

# THREE MILLS

## CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

MAY 2021



# CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Background</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Character Appraisal and Individual Assets</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Relevant Issues</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Management Guidelines</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Glossary</b>	<b>55</b>

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

**The London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) has commissioned Arup to review the existing Three Mills Conservation Area (CA) and its associated character appraisals and management guidelines and to produce a revised appraisal document.**

The Three Mills CA lies to the south of Stratford and to the west of West Ham and Plaistow within the Lower Lea Valley. The conservation area currently comprises two distinct designated parts; the larger eastern half, which lies to the east of the River Lea within the London Borough of Newham (LB Newham) and the smaller western half which lies to the west of the River Lea within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LB Tower Hamlets). The River Lea serves as the boundary between the two boroughs. Both conservation area designations fall within the LLDC’s planning authority area.

As the conservation area is divided across two local authorities, there are two extant conservation area appraisals with associated mapping and guidance:

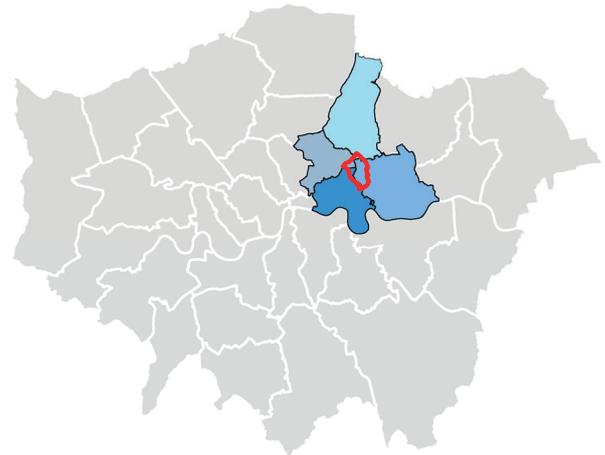
- CA appraisal prepared by LB Newham, adopted in December 2006 (designated LB Newham in November 1971); and
- CA appraisal prepared by LB Tower Hamlets, adopted in March 2007 (designated by LB Tower Hamlets in September 1971).

It is now proposed to consolidate the two designations to one and to adopt a single appraisal and suite of management guidelines for the Three Mills CA, whilst recognising that this designation sits across two local authorities who are due to receive their planning powers back from LLDC towards the end of 2024/25.

This revised appraisal document builds on the two adopted CA appraisals and a previous review of the Three Mills CA Appraisal undertaken by MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) in December 2019. Some text within this report therefore directly references the MOLA review.

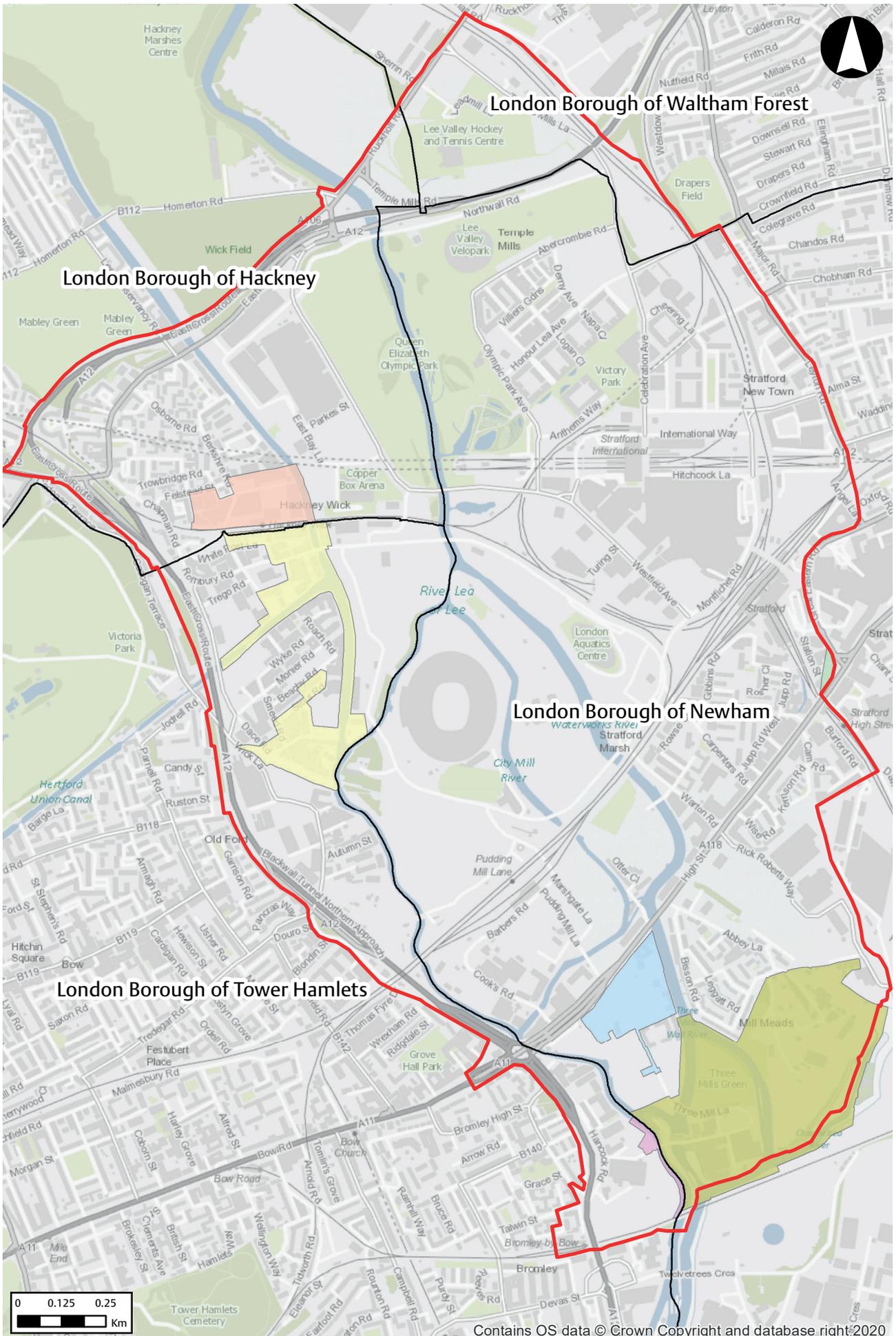
*Above: John Roque, 1746*

The two parts of the Three Mills CA are treated as a single, consolidated conservation area as outlined within this report. This is reflected in the updated boundary mapping provided alongside this document.



-  LLDC Authority Boundary
-  LB Hackney
-  LB Newham
-  LB Tower Hamlets
-  LB Waltham Forest

-  LLDC Authority Boundary
-  Fish Island and White Post Lane CA
-  Hackney Wick CA
-  St Johns CA
-  Sugar House Lane CA
-  Three Mills CA - LB Newham
-  Three Mills CA - LB Tower Hamlets



London Borough of Waltham Forest

London Borough of Hackney

London Borough of Newham

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

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## 1.2 THE AIM OF THIS REPORT

The Three Mills CA has been subject to changes throughout the 1980s/90s including the construction of new buildings and flood defence works. More recently, the Lee Tunnel Shafts at Abbey Mills Pumping Station site (for the Thames Water's Lee Tunnel Project) was implemented; and the surrounding areas (Sugar House Island to the north and Bromley by Bow to the west) are experiencing extensive regeneration and redevelopment. The redevelopment of Sugar House Island and Bromley by Bow (south) is currently underway. It is due to these changes in context that the CA appraisal and management guidelines have now been reviewed and updated.

The updated appraisal and management guidelines are intended to work alongside the relevant policies in the Local Plan (currently the LLDC Local Plan 2020-2036) when considering proposals that require planning permission in and around the conservation area and also for anyone involved in the management and maintenance of the fabric of the conservation area and the uses that occur within it. It is intended to be of use as a reference point to those living and working in and around the area. The specific purpose of the conservation area (and this revised appraisal) is described in the next section (Section 1.3), while that of the Management Guidelines is set out at Section 5.1.

This report has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019) and to standards specified by Historic England (HE 2019).

This report provides a detailed analysis of the conservation area's historic and architectural character in order to define its special interest and to assist stakeholders in understanding this significance, the desirability of preserving its special interest, as well as identifying opportunities for its enhancement.

This introduction is followed by:

- An outline of the context of the Three Mills site and its historical development;
- The area's present state and its key heritage assets - their significance is described;

*Opposite: Three Mills Distillery, Mill Meads, 1923, image © Historic Environment Scotland (Britain from Above)*

- Issues and opportunities specific to the area; and
- Management guidelines.

## 1.3 THE PURPOSE OF CONSERVATION AREAS

A conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest **'the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'** Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. S.69. The purpose of a conservation area designation is to help preserve or enhance the special character of the designated area.

A conservation area designation helps a planning authority control and direct development to this end. Extra controls operate over matters such as roof extensions or advertisements and there is a presumption against the demolition of structures or the loss of trees that contribute to the area's character or appearance. Conservation areas are heritage assets in their own right and may contain further heritage assets within them in the form of statutory or locally listed buildings. An area's significance as a heritage asset may be of local, regional or, at times, be of national importance.

It is the area as a whole that is of special interest as well as its individual features. Elements that make up character and appearance include: the historic layout and materials of roads; paths and boundaries; characteristic buildings; public and private spaces such as gardens, parks and greens; and street trees and street furniture. As well as physical form, its character may also be generated, in part, by the uses or mix of uses that happen there. Local views may also be important. It is also recognised that some elements of a conservation area may not contribute to, or could even detract from, its special interest. These represent opportunities for enhancement.

In reaching its decisions regarding proposed developments within a conservation area, the planning authority is required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of a conservation area. It will also seek to protect the setting of individual elements of the conservation area as well as the setting of the area as a whole.

## 1.4 SITE

## LOCATION

The conservation area is bounded in the west by the River Lea and the Bromley by Bow bridge, to the south by the Channelsea River (the eastern branch of the River Lea) and to the north by Abbey Road and the 'Greenway' embankment, containing the northern sewage outfall pipeline (leading from Hackney to Barking Creek).

### 1.5 HERITAGE CONTEXT

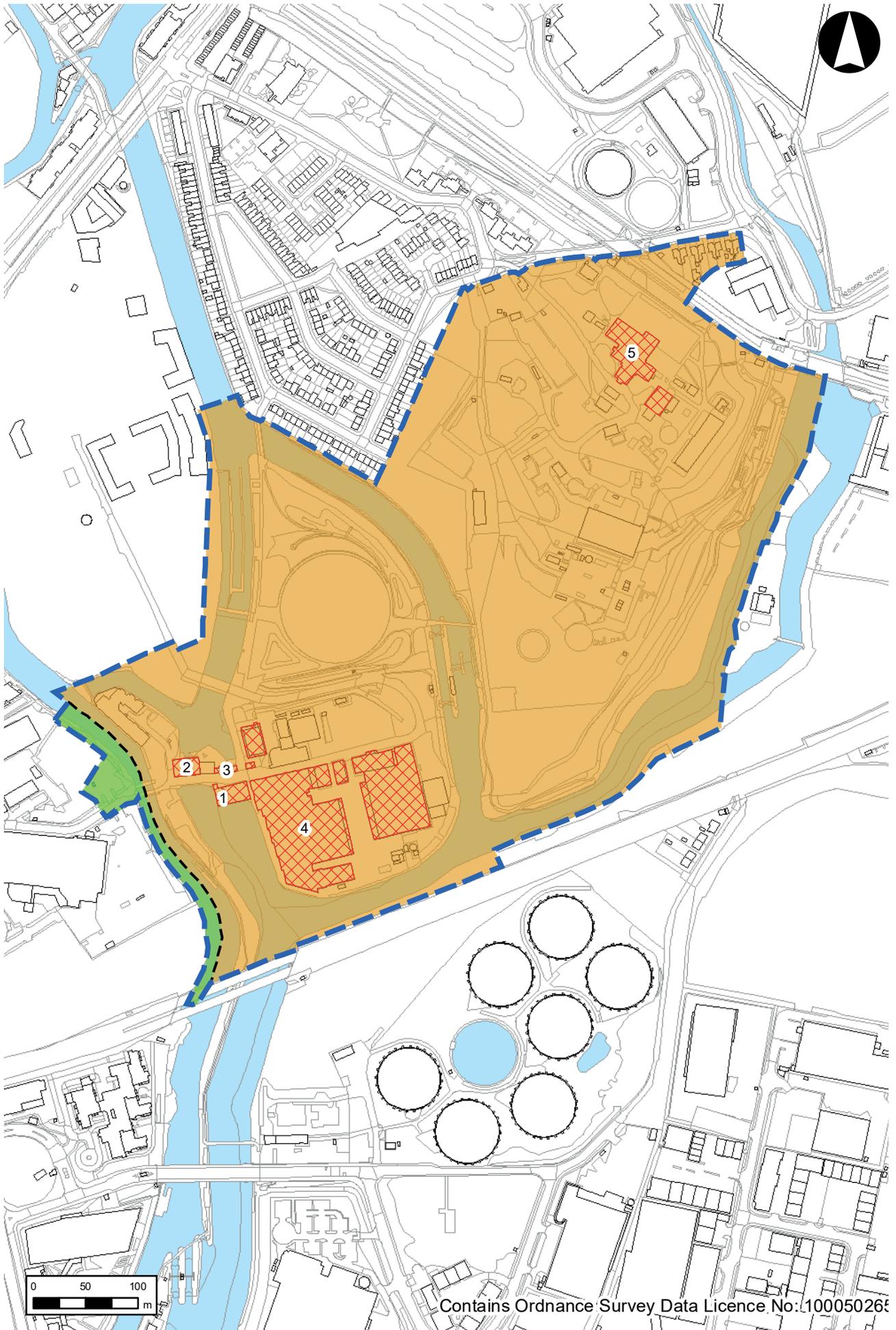
The conservation area was designated in 1971 (under separate designations) for demonstrable special interest for its group of historic buildings, its distinctive pattern of cobbled roadways and footpaths and its river setting. The character of the conservation area is primarily defined by the **Clock Mill (1)**, the **House Mill (2)**, the Offices Opposite Clock Mill (or **Customs House (3)**) former distillery complex **3 Mills Studios, (4)** and the **Abbey Mills Pumping Station (5)** as the centrepieces of the area.

