing buildings in the area e.g. the warehouse at 24 Gillender Street.
- 8.17 The height and design of the new residential buildings successfully complements the scale and different character of the two listed buildings. The height of the new residential building steps down from five to three storeys close Bromley Hall. The block closest to Bromley Hall, with its use of brickwork and an expressed grid pattern, reflects the domestic scale and character of the listed building. The form and

the cladding of the three and five storey elements take their cue from the older warehouses in the wider area.

- 8.18 The site layout of the new buildings enables the creation of a secure, protected garden area that has the dual function of providing amenity space for the residential development, separating it from the commercial accommodation, and also providing an appropriate setting for the rear of Bromley Hall.

### **Summary**

- 8.19 By retaining the significant heritage assets and improving their setting and the street scene with appropriate new development, the proposals will, taken together, both preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 8.20 The integration of Bromley Hall and Poplar Library with the new frontage building will help ensure the continuing beneficial use of the listed buildings and their future commercial viability.
- 8.21 The mix of retained historic buildings with new commercial and residential development, combined with the creation of a secure new garden setting, offers the opportunity to create a viable mixed-use development that will complement the larger scale of the adjacent Ailsa Wharf development.

## 9 CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 The application proposals will have conservation benefits in the retention of heritage buildings, combined with new mixed-use development providing residential and employment uses as well urban design benefits in terms of an improved public realm and frontage to the A12, a new enclosed garden space and the potential for improved linkages with other new development within the local area.
- 9.2 The proposals will not have a harmful impact on the significance of the historic buildings or of the site and its context as a heritage asset and will make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Limehouse Cut conservation area.
- 9.3 The introduction of the new frontage building, linking the listed buildings, providing a controlled access to the rest of the site and improving the appearance of the site frontage and the public realm will have a positive benefit, enhancing the setting of the listed buildings and helping to secure their future beneficial use as part of a commercially viable development.
- 9.4 The application proposals satisfy the policy requirements set out in the NPPF, the London Plan and Tower Hamlets Core strategy. The proposals will, inter alia, secure the following heritage benefits:
- Sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets and the contribution of their setting;
  - Reduce or remove risks to the future of heritage assets;
  - Help to secure the optimum viable use of heritage assets in support of their long-term conservation.
- 9.5 Taken overall the application proposals will make a positive contribution to the ongoing process of the redevelopment and regeneration of this part of east London.

## **SOURCES**

### **Publications**

Survey of London, Vol. I: Bromley-by-Bow (1900)

Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England), East London (1930}

Victoria County History, A History of the County of Middlesex: Volume 11, Stepney, Bethnal Green (1998)

Museum of London Archaeological Services, Bromley Hall Standing Building Survey (2002)

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Gary Haines, Bow and Bromley-by-Bow (2008)

London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Limehouse Cut Conservation Area Appraisal (2011)

### **Archives**

London Metropolitan Archive (LMA)

Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives (THLHA)

Historic England, Historians' file: Bromley Hall

### **Maps**

John Rocque, An exact survey of ... London .... and the country near ten miles round (1746)

Cruchley's Map of London (1829)

Ordnance Survey 1:2500: London Sheet XVIII (1869); London Sheet LXV (1896); London Sheet VI 9 (1916); Plan 51/3881 (1948)

LCC Bomb Damage Map 1939-1945

## APPENDIX ONE

### STATUTORY LIST DESCRIPTIONS

#### **No 43 GILLENDEY STREET E14, Bromley Hall**

(Formerly listed as 242 Brunswick Road)

Grade II\*

C16-C18. Dark red brick with steeply pitched, tiled hipped roof. Plaster coved cornice. Octagon angle turrets and brick string courses remain from early C16 building. Largely remodelled circa 1700 and 1 storey wing added to south side. 2 storeys and dormers, 4 windows with double hung sashes and glazing bars in cased frames set in raised brick margins. Interior with C16 moulded beams (although most now boarded over). Remnant of staircase circa 1700 with square newel post and twisted balusters remains to attics, otherwise early C19 simple staircase with continuous handrail. North front plastered. (RCHM)

#### **No 45 GILLENDEY STREET E14 (East side) Poplar Public Library**

Grade II

BRUNSWICK ROAD E14 (East Side) Poplar Public Library. 1904-5 by Squire, Myers and Petch. Faced with white ashlar masonry, slate roof, balustraded parapet. 2 storeys, dormers, basements, 4 windows in central recessed part, flanking advanced wings of 1 bay. Giant engaged Ionic pillars between windows, bottom windows have round arched heads and keystones. Rusticated basement. Gabled hood to doorway, with rusticated, engaged pillars and inner architrave.

#### **Nos 25-38 GILLENDEY STREET Former Fire Station**

Grade II

Fire station, now studios and flats. 1909-11 by London County Council Architects' Department Fire Brigade Section, with some mid-C20 alterations and late-C20 conversion to studios. Drawings dated 1910 were signed by W.E. Reilly, superintending architect to the LCC at the time; the station may have been designed by W.E. Brooks, who was responsible for the very similar 1907 Tooting Fire Station. Romantic building in the lively eclectic style favoured by the Department in this period. Red brick with timber small-pane sashes and steep pitched tile roofs. EXTERIOR: 4 storeys of accommodation over 3 ground floor appliance bays and office. Red brick in two shades, with three 3-storey canted oriels,

rendered and painted white. Symmetrical facade of three parts: wider central section has oriel flanked by paired timber sashes, the upper 2 floors faced with glazed red brick, at the base of which are a pair of pilasters with rendered capitals and 4 small arches between; similar oriel and plain paired sashes bay to each side. Ground floor also of glazed brick, with 3 former engine ports that retain timber panelled and part-glazed doors, all under continuous rendered cornice and applied metal lettering in distinctive typeface: L.C.C. FIRE BRIGADE STATION A.D. 1910. Stone opening plaque between 2 right hand ports. Office to far right has replaced door set behind curved exaggerated rusticated sides and with deep advanced cornice under semi-circular arch. Pitched tiled roof with deep eaves soffit and a pair of gables at each end. Prominent chimneys. Rear has pair of advanced stair towers, one now with blocked in windows. Otherwise sash windows, and simple open-air railings. HISTORY: Built as Brunswick Road Fire Station and opened in May 1911 at a cost of £10,428. Drawings are signed by Contractors were Messrs H.L. Holloway. The London Fire Brigade was expanded considerably following the Cripplegate fire of 1897. 43 new stations were opened between 1899 and 1914, and Brunswick Road is part of this campaign. Stone plaque reads: 'This station was opened by Jocelyn Brandon Esq. Chairman of the Fire Brigade Committee London County Council on May 19th 1911'

The former Brunswick Road (now Gillender Street) L.C.C. fire station of 1909-11 is listed as one of London's top rank early-C20 fire stations, similar to that of 1907 in Tooting (q.v.), and considering the capital's pre-eminence in fire station design, this endows it with historic interest. Although now converted, it retains its distinctive architecture, with elongated proportions emphasising the romantic qualities of the style, and strong municipal presence.

### **GILLENDER STREET E14 (East Side) Dowgate Wharf P B Burgoyne & Co Ltd**

#### **Warehouse**

Grade II GV

Dowgate Wharf P B Burgoyne & Co Ltd Warehouse. First half C19. Brick warehouse with heavy corbelled cornice and blocking course, part demolished for entrance. 2 storeys. Large window with glazing bars on top floor and smaller blocked windows on ground floor. Adjoins 4 storey portion with similar blocking course and cornice. Windows with flat arches set within brick arches.

The listed warehouses and associated buildings form a group on the east side of St Leonard's Street.

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