

Greenwich Park

Conservation Area Appraisal



2010

Greenwich Park Conservation Area Appraisal

Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Planning policy context	3
3.	Historical development	5
4.	Special interest and character assessment	7
5.	Appendix: useful information and contact details	55



I. Introduction

Greenwich Park was designated as a conservation area in 1970 and is one of five conservation areas in the western part of the London Borough of Greenwich that are currently being re-examined.

This report was produced by Urban Practitioners for the London Borough of Greenwich and English Heritage. A companion report, Greenwich and Blackheath Conservation Areas Management Strategy and Conservation Guidance, complements this study.



Greenwich Park: Definition of special interest

Greenwich Park and the Old Royal Naval College are at the heart of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage site and thus, in UNESCO's terms, a site of 'outstanding universal value'. The site meets three of the criteria laid down by the World Heritage Committee:

- Masterpieces of creative genius (as represented by the Queen's House by Inigo Jones, the Old Royal Naval College plans and key buildings by Sir Christopher Wren and others);
- An outstanding example of a type of building or architectural ensemble or landscape which illustrates a significant stage in human history; and
- Direct or tangible association with events or living traditions, with ideas or beliefs, or outstanding literary or artistic works (Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site Management Plan First Review, December 2004).

The area is of exceptional historic, architectural and topographic importance.

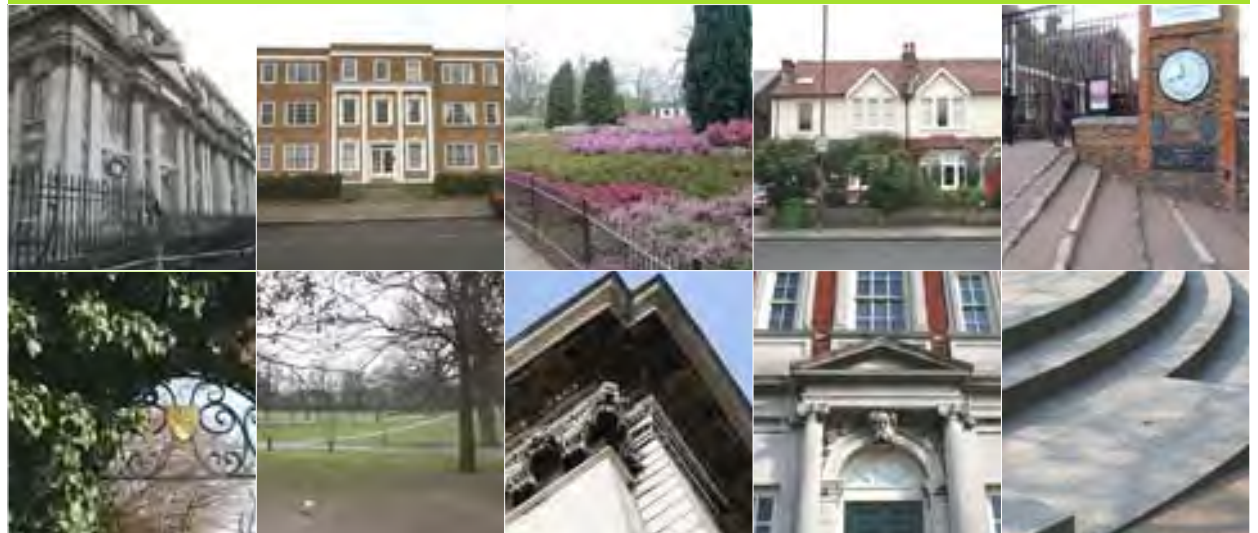
Its historical significance is threefold:

- As the site of a Tudor Royal Palace, long demolished but of considerable historical significance as the birthplace of Henry VIII, Mary and Elizabeth I;
- As the location of the Royal Naval Hospital, founded by William and Mary in 1694; and
- As the site chosen for the Royal Observatory.

Its architectural interest is as follows:

- The Queen's House, widely regarded as one of the most important buildings in the history of English architecture and the spark of Palladianism;
- The Old Royal Naval College, planned by John Webb and Christopher Wren creating the finest composition of baroque buildings in the country, with the Painted Hall as its most celebrated interior; and
- The evolution of the observatory buildings within Greenwich Park over a period of three centuries.