The Heritage at Risk Programme helps the understanding of the overall state of England's historical sites. Launched in 2008, the programme identifies those sites (including conservation areas) that are most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay, or inappropriate development. The conservation area is identified as a heritage asset at risk on the register held by Historic England, where it is identified as being in 'very bad' condition but with 'significantly improving' trend.

### 1.6 LIMITATIONS

A site visit of Abbey Mills Pumping Station was not undertaken as part of this report and information within this report relies on existing information regarding this site. Abbey Mills continues to be a working site.

-  Combined Three Mills Conservation Area
-  Principal buildings
-  Three Mills CA - LB Newham
-  Three Mills CA - LB Tower Hamlets



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## 2 BACKGROUND

### 2.1 A SHORT HISTORY

The following summary history is sourced directly from the Three Mills CA Character Appraisal and Management Proposals (December 2006)—the LB Newham.

‘East and West Ham were known collectively as ‘Ham’ during the Norman period, literally referring to the low-lying pasture extending from Romford Road to Ham Creek on the Thames and divided by Green Street. ‘Ham’ was part of the administrative Hundred of Becontree. The Domesday survey in 1086 recorded eight tidal watermills on the River Lea. The sites of five of these mills are recalled in the names of the Lea tributaries: **Pudding Mill, City Mill, Waterworks Mill, Abbey Mill** and **Three Mills**. During the fourteenth century Edward III encouraged the expansion of manufacturing on the Lower Lea. The industries that subsequently developed included soap making, printing, paper making, gun powder, flour milling, distilling, linen and silk weaving, tanning and potteries.

A Cistercian abbey was built at Stratford Langthorne beside the Channelsea River in 1135 by William de Montfitchet, the most significant manorial lord of ‘Hame’. By the fifteenth century the Abbey owned all of Newham and had extended its estates into Essex and along the Lea valley. The earliest mills were developed at Stratford Langthorne during the medieval period and formed part of the Cistercian abbey estates at Stratford.

These mills supplied flour to the bakeries of Stratford-atte-Bow (modern Bow) until the Reformation. Milling remained an important industry in the tidal lower Lea valley. The mills at Three Mills were built on a man-made island to exploit the ebb tide.

In 1424, an Act was issued to improve the navigability of the river. The Act constituted a commission, drawn from local landowners, who were responsible for implementing improvement works funded by tolls. In 1571, a second Act was passed with the intention of increasing the supply of grain into the City, by improving navigation on the lower Lea. These works included the construction of **‘water cuts’ and tow paths**. Throughout the seventeenth century, disputes are recorded between the mill operators and Commissioners of Sewers, who accused them of penning back the waters causing flooding and the silting up of the river channels. The improvements to the lower Lea continued into the twentieth century when the Prescott Channel was cut between 1931-35, as a flood relief channel.

**The Three Mills** were part of the Abbey Estate at the time of the dissolution and were forfeit to the Crown in 1538. They were granted to Sir Peter Mewtys, a gentleman usher of the Privy Chamber. By the later sixteenth century, the Three Mills area comprised two water mills. These were in use as a corn and a gun powder mill in 1588. By the end of the seventeenth century, gin had become a popular drink, adopted from the Netherlands under the patronage of William of Orange. The site and former mill buildings were purchased in 1727 by a partnership of Huguenots with experience in distilling. The partnership, which intended to use the complex as a **distillery**, included Peter Lefevre (a corn miller), John Bisson and John Debonnaire. By 1735, the distillery business had boomed as the importation of brandy from France was prohibited and gin had replaced beer and cider as the staple drink of the urban working classes.

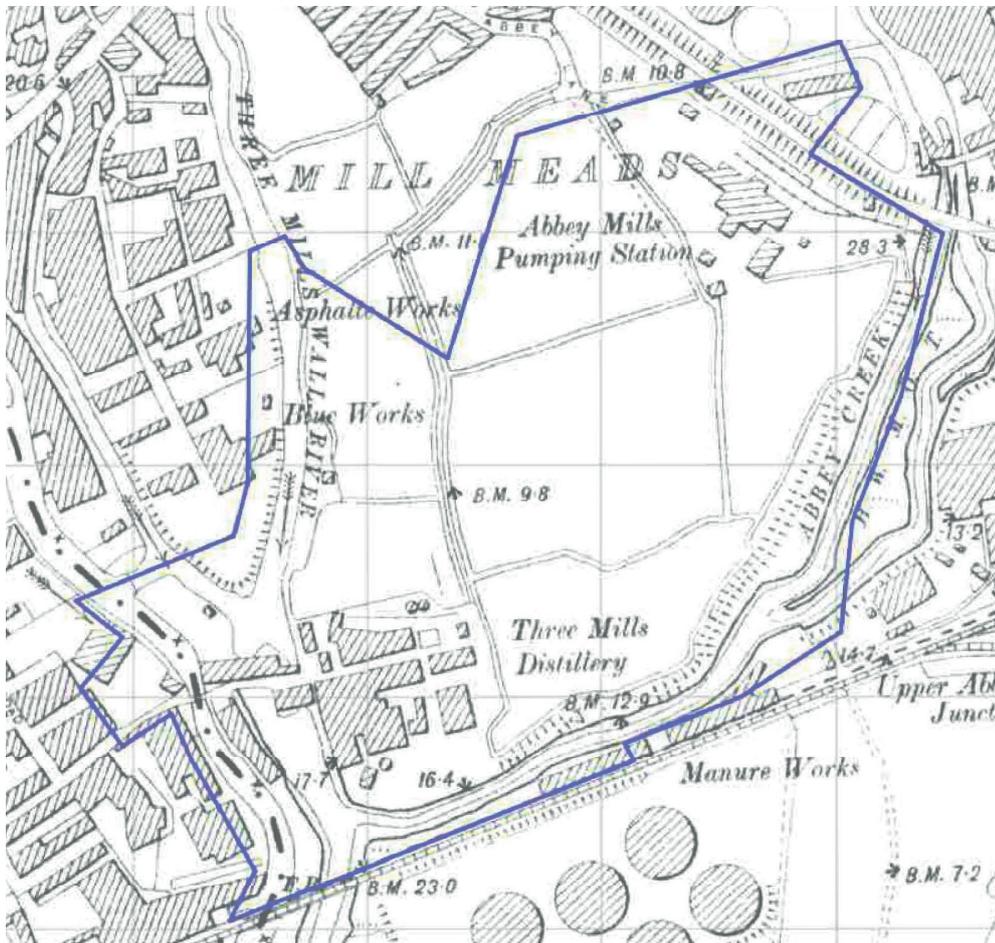
The **House Mill** is named after its historic position between the houses (manager and miller) and is dated 1776 on a stone plaque. It bears the initials of Daniel Bisson (senior). The partnership by this time fashioned them-selves as ‘millers and malt distillers in a very large and extensive way’. The plaque on the House Mill commemorates the rebuilding of the mill in 1776 by Daniel and Sarah Bisson, which was subsequently reconstructed again following a fire in 1802. Philip Metcalfe subsequently took over the business on a lease from Sarah Bisson before finally purchasing it. The mill building was restored by the River Lea Tidal Mill Trust in 1989.

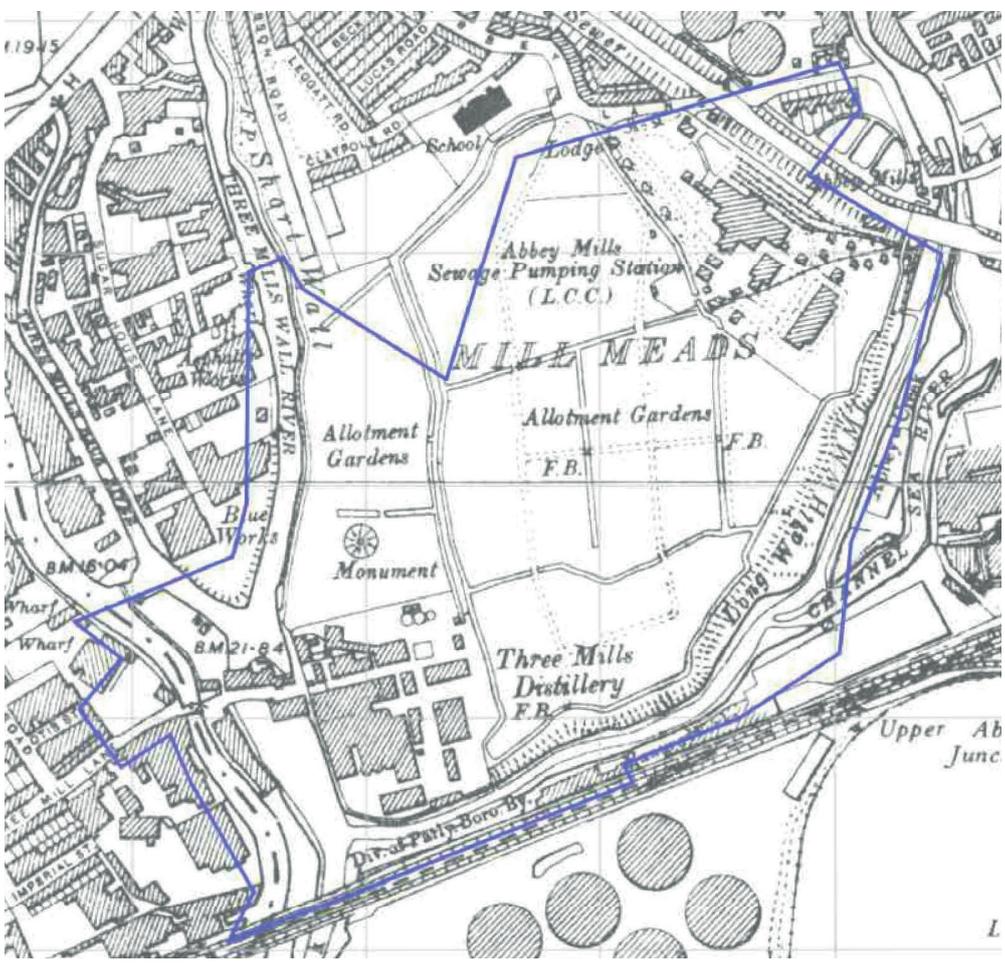
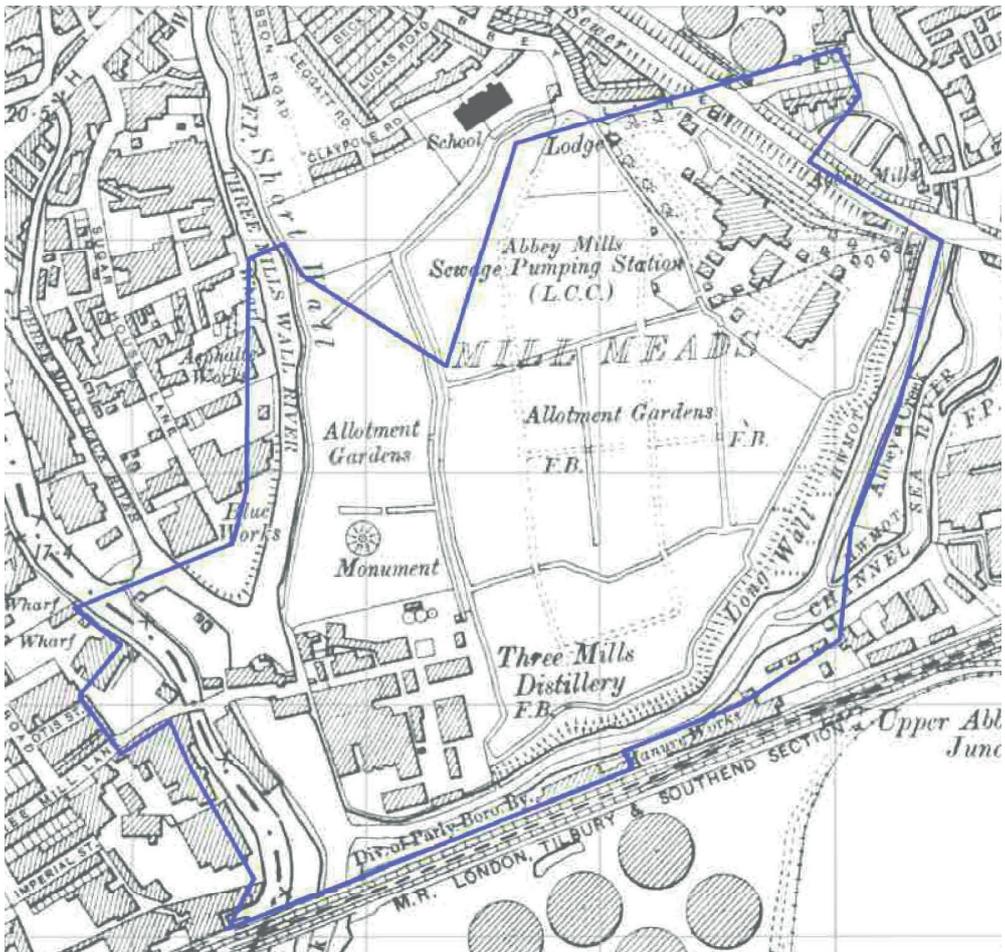
Unfortunately, the machinery remains to be restored.

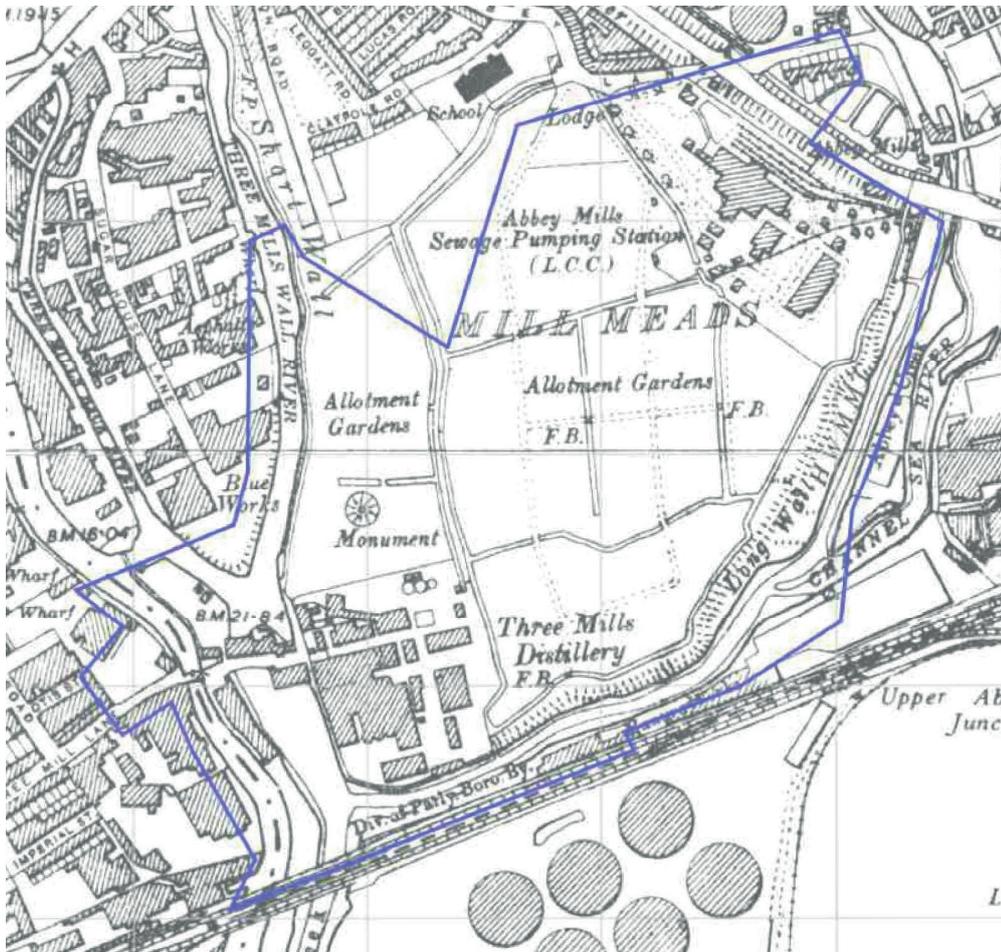
 Approximate Three Mills CA boundary

*Opposite above: OS extract, 1863 (Groundsure Insights)*

*Opposite below: OS extract, 1869 (Groundsure Insights)*







The façade of the miller’s house was demolished during the 1950’s following post war neglect, but rebuilt, with a modern rear elevation, by Julian Harrap architects as a visitor centre in 1992-3.

**The Clock Mill** dates from the mid-eighteenth century but was also destroyed by fire and rebuilt in 1817 by Philip Metcalfe. This is recorded on a lead plaque mounted on the mill wall. The clock tower was built around 1753 as a timber framed structure which was later underbuilt in brick. By the early nineteenth century, the Three Mills business was burdened with bad debts and heavily mortgaged. The property was finally conveyed to J and W Nicholson in 1872. The complex of buildings to the east of the mills was associated with **Nicholson’s Distillery**. The complex was erected from 1836 and includes former still houses and bonded warehouses.

 Approximate Three Mills CA boundary

*Above: OS extract, 1981 (Groundsure Insights)*

*Opposite above: OS extract, 1920 (Groundsure Insights)*

*Opposite below: OS extract, 1949 (Groundsure Insights)*

**Abbey Mill** was the earliest recorded mill in West Ham. It was sited within the precincts of Stratford Abbey. It was bought by Maud, Queen of Henry I, and donated to Barking Abbey to provide an endowment for the Bow and Channelsea bridges on the River Lea. It was subsequently bought from Barking Abbey by Stratford Abbey. In 1538 the Abbey Mill comprised two water mills under one roof. The Abbey Mill formerly stood on a small island in the Channelsea River. An engraving dated 1783 illustrates a complex of buildings with a weather boarded smock windmill at its centre. Records show that the mill was rebuilt in 1768 and again in 1863-4 in brick. Regrettably, the mill was destroyed by fire during the war and the remains were finally removed in 1967.

**Abbey Mills Pumping Station** is a complex comprising stations known as A, B, C, D, E, F (labelled overleaf). Station A was locally known as the '**cathedral of sewage**'. It was developed from 1865-8, initially by the engineer **Sir Joseph Bazalgette** to the designs of the architect Charles Driver, for the Metropolitan Board of Works' Main Drainage Project. Station A was originally set within formally landscaped gardens. The station was designed to raise sewage to the level of the elevated Northern Outfall Sewer. The outfall sewer runs beneath the '**Greenway**' between Old Ford and the Thames at Beckton.

**Station A** is designed in an exotic hybrid architectural style with elements drawn from the Byzantine, Italian Gothic and Russian Orthodox schools. The octagonal lantern, which crowns the building, has become a well-loved and admired landmark. Until World War II, this composition was further enhanced by twin giant octagonal chimneys, which lent the group a Moorish flavour. These were demolished during World War II to remove these 'signposts' for enemy bombers and to reduce the resultant damage. The main engine house originally housed eight beam engines, but these were replaced by electric centrifugal pumps in 1933. This rendered the tall twin flues redundant. The series of semi-detached **workers' cottages on Abbey Road**, which shelter in the lee of the 'Greenway', are contemporary with the main pumping station (1865) and designed in a similar Gothic derived style.

Within the complex, **Station B** was originally a diesel engine house constructed in 1891-6 to deal with flows from the Isle of Dogs branch sewer and diverted flows from the West Ham pumping station. **Station C** was originally a gas engine house built during 1910-14. It formerly housed gas engined centrifugal pumps,

which have since been replaced by diesel engines. **Station D** (now demolished) was built in 1970-1 to divert flows from West Ham to Abbey Mills and to pump storm water to Abbey Creek. **Station E** was commissioned in 1994.

During the 1990s, a replacement principal pumping station (**Station F**) was constructed on the north bank of the Channelsea River to the south west. The space age design of this new pumping station is in stark contrast to the highly ornamented appearance of the nineteenth century complex. This new station was constructed by Thames Water between 1994- 7 to the futuristic design of Allies and Morrison. The reflective aluminium cladding and cylindrical flues provides a sophisticated counterpoint to the historicism of its High Victorian neighbour.

Within the Lea Valley Park is a memorial to distillery workers who suffocated in a nearby well in 1901. The current memorial sculptures 'Helping Hands' by Alec Peever replaced an earlier memorial medieval style cross on the site. The memorial is a poignant reminder of the many workers who have died in the dangerous industries that have thrived in the area.

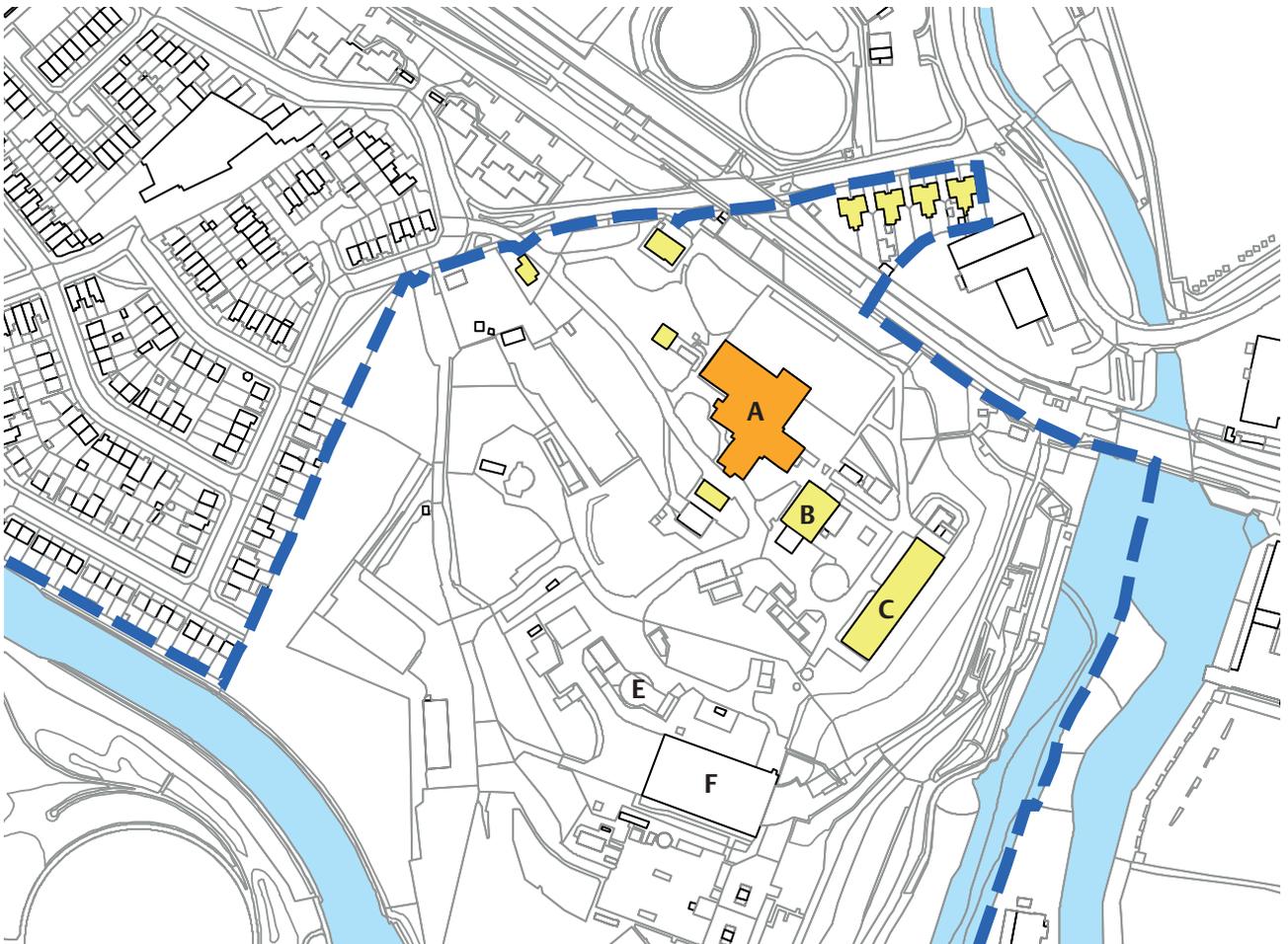
The **allotments** which border the eastern side of the Prescott Channel were managed by the West Ham Allotment Society until 2019. Whilst the society was registered as an Industrial and Provident Society in 1942, the allotments on this site have been cultivated since 1916, or earlier, with a brief period of closure to facilitate the cutting of the Prescott Channel. The allotments were formerly more extensive in area, with over 300 plots recorded. The most recent pumping station (F) now occupies former allotment ground.<sup>1</sup>

-  Combined Three Mills Conservation Area
-  Listed Building - Grade I
-  Listed Building - Grade II\*
-  Listed Building - Grade II

*Opposite above: Abbey Mills Pumping Station, 1941, image © London Metropolitan Archives (City of London)*

*Opposite below: Abbey Mills Pumping Station Complex. Stations A to F are labelled (Station D no longer exists)*

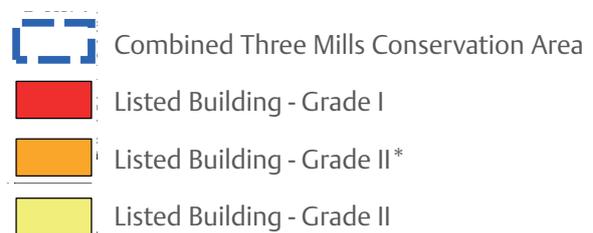
<sup>1</sup> Three Mills Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals (14 December 2006), London Borough of Newham.