The topography provided the inspiration for the axial planning of the Old Royal Naval Hospital and the siting of the Observatory, as well as the outstanding views that can be enjoyed from the escarpment.





Nelson statue, Park Row



Figure 1.1. Boundary of Greenwich Park Conservation Area

Greenwich Park Conservation Area Appraisal

2. Planning policy context

This appraisal is a non-statutory planning document but it relates to, and should be read with, current national, regional and local planning policy.

The key documents are referred to below.

National planning policy

Since 1967 there has been a legal duty for all local authorities to designate as conservation areas those parts of its area that are of "special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". There are currently 20 conservation areas in the London Borough of Greenwich.

Many conservation areas, but not all, are centred on listed buildings. English Heritage lists buildings of special architectural or historic interest on behalf of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. The Secretary of State is also responsible for the scheduling of ancient monuments and the registering of historic parks and gardens.

Planning Policy Statement PPS5, Planning for the Historic Environment, sets out current government policy on conservation.

UNESCO inscribed Maritime Greenwich as a World Heritage Site in 1997. Greenwich Park Conservation Area falls within the 'buffer zone' around the inscribed area and the impact of new development on the setting of the World Heritage Site is a material consideration when planning permission is being sought. An updated Management Plan for the World Heritage Site was issued in 2004.

Circular 07/2009 gives advice on the consideration of Outstanding Universal Values in relation to the protection of World Heritage Sites. In particular, Outstanding Universal Values are highlighted as material

considerations in determining planning applications and appeals. In this context the advice emphasises the need for appropriate policies in local core strategies and management plans for each site. Such policies should be concerned with promoting change that will preserve and enhance the Outstanding Universal Values of the Site. World Heritage Site status is a key material consideration in the determination of these policies.

English Heritage has produced guidance for the protection and management of the World Heritage Sites in England which accompanies Circular 07/09. The guidance has been endorsed by Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

Circular 01/06: Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System includes the requirement for Design and Access Statements to accompany planning applications, including those within a conservation area or World Heritage Site. The Circular also sets out what should be included within a Design and Access Statement.

Regional policy

The principal regional policy is contained within the Mayor of London's London Plan (the Spatial Development Strategy). The Mayor undertakes to work with strategic partners to protect and enhance London's historic environment (Policy 4B.10) and expects Boroughs to ensure that the protection and enhancement of historic assets in London is based on their special character (Policy 4B.11). The Plan also includes a commitment to protecting World Heritage Sites and safeguarding or enhancing their setting (Policy 4B.13). The London Plan and Supplementary Planning Guidance also contains proposals for protecting and managing strategic views, including those of central London from Greenwich Park and Blackheath Point.

The Mayor has produced a draft replacement London Plan, which was open for public consultation between October 2009 and January 2010. The policies addressing the historic environment in the draft replacement London Plan are broadly in line with those contained in the consolidated London Plan. The draft replacement London Plan will undergo an Examination in Public in the summer and autumn of 2010, with the Mayor looking to publish the replacement London Plan towards the end of 2011.

Local policy

Greenwich Council has started work on a new statutory plan, the Local Development Framework (LDF). This will comprise a suite of documents that will eventually replace the current Greenwich Unitary Development Plan (UDP).

The Greenwich UDP was adopted in 2006 and in July 2009 the Government Office for London (GOL) issued a direction to extend the life of most of the UDP policies and site proposals.

The UDP contains detailed policies for the period to 2011 and in some instances to 2016.

The following policies are of particular relevance to development in and around conservation areas.

TC7 The Council will protect and enhance the site and setting of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site, as defined on the Proposals Map. Development within it should preserve and enhance its essential and unique character and appearance. Views and vistas to and from the World Heritage Site will also be protected by ensuring that developments in the buffer zone of the Site or directly visible from it are visually sympathetic.

DI6 Planning permission will only be granted for proposals which preserve or enhance the character or

appearance of conservation areas, taking into account local scale, the established pattern of development and landscape, building form and materials. Where the character of a conservation area is threatened by inappropriate development, the Council will seek to control these through the use of Article 4 Directions. Development on sites in the vicinity of a conservation area and which would have a visual effect on its character or appearance, should respect the setting of that area.

The UDP also contains specific policies for siting telecommunications equipment and satellite dishes, as well as for the design of shopfronts, signs, street furniture and advertisements.