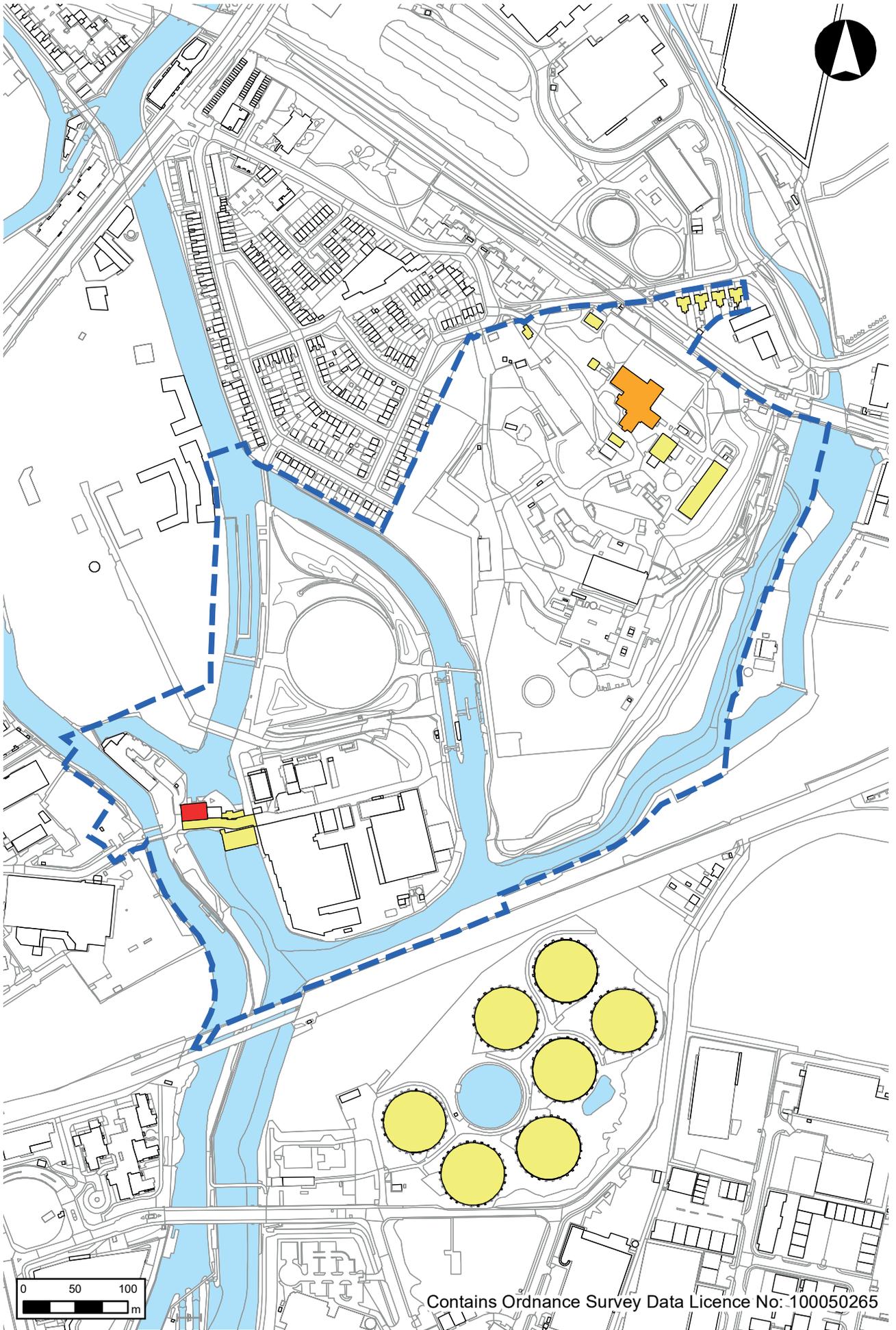


## 2.2 BACKGROUND TO LISTING

The Three Mills CA was declared in November 1971 on the basis that the area is one of London's oldest extant industrial centres. The existing conservation area appraisal documents were adopted in 2006 (LB Newham) and 2007 (LB Tower Hamlets) respectively.

The area's character derives from its collection of unique examples of 18th and 19th century industrial architecture, with the former House Mill and Clock Mill being the major centrepieces, together with the distinctive townscape quality of the area characterised by the surrounding tidal river channels, informal cobbled roadways/footpaths and recreational space, former workers cottages, bridges and other natural features.





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## 2.3 RECENT HISTORY

### Works within the Conservation Area

Major redevelopments and works within the area include the following:

#### Three Mills

- Three Mills sustained severe air-raid damage during the Second World War. The Miller's House was destroyed in 1941 and rebuilt in 1995 with a modern interior and rear part, but retained the original facade. The remainder of the site was largely used for warehousing until the 1980s, when three studios were founded on the site: Bow Studios, Three Mills Island Studios and Edwin Shirley Productions. These merged to become 3 Mills Studios in the mid-1990s.
- For the 2012 London Olympics construction work, the Three Mills Lock was created on the Prescott Channel and the Three Mills Wall River Weir.
- The area has seen various flood defence works across the island.
- The Clock Mill building is in temporary use as a secondary school (until c2024) after which it is envisaged to be used as workspace for TV, Film and Creative industries.

#### Abbey Mills

- Recent work at Abbey Mills includes the construction of the Lee tunnel taking storm overflows to Beckton treatment works. While most of the operational structures are underground, there are ventilation structures, landscaping/hardstanding near the shaft site and additional fencing. This work has already been implemented. The shaft and ventilation structures are above ground, near the location of the existing pumping station F. These predominately ground level works/landscaping are low rise, are not readily visible from Three Mills area and do not have a significant impact on views and setting between the Three Mills and the Abbey Mills sites.

### Works within the surrounding area

Key surrounding recent (and proposed) developments within the setting of the conservation area include the following:

#### Sugar House Island

- Sugar House Island originally housed a large cooperage producing barrels to support the mills, as well as a wide range of industries, from the manufacture of innovative inks to sugar refining. In 2012 permission was granted for a hybrid planning application for a comprehensive mixed-use development.

#### Bromley by Bow Masterplan

- The Bromley by Bow Masterplan sets out the aim to achieve transformation of the area for a new district centre with new retail, services and businesses along with community facilities a new primary school and open space alongside new homes. The south of the site is in the early stages of implementation.

*Opposite: View looking south west towards the House Mill showing the current redevelopment of Sugar House Island beyond the Three Mills wall river weir*



## 2.4 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

The conservation area is significant for its historic buildings and its distinctive pattern of cobbled roadways/footpaths and its river setting. The character of the Three Mills CA is defined by the Clock Mill and the House Mill as the centrepiece of the area.

Despite previous flood defence works and redevelopment of the surrounding area, this has had little impact on the overall significance of the conservation area. The summary of significance as is outlined:

- The **tidal river channels** of the River Lea, including the Channelsea River, Abbey Creek and Bow Creek;
- The **House Mill, Clock Mill**, former distillery complex, and Abbey mills pumping station;
- The **cobbled roadway** leading from the bridge over the River Lea to the former distillery complex (3 Mills Studios);
- The **3 Mills Studio** site, comprising former gin distillery complex and one of the UK's primary filming locations;
- Former **workers' cottages** (nos. 116-130 Abbey Lane);
- Area of high **biodiversity** value including an impressive specimen of an ancient Black Poplar tree (*Populus nigra* subsp. *betulifolia*) on north bank of Channelsea River;
- **Reed beds** along Channelsea River and Abbey Creek, surrounding Channelsea Island;
- The **'Greenway'** (Northern Outfall Sewer Embankment) and the bridge over Channelsea River;
- **Narrow boats** moored on Three Mills Wall River; and
- Other **waterways** in the area with their associated historic **wharves** and **tow-paths** and more recent **footpaths**.<sup>2</sup>



*Above: View looking east along the Channelsea River from the southern boundary of the CA*

*Below: View looking north from Three Mills Lock. Allotments can be seen to the right with tall buildings in Stratford beyond*



<sup>2</sup> Three Mills Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals (14 December 2006), London Borough of Newham.



*Above: Grade II listed properties on Abbey Lane*

*Below: View looking east towards Clock Mill looking across the Channelsea River*



# 3 CHARACTER APPRAISAL AND INDIVIDUAL ASSETS

## 3.1 THE CONTEXT AND SETTING

The setting of the conservation area is varied. To the south the group of grade II listed gas holders contribute to the industrial character of the area as do the rail tracks and network of waterways which surround the area. To the east, the landscape is green and open in character. To the west the setting is dominated by later industrial development but is currently in flux as a result of the Bromley by Bow redevelopment works. Similarly, Sugar House Lane to the north is currently being redeveloped as well as the former Parcelforce site to the south, which is allocated for redevelopment and the eastern part is already under construction (now known as Twelvetrees Park).

*Below: Grade II listed gas holders on the south side of the Channelsea River as seen from the southern boundary of the Three Mills CA*



## 3.2 CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE

The character and appearance of the conservation area itself has changed little since the 2007 LB Newham appraisal, with the exception of those works to the area and surrounding context as described above. The following key elements of the character of the conservation area are summarised below from the 2007 LB Newham management plan.

### Principal buildings (centrepiece of area)

The character of the Three Mills CA is defined by the Clock Mill, the House Mill, the former distillery complex (3 Mills Studios) and the Abbey Mills Pumping Station, which form the centrepieces of the area, as described below:

#### Clock Mill

Opposite the courtyard is the Clock Mill, a substantial tidal water-grain mill built of brick with timber floors and supported by iron columns. Altered over the years, the Clock Mill retains its corner tower, and is faced in brick with pointed gothic windows. Later additions to the Clock Mill included two drying kilns with dentilled eaves cornices, conical slated roofs and cowls. Entirely gutted of its fittings, including its grinding stones and wheels, the Clock Mill is currently occupied by the East London Science School.

#### House Mill

The House Mill is now the oldest surviving and largest tidal mill in the country and represents the qualities of both the pre-industrial and industrial periods. Its brick faced frontage and weatherboard rear conceals its timber-framed structure. It has a doubled ridged, steep roof with 12 dormer windows lighting its two attic storeys.

#### Offices Opposite Clock Mill (Customs House)

Customs House is an early 19th century domestic brick building which has been vacant for the last 5 years. It has been used for office use and as part of the wider 3 Mills Studios complex. It is comprised of two storeys with two segmental bays to the front elevation and timber sash windows set beneath gauged brick arches.

*Above: Clock Mill as seen from Three Mill Lane*

*Middle: House Mill as seen from Three Mill Lane*

*Below: View east along Three Mill Lane*



### 3 Mills Studios

The 3 Mills Studios site is comprised of the former distillery complex which includes many modified former warehouses and offices. It is a private facility and is not accessible to the general public without prior arrangements.

The distillery complex, which is located to the east of the mills, was erected from 1836 and was associated with Nicholson's Distillery, comprising of purpose built still houses, maltings and bonded warehouses.

During the 1980s, three production companies established themselves on the island and occupied these former industrial buildings. In the mid 1990s the three studios merged to become 3 Mills Studios.

The tall brick elevation of the former main warehouse of the former Nicholson's Distillery can be seen from Three Mill Lane above the boundary wall containing the studio site.

The LB Newham CA Appraisal (2006) provides the following description of the studio complex, which was inaccessible at the time of writing:

“Inside the film studio complex, the nineteenth century origins of the site as a distillery are clearly evident in the traditional scale and detailing of the nineteenth century brick stillhouses and warehouses. These flank a spine road faced in a continuation of the cobbled causeway found along the western approach. This retains iron tram rails (probably for coal trucks used to sully the distillery boilers) and distinctive cast bollards, intended to protect the corners of buildings from accidental damage.”

Building heights are relatively low across the complex, and long views from the site are terminated by modern development in Stratford.

The complex remains one of the largest film and television studios in London and comprises an ecosystem of 15 small businesses resulting in 450 jobs.<sup>1</sup>



*Above: The entrance to 3 Mills Studio complex from Three Mill Lane*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/sadiq-sees-potential-for-largest-film-studios>



*Above: View north between two of the former industrial buildings within the 3 Mills Studio site, the building to the left is a former gin still. Beyond the car park, tower blocks in Stratford are visible*



*Left: View east towards Clock Mill from the 3 Mills Studio site*

*Below: View north between two of the later buildings on the 2 Mills Studio site*



### Abbey Mills Pumping Station

Abbey Mills Pumping Station comprises a sewage pumping station dating from 1868 and is a large building in Italian Gothic Style with a cross plan. It sits within the wider secured setting of the pumping station, which comprises both old and new buildings.

### Two Distinctive Character Areas

There are two areas of distinctive character areas, namely the Three Mills Island and the Abbey Mills Pumping Station complex.

### Three Mills Island Character Area

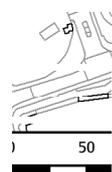
This character area is a ‘tear-drop’ shaped island set within the branches of the River Lea. It was only severed from the area to the east in 1931-5 by the cutting of the Prescott Channel. This character area is defined by the former gin distillery complex which included the House and Clock Mills with purpose built still houses, maltings and bonded warehousing to the east, now forming part of the 3 Mills Studios. To the north of the complex is a large grassed recreation ground with a memorial to workers killed in 1901 at its northern end.

### Abbey Mills Pumping Station Character Area

This character area is defined by the Channelsea River in the south, Abbey Lane in the north, the Prescott Channel to the west and the ‘Greenway’ to the east. The pumping station complex occupies the north-eastern half of the area, set within a partly walled and railed/fenced enclosure from which the public are excluded. The area includes an important tidal reed bed and wetland along the north bank of the Channelsea River.



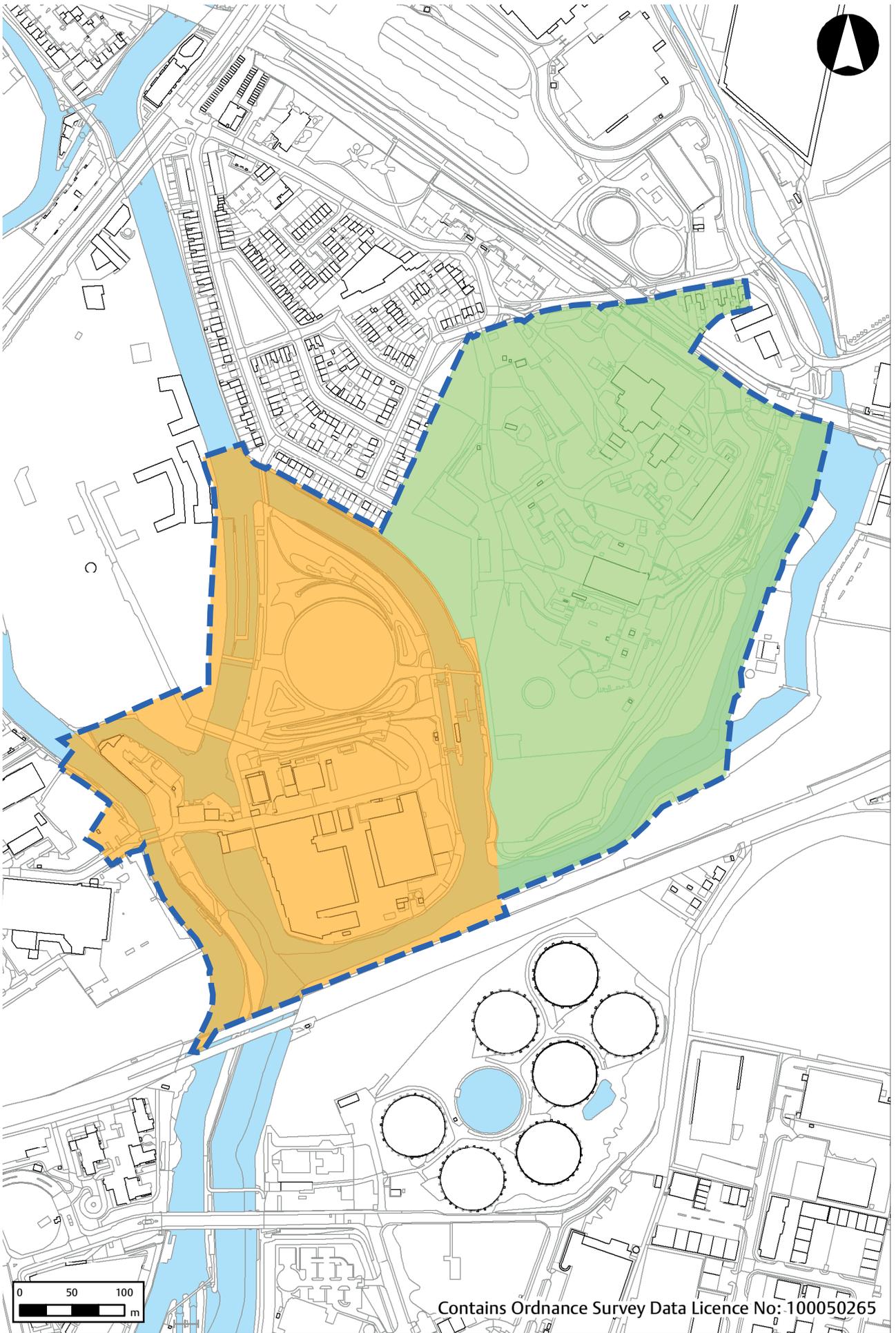
*Above: The main Abbey Mills Pumping station building as seen from the Greenway looking north*



Combined Three Mills Conservation Area

Three Mills Character Area

Abbey Mills Pumping Station Character Area



Contains Ordnance Survey Data Licence No: 100050265

## Townscape

### Form and Scale

The scale of the area is predominantly 3-4 storey buildings. Central to the character of the CA, the House Mill is 3 storeys (plus 2 attic storeys) and the Clock Mill is 4 and a half storeys.

### Open Space

The River Lea is one of a network of rivers set within the open lands of Mill Meads. The open and unenclosed feel of the towpath is an important characteristic of the area.

The two complexes of buildings (Three Mills and Abbey Mills Pumping Station) are set within areas of undeveloped land (including watercourses) that give the groups a particular setting. The Three Mills complex has an island setting with a large expanse of open land to the immediate north of the complex. The Three Mills Green is a large recreational park located to the north of the island.

The Abbey Mills Pumping Station complex is formally arranged around the principal pumping station to create a more open grain with opportunities for formal tree planting and landscaped spaces between the buildings. The area of undeveloped land to the south west of the group provides a wider landscaped setting for the group.

### Landscape & trees

There are particularly important trees which may form part of the original nineteenth century planting scheme within the Abbey Mills Pumping Station compound. Native regenerating trees, including Black Poplar, are an important part of the distinctive character of the Abbey Creek area.

Other specimen planting in the area and boundary planting are significant to the character of the area and the setting of the buildings and screen the island from surrounding urban area.

### Views

The River Lea is significant in defining the visual character of the Three Mills area and is a historical reminder of the city's dependence on water-power and industrial activity in the 18th century. The buildings provide focal points within the conservation area.

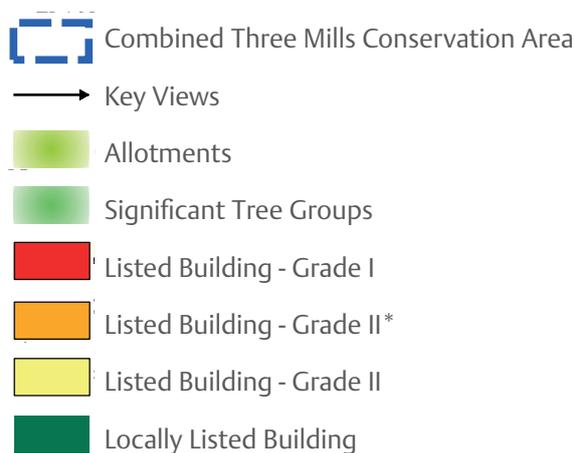
Significant views associated with the conservation area comprise the following:

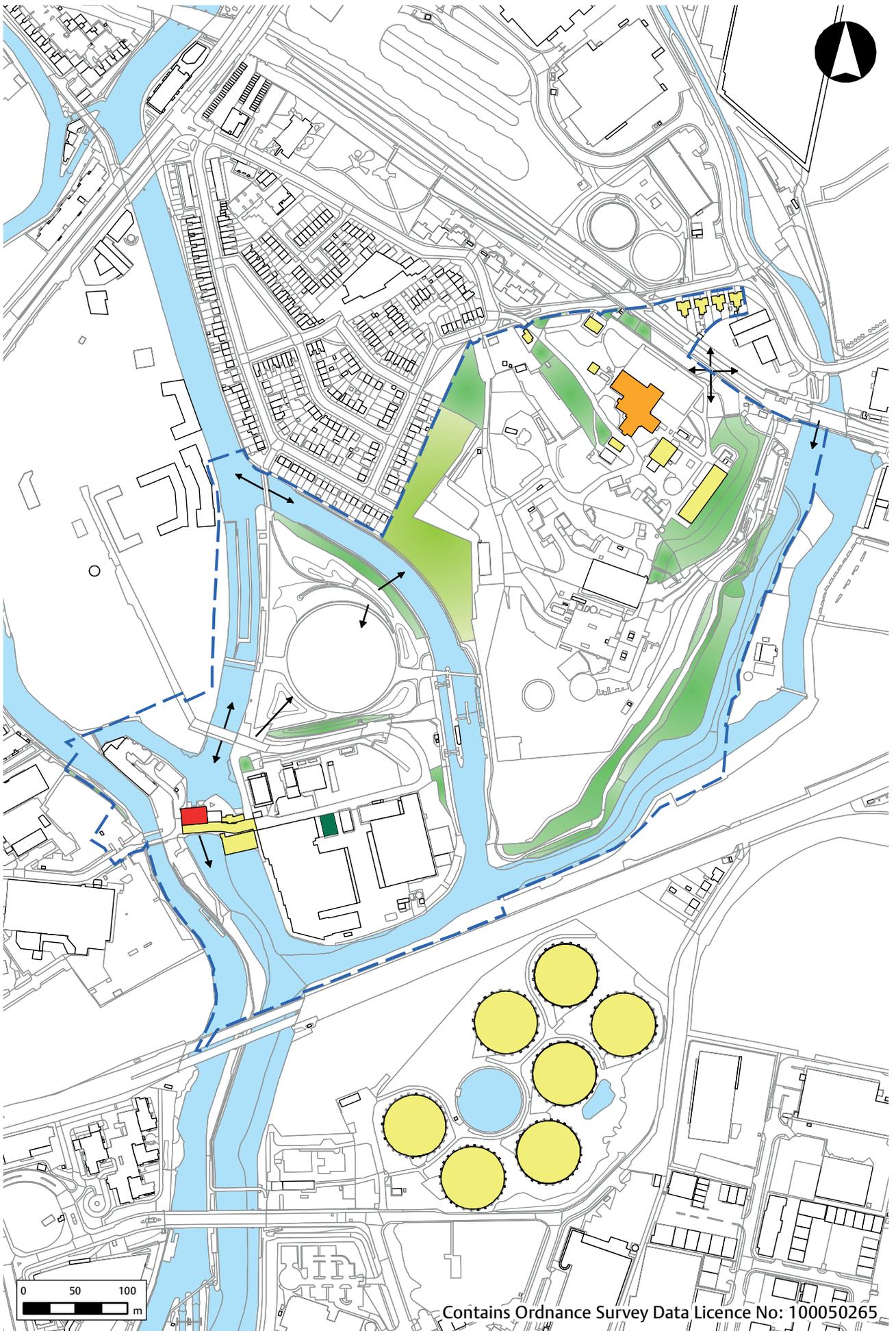
- Panoramic views towards the House Mill and Clock Mill via the Three Mill Lane approach and to the gas works of Bromley by Bow as a backdrop to the Channelsea River.
- The view east across the River Lea from Three Mill Lane.
- The view of House Mill and Clock Mill from the Lee Navigation's tow-path, the use of which as a public amenity and route for active travel has intensified significantly.

### Layout

The quality of the streetscape, the surface materials, street furniture and other features, are an integral part of the character of the conservation area. Three Mill Lane is an important historic route which runs through the area across the River Lea to the east. There are several areas of historic road surfacing and paving which is significant to the character of the area, including a richly textured granite cobbled causeway that continues along Three Mill Lane through the Studio Complex and reinforces the character of the conservation area.

The townscape is comprised of the Three Mills group, which presents a picturesque composition when views on the western approach to the area from Bow.





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## Building Types

There are four principal building types in the area; mills, pumping stations, industrial buildings and houses.

The majority of the public realm in the area is composed of informal footpaths and recreation space. The Three Mill Lane forms a significant public thoroughway within the Three Mills sites, where the conservation area is appreciated.

### Mills

Together with the Pumping Stations, mills are the most significant building type in the area. The House Mill is the earliest surviving mill (1776 - albeit reconstructed in 1802) with three storey brick faced elevations, painted multi-paned sash windows and planked pitching doors. The deep plan form and steeply pitched, clay tiled roof is distinctive with unusual twin tiers of dormer windows.

### Pumping Stations

Pumping stations form an unusual and impressive group at Abbey Mills. The earliest and most impressive, in terms of scale and detailing is Station A, which forms the centre of the group. The cruciform plan and richly detailed polychrome brickwork elevations and mansard roof are remarkable. The central glazed cupola with gilded iron work finial is a local landmark.

### Industrial Buildings

The former distillery complex associated with Nicholson's gin distillery is now in use as the 3 Mills Studios. Many of the former warehouses, converted to houses and offices survive, albeit subject to modification and reconstruction. The group is composed of buildings of variable scale that predominantly date from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

### Houses

Within the area are a small number of nineteenth century houses that were historically ancillary to the industrial complexes, which they adjoin. The Mill House, is the most significant of these and is based on an original reconstruction.



*Above: Clock Mill*



*Above: Abbey Mills Pumping Station*



*Above: the rear of houses along Abbey Lane as seen from the Greenway*



*Right: House Mill*

### 3.3 LANDUSE AND ACTIVITIES

Within the Three Mills CA in LB Newham are three statutorily listed buildings, including warehouse buildings of 19th century industrial architecture. On the west of the River Lea, in Tower Hamlets, the conservation area covers the towing path for pedestrian access and part of the Tesco car park. There is an allocation of car parking spaces to serve visitors to the House Mill.

The House Mill is open to the public as a unique heritage attraction. It serves as an informal centre for the local community. The Clock Mill is now occupied as a school. 3 Mills Studios is a film and television production studio and rehearsal area.

*Below: View east along Three Mill Lane. Clock Mill can be seen to the right and House Mill to the left*



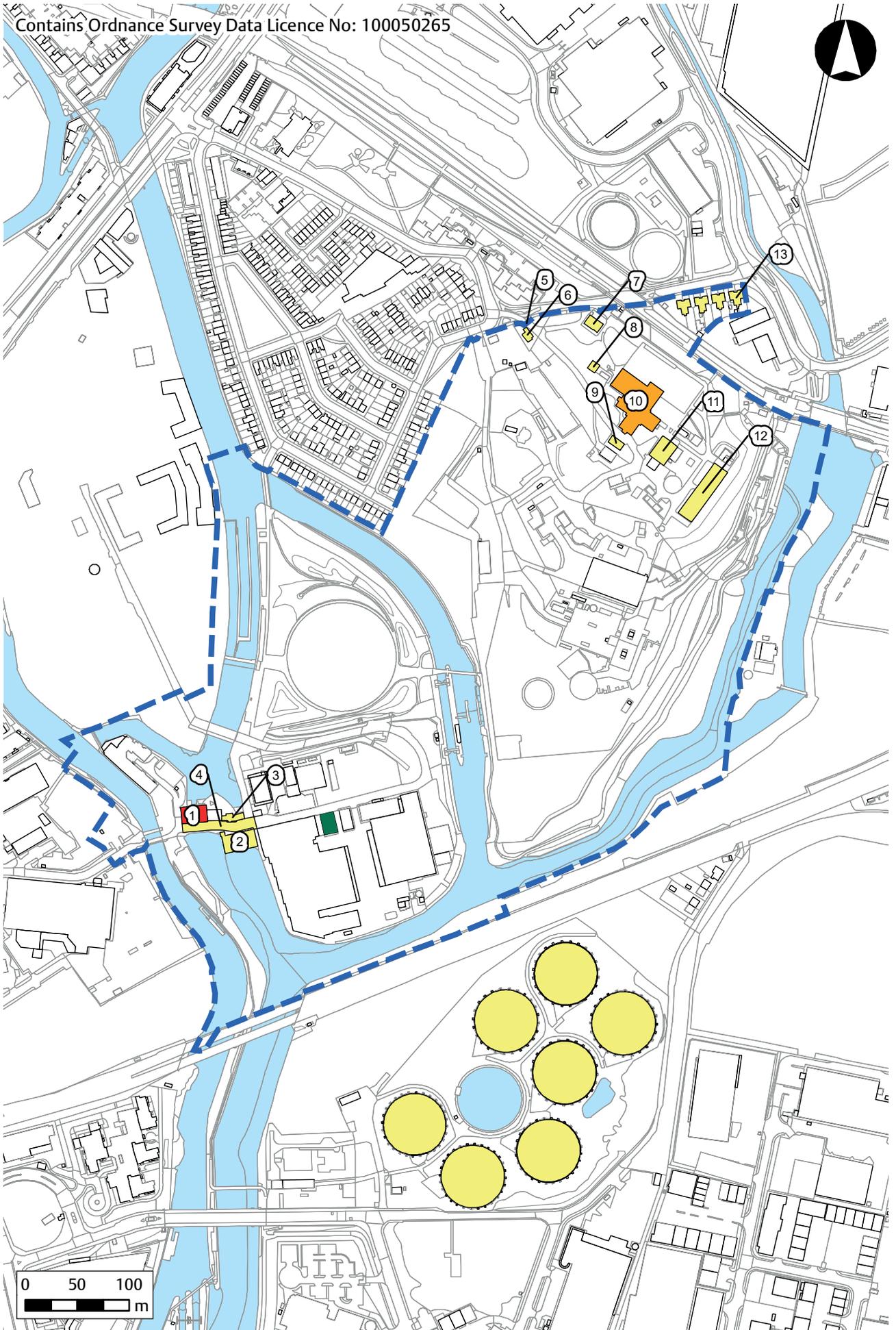
## 3.4 INDIVIDUAL HERITAGE ASSETS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

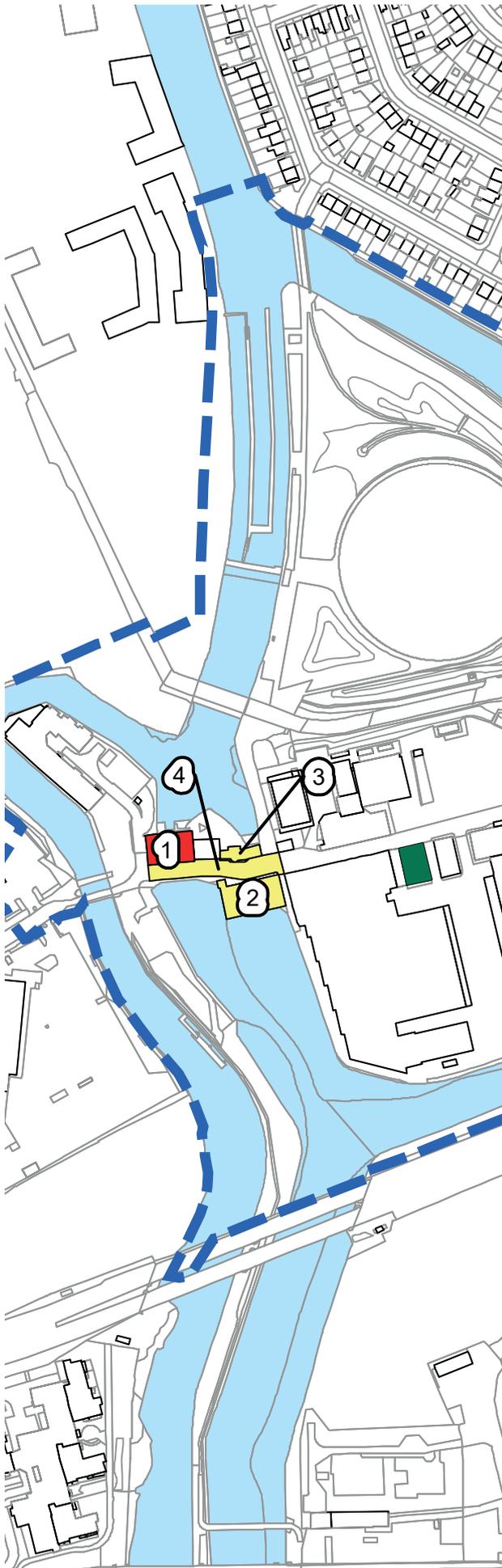
LLDC has identified a number of heritage assets that are of special architectural or historic interest, and which contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The heritage assets identified as being significant due to their architectural and historic interest are shown opposite and listed overleaf.

There are also several locally listed buildings and buildings of townscape merit within the conservation area. These predominately comprise the former main warehouse of the former Nicholson's Distillery and other associated buildings.

There are two lesser known heritage features within the designation, both submerged. These are a camp shed (or barge bed, an embanked platform) in Bow Creek to the immediate south of Three Mill Lane, and the ex situ (off site) architectural fragments from the 1960s demolition of the Euston propylaeum, designed by Philip Hardwick and built in 1838, which were used to fill part of the bed of the Prescott Channel.

-  Combined Three Mills Conservation Area
-  Listed Building - Grade I
-  Listed Building - Grade II\*
-  Listed Building - Grade II
-  Locally Listed Building





**1 Tide Mill (known as House Mill)**

Grade I

List Entry Number:

1080970

[historicengland.org.uk](http://historicengland.org.uk)

Significance: Historical and Architectural Interest, Group Value

**2 Clock Mill**

Grade II

List Entry Number:

1191269

[historicengland.org.uk](http://historicengland.org.uk)

Significance: Historical and Architectural Interest, Group Value

**3 Offices, former Custom House, east of House Mill opposite Clock Mill, Three Mills**

Grade II

List Entry Number:

1080971

[historicengland.org.uk](http://historicengland.org.uk)

Significance: Historical and Architectural Interest

**4 Paved roadway extending from west side of House Mill to wall and gate on east side of Clock Mill**

Grade II

List Entry Number:

1080972

[historicengland.org.uk](http://historicengland.org.uk)

Significance: Historical and Architectural Interest, Group Value

1



2

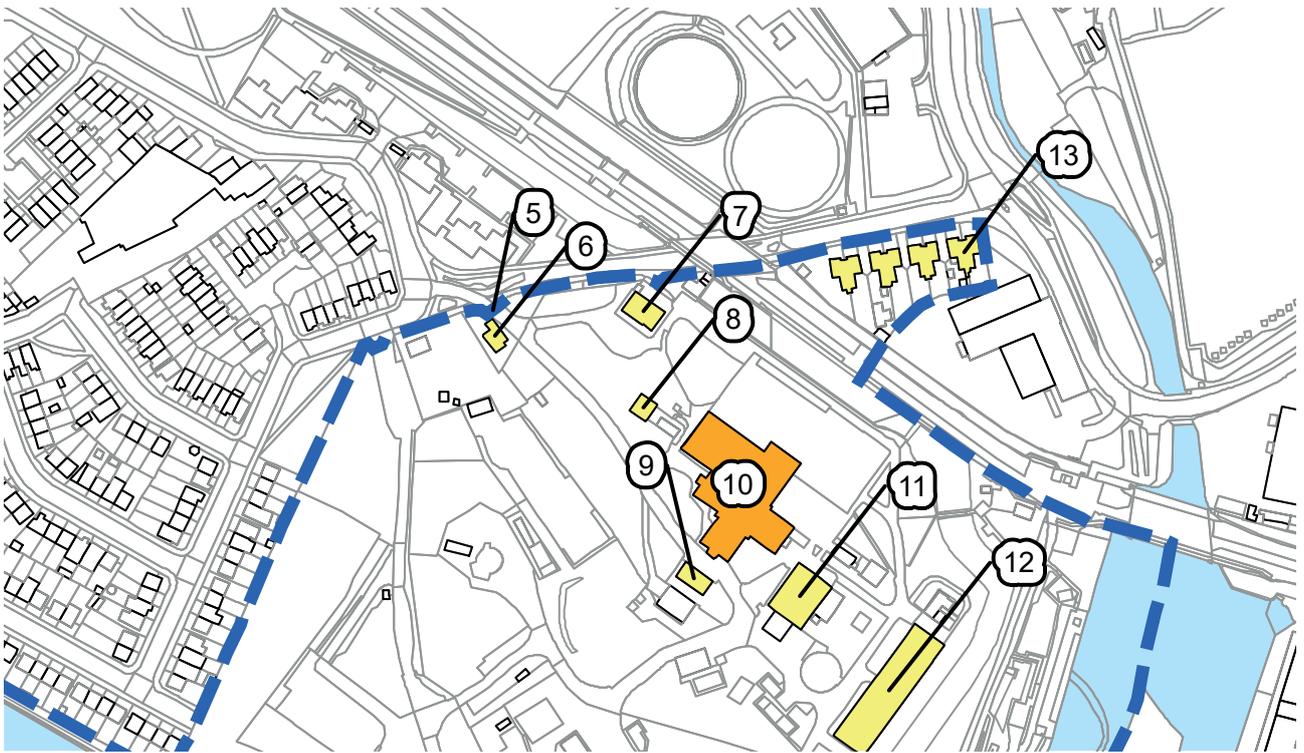


3



4





**5 Gates and Gatepiers at entrance to Abbey Mills Pumping Station**

Grade II

List Entry Number:

1357996

[historicengland.org.uk](http://historicengland.org.uk)

Significance: Historical and Architectural Interest, Group Value



**6 Gate Lodge at Abbey Mills**

Grade II

List Entry Number:

1080982

[historicengland.org.uk](http://historicengland.org.uk)

Significance: Historical and Architectural Interest, Group Value



(Image © Historic England)

7 **Offices (Former Superintendents House) at Abbey Mills**

Grade II

List Entry Number:

1080981

[historicengland.org.uk](http://historicengland.org.uk)

Significance: Historical and Architectural Interest,  
Group Value

*No image available*

8 **Bases of pair of Former Chimney Stacks at Abbey Mills Pumping Station**

Grade II

List Entry Number:

1357995

[historicengland.org.uk](http://historicengland.org.uk)

Significance: Historical and Architectural Interest,  
Group Value



*(Image: Flickr)*

9 **Stores Building to West of Pumping Station**

Grade II

List Entry Number:

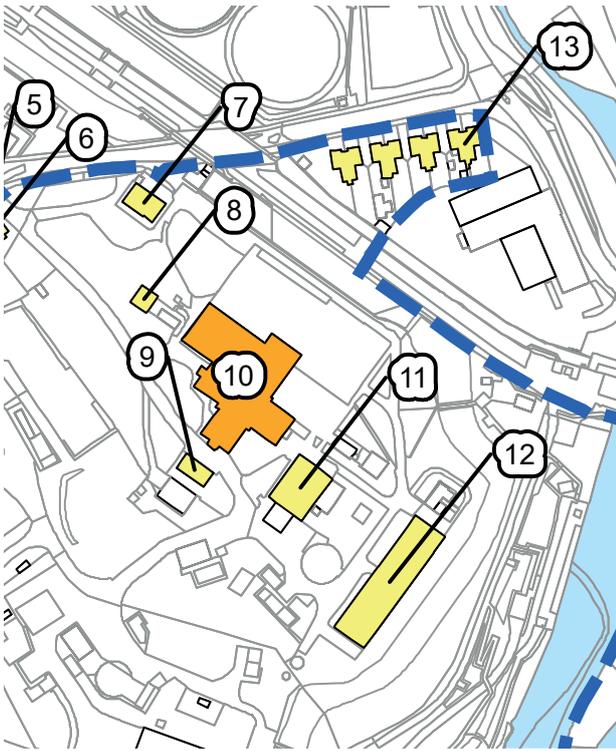
1080980

[historicengland.org.uk](http://historicengland.org.uk)

Significance: Historical and Architectural Interest,  
Group Value



*(Image © IoE Mr Colin Carron. Source Historic England Archive)*



## 10 Abbey Mills Pumping Station

Grade II\*

List Entry Number:

1190476

[historicengland.org.uk](http://historicengland.org.uk)

Significance: Historical and Architectural Interest,  
Group Value



11 **B station at Abbey Mills Pumping Station**

Grade II

List Entry Number:

1357994

[historicengland.org.uk](http://historicengland.org.uk)

Significance: Historical and Architectural Interest,  
Group Value



(Image © Historic England)

12 **C station with associated valve house, Abbey Mills Pumping Station**

Grade II

List Entry Number:

1392550

[historicengland.org.uk](http://historicengland.org.uk)

Significance: Historical and Architectural Interest,  
Group Value

*No image available*

13 **116-130, Abbey Lane**

Grade II

List Entry Number:

1080983

[historicengland.org.uk](http://historicengland.org.uk)

Significance: Historical and Architectural Interest,  
Group Value



### 3.5 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THREE MILLS SITE AND ABBEY MILLS PUMPING STATION SITE

The conservation area is essentially composed of two industrial complexes of markedly different architectural form and character, set within areas of open space. While distinct in character, the two areas share industrial functions owing to the site conditions they share, which are influenced by waterways and areas of undeveloped, open land.

The Three Mills and Abbey Mills site has a distinctive sense of place and setting as a whole due in part to its island character, surrounding canals, Channelsea creek and Abbey Creek and industrial architecture, structures and archaeology. There is separation between the Three Mills and Abbey Mills site provided by the river.

Abbey Mills is dominated by old and new sewage pumping stations which form part of its character and setting and which demonstrate its evolution and long history and continues to be a 'working site.'

*Opposite: View looking north along the Channelsea River which serves as a boundary between the two sites*



## 4 RELEVANT ISSUES

This chapter provides an overview of current issues within the CA which have been considered during this review of the appraisal and which should be considered during future reviews.

### **Future review of existing boundaries**

This appraisal combines two previously separate CA designations into one consolidated CA: that to the east within LB Newham and that to the west under LB Tower Hamlets.

It is considered that the current LB Newham boundary for the main part of the CA is appropriate and no changes are proposed.

The LB Tower Hamlets is designated as a separate conservation area under LB Tower Hamlets and its boundary comprises a small portion of land on the west side of the river. It was designated to 'control the impact of any potential development on Three Mills' and 'safeguard views from the east'. The current land use of this area is primarily as car park.

A conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest "the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance" Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The purpose of a conservation area designation is to help preserve or enhance the special character of the designated area. This area forms part of the setting of the main part of the conservation area. Policies within the NPPF allow for the setting of designated heritage assets to be considered in all planning decisions, to ensure their future protection. Elements such as open space and views from the east can be considered under setting impacts and future management guidelines.

Upon the completion of ongoing and future development in the surrounding area, a future review of the CA and its boundary should be considered in light of any impact of this development.

### **Designated and non-designated (locally listed) assets**

Existing designated and non-designated (locally listed) assets are identified within the accompanying appraisal map.

### **Impact of flood management**

The area has been subject to various flood defence schemes. In January 2015, a suite of flood defence works was undertaken by LLDC. This included refurbishment to the existing river walls as well as updating the flood defence standards at the site. In summary, the works involved increasing the flood resilience of the Grade II listed Clock Mill building through improvements to the building fabric and the modest upgrading of existing flood defence measures. The works also included undertaking works to improve flood resilience to the wider studio site, including various repairs to an area of historic river walling, the introduction of a new flood defence wall behind the studio's boundary wall, and flood resilience work in and along the edge of the river, within the Three Mills CA. Although the 2015 works resulted in some change to the area, the outcome of this work overall was that it was not harmful to the special interest of the Clock Mill, its setting or the significance and setting of the conservation area.

More recently in 2018 it was proposed to undertake a series of flood defence works, primarily centred on the construction of a new flood defence wall alongside 3 Mills Studios and repair of the existing wall and bridge to the south of the House Mill. These works are due to be completed in 2021. An identified issue on site was the presence of traditional paving 'lifting up' which may need further investigation as part of any site wide flood defence works. The House Mill in particular is subject to regular flooding.

It is possible that flood defences will need to be raised in the future and the character of the conservation area is potentially at risk as a result. Future assessment of flood mitigation and management should be continually reviewed.

### **Condition**

Based on visual inspection and site visits a number of heritage assets require review for potential restoration and repair.

The conservation area is registered as in a 'very bad' condition but with a 'significantly improving' trend.

### Maintenance of 3 Mills Studios

The 3 Mills Studios is a private production and film studio and is a secured facility separated from the surrounding Three Mills sites. There are specific issues with its maintenance as outlined below:

#### Graffiti

Graffiti is a prevailing issue in the area particularly in the 3 Mills Studios Area.

#### Entrance

Three Mill Lane is an important historic route which runs through this area across to the river to the east. There is an opportunity to improve the entrance to the 3 Mills Studio Complex from Three Mill Lane, which separates The House Mill and the East London Science School. Views through the two sections are curtailed by a security cabin and fencing and the identified 'positive' buildings within the studio complex are not readily visible nor appreciated from the wider setting and outside of the studios site. This diminishes important views through the conservation area.

#### Car parking and road surfaces

There is an opportunity to improve the setting of existing parking and/or provide a more co-ordinated parking approach at the site.

The car parking is currently hard-standing and does not accord with the visual aesthetic of the central cobbled lane through the Studios complex.

The cobbled lane running through the 3 Mills studio complex is subject to localised flood damage and subsidence. There is a need to ensure the long-term preservation of the cobbled lane.

#### Access

Public access is limited as the 3 Mills Studios is a private and secured. This diminishes the ability for the public to interpret and appreciate the significance of this particular part of the conservation area.

### Impact of redevelopment within the Conservation Area

- The spaces in between the buildings of the mill and studio complex, including the 'listed 'setts'', are an integral part of the character of the place. Every care should be taken to preserve these, both in fact and condition and enhance the CA by extending the yard nature of the urban grain, in appropriate materials, where possible.
- Within the studios complex, not all of the buildings and spaces contribute specifically to the 'special character' of the CA and there are opportunities for sensitive, appropriately scaled and finished development in keeping with the existing. One such area which provides an opportunity for sympathetic redevelopment is the 3 Mills Studio complex and associated car parking.

*Below: View looking west towards Sugar House Island from the western boundary of the Three Mills CA*



### Impact of redevelopment within the Surrounding Area (setting)

- The local context is dramatically changing, with 3 Mills Studios at the centre of an emerging town centre. The site is surrounded by four significant developments: Vastint's Strand East (now known as Sugar House Island); Southern Housing's Bow River Village; the former Parcellforce site (Site Allocation S11 – LBN Local Plan 2018) and Bromley-by-Bow South Masterplan Area, which together will deliver c.7,500 new homes, as well as new commercial uses, improved connectivity with new pedestrian crossings over the A12, supported by new bus routes and a reconfigured tube station.

*Below: View looking north-west towards Sugar House Island from the western boundary of the Three Mills CA*

*Opposite: View north from the footbridge crossing into the Three Mills CA from the north towards new development within the Sugar House Lane CA*

- The nearby Sugar House Lane has been subject to significant change as part of the Sugar House Island development.
- The conservation area on the west bank of the river performs a valuable function in providing separation and screening from the development site beyond. It is considered however, that this is important for 'setting' considerations only. The character of the conservation area is potentially at risk by virtue of impact on its setting from this aspect of regeneration of the wider area; however, as discussed above, current planning policy allows for the setting of designated heritage assets to be considered in all planning decisions to ensure their future protection.
- Development opportunities to the west and north of the CA – in the west, unused land south of Tesco and associated car park, may provide opportunities for sympathetic redevelopment in the setting of Three Mills. The Bromley by Bow Masterplan will see redevelopment of the entire area to the south of the Bow River Village development and there are recent planning permissions for redevelopment of two sites to the south of the Tesco store land.





# 5 MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of these Management Guidelines is to help ensure that proposals for development achieve the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area's special architectural and historic interest through restoration and refurbishment, redevelopment and management.

The Management Guidelines outlined in the 2006 LB Newham appraisal and the 2007 LB Tower Hamlets appraisal continue to be relevant as part of this revised appraisal. The content of these previous appraisals is acknowledged. The guidelines have also addressed recent issues in the area discussed in Section 4 above and specifically concern those issues around the 3 Mills Studios complex.

This revised appraisal document provides landowners, businesses, residents and developers within the area guidance on how to protect the special architectural and historic interest, while encouraging high quality new development and sensitive restoration and refurbishments that respond sensitively to the historic context.

The conservation area will be regularly reviewed to consider any further amendments to its boundaries or the designation of heritage assets within it.

## 5.2 GUIDANCE ON APPLICATIONS

Within a conservation area, planning permission may be required for what might otherwise be considered permitted development or minor works. The demolition of any building or structure within a conservation area requires consent. Controls also exist over certain works to trees. All works to trees in the conservation area should be notified in advance to the planning authority.

Almost the entire conservation area is within an Archaeological Priority Area and developers and statutory undertakers are encouraged to consult with the planning authority prior to undertaking any groundwork.

When deciding the merits of applications in the conservation area, the planning authority will pay special attention to whether the character and appearance of the area and its setting is preserved or enhanced.

## 5.3 POLICIES RELEVANT TO THE CONSERVATION AREA

All development within a conservation area should have regard to national, regional and local planning policy.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) sets out the Government's planning policies for England. It contains national policies relating to the conservation of heritage assets.

The London Plan 2021 is the relevant regional planning policy for the area.

Policy HC1 *Heritage Conservation and Growth* seeks to ensure the preservation of heritage assets and their setting and notes that conservation areas make a significant contribution to local character and should be protected from inappropriate development. Substantial harm to or loss of an asset should be exceptional.

The LLDC Local Plan 2020 to 2036 (adopted July 2020) includes the borough's local policies for the protection of heritage assets including conservation areas and their setting.

Section 13 of the LLDC Local Plan includes a vision for the surrounding area ('Sub Area 4') including Bromley-by-Bow, Pudding Mill, Sugar House Lane and Mill Meads, to be an area of new business and residential communities that will have been sensitively and excellently designed, taking account of the historic waterside settings and the heritage assets within and around the conservation areas.

Site Allocation 4 provides development principles to ensure that renewal of facilities needed to maximise opportunities of the site is focussed on preserving the character afforded by the heritage environment. These include protection and enhancement of the conservation area, proportionality of new development against existing heritage assets and protection of key views from the conservation area.

## 5.4 OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT

### Issues

Those issues prevalent to the conservation area are described in Section 4 above. Opportunities for enhancement to the conservation area are provided below which may help in removing the CA from the risk register.

### Opportunities

There is an opportunity to enhance the character and appearance of Three Mills CA as follows:

- The spaces in between the buildings of the mill and studio complex, including the listed setts, are an integral part of the character of the place. Every care should be taken to preserve these, both in fact and condition and enhance the CA by extending the yard nature of the urban grain, in appropriate materials, where possible.
- Within the studios complex, not all of the buildings and spaces contribute specifically to the 'special character' of the CA and there are opportunities for sensitive, appropriately scaled and finished development in keeping with the existing. The heritage assets within the Three Mills CA can positively influence the urban design and architectural quality of any new development which, together, can enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- There is an opportunity to enhance the use of the area and heritage assets within the area for education and heritage interpretation. Reinstatement of the heritage machinery to working order, development of an education program and arts and culture centre, and an enhanced heritage interpretation signage strategy for the area should be considered.

- There are opportunities for enhanced gateways and views to and from the conservation area from surrounding development (currently implemented Sugar House Island and Bromley by Bow).
- Opportunities for increased visitor access should be considered. Improvements to street surfaces and lighting should be reviewed along with any proposal for visitor access, which would not be detrimental to the significance of the area.
- There are opportunities to improve the River Lee towpath walking and cycling route in the area over and around Three Mills Lane Bridge as it crosses from the west to the east bank of the river.
- There is an opportunity to improve the entrance to the 3 Mills Studio Complex from Three Mill Lane which separates The House Mill and the East London Science School. There is an opportunity to enhance the view through the conservation area.



*Opposite above: Looking towards the 3 Mills Studio complex from Three Mill Lane*

*Opposite below: Existing alley between Clock Mill (right) and 3 Mills Studio building*

## 5.5 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

### General principles

In determining applications for planning permission relating to any land or buildings in a conservation area, the planning authority is required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of that area. Policies in respect to the preservation or enhancement of heritage assets and their special interest are contained within the LLDC Local Plan 2020 – 2036.

New development offers the opportunity to enhance the conservation area. Hence, high quality contemporary architecture that is sensitive to the existing heritage assets is encouraged. Proposals should demonstrate how they will preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area and setting of listed buildings.

New designs are encouraged that respect the scale, form, materials, setting, and relationships between buildings and established spatial typologies – for example, the scale and form of yards and the relationship between buildings and the canals. This does not preclude the sensitive juxtaposition of forms and materials.

Three Mills and its setting have a distinctive sense of place that is due, in part, to its island character, surrounding canals, Channelsea creek and Abbey Creek and industrial architecture, structures and archaeology. New developments should have regards to its unique character.

The variety of historic building forms and architectural details which are evident across the wider Three Mills and Abbey Mills area should be used to inform the design of any new developments.

The Lea Valley will be experiencing considerable new development in the coming years. When considering development nearby, the setting of the conservation area must be carefully taken account of.

*Opposite above: View east towards the Three Mills sit from Three Mill Lane*

*Opposite below right: Grade II listed road surface to the front of House Mill*

*Opposite below left: Grade II listed road surface to the front of House Mill*

Future development should consider the following aspects:

### Presumption against demolition

There is a presumption in national planning policy against the demolition or partial-demolition of any heritage asset or of any structure identified as contributing positively to the character and appearance of a conservation area or its setting.

### Form of new development

The conservation area is essentially composed of two industrial complexes of markedly different architectural form and character, set within areas of open space. The form of new development should respect the existing significant historical development on the site.

### Grain and plot size

The existing street pattern, yard typologies and plot sizes reveal the historic grain and morphology of the area. Any new development should preserve and respond to this pattern and strengthen it where past demolitions or more recent buildings that contribute negatively to the area have eroded it.

### Streets and yards

Three Mill Lane is currently the principal street in the conservation area; however, the street has limited and restricted access to the 3 Mills Studio complex site. There is no access to the Abbey Mills Area.

The high quality of the historic paving is a key characteristic of this area, and new developments should give special attention to the quality of the public realm.

### Height and scale

New development that responds positively to the characteristic height, scale and massing of heritage assets, and which successfully relates to the area's streets, yards, waterways and human scale will enhance the overall character of the area.

Any proposals should respect the scale and presence of the historic mill buildings, particularly those closest to the river. New development should not mimic the architectural style or details of the mill buildings, but should be high quality, and reflect the robustness, simplicity and attention to detail of the historic industrial buildings.



### Landmarks, views and legibility

The setting of the conservation area is very important and development that impacts in a detrimental way upon the immediate setting and longer views, into and from the conservation area, should be resisted. In contrast, high quality development that preserves or enhances the setting of the area will be encouraged. Where any impacts do arise from development, these will be considered in the context of any public benefit that the proposals may provide. The important views are identified on the Townscape Analysis Map (p. 29).

Buildings provide focal points within the conservation area. In particular, the clock tower and drying kilns of the Clock Mill and the lantern and iron finial of station A of the Abbey Pumping Station, provide the principal focal points. Long views from the north east ('Greenway' and grassy knoll at the north east corner of the recreation ground) are dominated by the Bromley Gas Works to the south and the distinctive tower of Canary Wharf in the distance. Views are principally obtained from the bridges which cross the various watercourses and from the higher ground associated with the 'Greenway' embankment. From these points, vistas are obtained along the various watercourses.

All new development should serve to respect these important views and longer views of landmarks within the area as seen from further away.

### Active frontages and permeability

The creation of additional access to and activation along the waterside would enhance the character of the conservation area.

### Character & Use

The site includes a range of uses and facilities. Any new development should be proportionate and in keeping with the range of creative and business uses on site. New proposals should compliment existing employment uses.

*Opposite above: View north-west along the Greenway terminating in views of the Olympic Park*

*Opposite middle: View north from the Three Mills wall river weir towards Sugar House Island*

*Opposite below: View south from the Three Mills Lock towards the listed gas holders*





## Public realm

The majority of the public realm in the area is composed of informal footpaths and recreation space. Much of this is appropriately maintained as semi-natural areas with low levels of intervention. Significant work along the northern bank of the Channelsea River was undertaken in the late 1980's to improve the area for casual recreation and wildlife. This included land reclamation, laying of footpaths, planting and informal recreation facilities. The footpath on top of the Northern Outfall Sewer, now re-named "The Greenway", won a Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) award. Vandalism and poor maintenance have detracted from these areas. The formal approach into the Three Mills area from Three Mill Lane and Sugar House Lane is marked by the use of high quality granite cobble surfacing and setts. These materials provide tangible evidence of specific aspects of the functional history of the industrial complex, with a horizontal stratigraphy reflecting the cumulative development and alteration of these surfaces over time. These lie in contrast to the entrance from Abbey Lane that has modern surfacing in artificial materials and inappropriate highway works to obstruct the road beneath the line of the Greenway Bridge.



The brick horse ramps taking the Lee Navigation tow-path across the turnover bridge at Three Mill Lane are classic, albeit early 20th-century, features of the inland waterways and are reminders of a working tradition based around equine motive power.



Much of the public realm in the area is dedicated to informal recreation space. The semi-natural areas, along the banks of the watercourses are particularly attractive and rare in inner London. The management of these areas is essential to ensure that they remain attractive to visitors and wildlife. The Lea Valley Rivers Trust currently fundraises and works with local volunteers to manage these areas.

*Opposite above: Footpath adjacent to the River Lea north of Three Mill Lane*

*Opposite middle: View south from the Greenway over Abbey Creek with Canary Wharf seen in the distance*

*Opposite below: The rear of the listed Abbey Lane houses as seen from the Greenway provide a distinctive roofscape from this position*

The River Lea itself is an important key open space, and part of a much longer network of open space running north to south along the eastern edge of the Borough. All trees in conservation areas are protected, and some trees are also covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO).

The public realm should be conserved and protected, with opportunities for enhancement considered. In expanding the use of traditional surface materials, care must be taken to delineate, and preserve the legibility of, those areas of extant historic surfacing.

### **Materials and Detailing**

The mills and adjacent houses have a ‘Georgian’ character derived from brick elevations with gauged brick arches and multi-paned sash windows, set in reveals. The Clock Tower comprises Gothic sash windows and doors with interlacing glazing bars. Both roof slating and plain clay tiles are used for roofing materials.

The Abbey Mills Pumping Station is detailed in an eclectic high Victorian hybrid style. The principal nineteenth century stations are faced in yellow brick with polychrome and freestone detailing.

The former Nicholson’s distillery complex is elevated in a simple, classically derived style and yellow stock brickwork. Ashlar detailing is restricted to principal door surrounds, impostes and cornices.

Any proposals should respect the traditional and historic materiality, detailing and fenestration patterns of historic buildings within the conservation area.

### **Signage**

Signage is not a typical part of the distinctiveness of the area and will be considered carefully.

The character of a conservation area can be seriously eroded through the installation of inappropriate signs. When designing signs, it is important to consider the building as a whole, using colours, materials, scale, locations and form that complement buildings and that respect the character, appearance and setting of heritage assets.

### **Graffiti and Clutter**

Bin stores, electricity substations, ventilation ducts etc. should be sympathetically located and obscured/ screened from view.

Graffiti should continue to be monitored and removed sensitively so as to not damage the delicate fabric of historic buildings.

### **Site Allocation 4, LLDC Local Plan 2020-2036**

In addition to the principles set out above, new proposals should demonstrate how they will contribute to the overall vision of this sub area, referencing plans for the wider area, such as the Bromley-by-Bow SPD, the Bromley-By-Bow master plan and the Sugar house Lane CA.

### **3 Mills Studios Area**

The maintenance of 3 Mills Studios complex requires specific care.

- Graffiti is a prevailing issue in the area and all efforts to secure the facility should be ongoing and monitored.
- Whilst it is acknowledged that vehicular parking and access is required for the continued use of the site as filming studios, this should not compromise the significance of the area or remaining historic fabric. Future management opportunities should seek to explore parking and access across the site to mitigate any potential conflict of use.

## 5.6 MONITORING CHANGE AND ENFORCEMENT

A record of changes within the area should be kept including the use of dated photographic surveys of street frontages and of significant buildings and views, taken every five years.

The contribution of the local community in managing conservation areas is recognised and the opportunity to work collaboratively is welcomed.

Appropriate enforcement action will be taken against any unauthorised works to heritage assets within the conservation area. It should be noted that the conservation area as an entity is a designated heritage asset.

The demolition of an unlisted building in a conservation area, without the consent of the local planning authority, is a criminal offence.

## 5.7 TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS

Notice must be given to the authority before works are carried out to any tree in the conservation area, and some works require specific permission. Carrying out works to trees without the necessary approval can be a criminal offence, and early requests for advice are welcomed.

# 6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## 6.2 OTHER SOURCES

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# 7 GLOSSARY

Heritage asset	A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. Heritage assets are the valued components of the historic environment. They include designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
Designated heritage asset	<p>“A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.”</p> <p>Annex 2: Glossary, National Planning Policy Framework, Department of Communities &amp; Local Government, 2019.</p>
Non-designated heritage asset	<p>“Non-designated heritage assets are ‘buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by local planning authorities as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which are not formally designated.’”</p> <p>Historic England Advice Note 7: Local Heritage Listing.</p>
Built heritage	Upstanding structure of historic interest.
Conservation area	An area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Designation by the local authority often includes controls over the demolition of buildings; strengthened controls over minor development; and special provision for the protection of trees.
Principles of selection for listed buildings	<p>“This document sets out the statutory criteria and general principles that the Secretary of State applies when deciding whether a building is of special architectural or historic interest and should therefore be added to the list of buildings compiled under section 1 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (“the 1990 Act”). The Secretary of State takes into account these criteria and general principles when considering his decision.”</p> <p>Principles of Selection, Department for Culture, Media &amp; Sport, 2018, p3</p>
Significance	<p>1) ‘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.’</p> <p>Annex 2: Glossary, National Planning Policy Framework, Department of Communities and Local Government, 2019</p> <p>2) “The sum of the cultural and natural heritage values of a place, often set out in a statement of significance.”</p> <p>p72 Conservation Principles, English Heritage, 2008.</p>
Setting	<p>1) “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.”</p> <p>Annex 2: Glossary, National Planning Policy Framework, Department of Communities and Local Government, 2019</p> <p>2) “The surroundings in which a place is experienced, its local context, embracing present and past relationships to the adjacent landscape.”</p> <p>P 72, Conservation Principles, English Heritage, 2008.</p> <p>3) “The setting of a heritage structure, site or area is defined as the immediate and extended environment that is part of, or contributes to, its significance and distinctive character. Beyond the physical and visual aspects, the setting includes interaction with the natural environment; past or present social or spiritual practices, customs, traditional knowledge, use or activities and other forms of intangible cultural heritage aspects that created and form the space as well as the current and dynamic cultural, social and economic context.”</p> <p>Xi’an Declaration on the Conservation of the Setting of Heritage Structures, Sites and Areas, ICOMOS, 2005.</p>