D17 Demolition of buildings and structures which positively contribute to the character or appearance of a conservation area will be resisted. Conservation Area Consent for the demolition of buildings will normally be given only when planning permission has been granted for redevelopment which complies with the requirements of Policy D16. When demolition is permitted it will be subject to the building remaining until a contract for redevelopment is let.

D18 There will be a presumption in favour of the preservation of listed buildings. Listed Building Consent will only be granted for demolition or partial demolition in exceptional circumstances and will be assessed against the following criteria:

- i. the condition of the building and the cost of repairs relative to its importance.
- ii. the adequacy of efforts made to retain the building in use.
- iii. the merits of alternative proposals for the site.

D21 Proposals for changes of use of listed buildings will only be granted planning permission if it is no longer in its original or other established historic use and the new

use is beneficial to the building and is compatible with its character and features of historic interest. Such a change of use should not conflict with other policies in the Plan.

D22 The Council will assist English Heritage to maintain and revise regularly a Register of Listed Buildings at Risk from neglect and decay. The Council will promote action, including the use of building repair notices and urgent works notices where appropriate, to bring about the reuse and repair of buildings on the register.

D23 The Council will give substantial weight to protecting and conserving the special character of buildings on the Local List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest, with every effort made to secure their long-term retention, maintenance and use.

3. Historical development

There have been few prehistoric finds in Greenwich but archaeological discoveries in the Park confirm a Roman presence in the area. The main road from London to Dover, Watling Street, crossed over Shooters Hill and although there is no conclusive evidence of a major Roman settlement, there is likely to have been some traffic on the river front towards Deptford. Much of the Greenwich area was heavily quarried, extracting chalk for the formation of barge beds on the river shore as well as for lime burning. From the medieval period, gravel was extracted for ships' ballast and clay brickearth was taken for brick and tilemaking.

Burial mounds in Greenwich Park, once thought to be Bronze Age, are now believed to be Saxon and the Church of St Alfege marks the site of the martyrdom of the Saxon saint. At East Greenwich, excavations in 1997 on the river front at Highbridge Wharf revealed pit and stake holes of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and a well that suggested a higher status settlement in the vicinity. (Journal of the Greenwich Historical Society Vol I No 6, p180)

The conservation area is of exceptional archaeological significance as the site of a major royal palace. King Edgar granted lands at Greenwich in 964 AD to the Abbey of St Peter in Ghent. The Flemish connection lasted until 1414 when the estate was repossessed by Henry V. By this time Eltham Palace was already occupied and the first royal presence at Greenwich was that of Humphrey Duke of Gloucester; uncle of Henry VI, who inherited the estate in 1433 and built the first manor house. Duke Humphrey also built a fortified tower on the hill above the palace, on the site of the present Royal Observatory. The lands passed to the Crown in 1447 and were given to Margaret of Anjou and was followed by a formal royal seat on the Greenwich waterfront, later to become the site of the Seaman's Royal Naval Hospital. Substantial works were carried out by Henry VII and Henry VIII, who was born at Greenwich and married Katherine of Aragon and Anne of Cleves here. Henry's daughters



Figure 3.1 Greenwich Park historical development - 1866 historical map with present day overlay

Mary and Elizabeth were also born in Greenwich.

The Woolwich Road ran to the south of the palace, carrying the main route between London and Dover. The oldest survivor above ground of the Royal Palace is the Italianate Queen's House, designed by Inigo Jones for Anne of Denmark, who had been given Greenwich in 1613, and completed in 1635 for the wife of Charles I, Queen Henrietta Maria. The Queen's House was built over the old Greenwich to Woolwich road to link the Palace gardens to the Royal Park. A radical departure from the character of the Tudor palace, the Queen's House was to have a profound effect on the replanning of Greenwich and more widely, on architectural taste across England.

After the Civil War the Royal Palace fell into decline. On the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Charles II decided to replace the buildings with a new palace, retaining the Queen's House. John Webb's plan was for a three-sided, formal courtyard on the axis of the Queen's House and kept open to the river. Work started but only the western range, the King Charles Building, was completed (1664-9). By 1694 William and Mary were on the throne and favoured Hampton Court rather than Greenwich as their residence; in its place, Mary pursued an idea first advanced by James II for a Royal Naval Hospital for retired sailors, modelled on the lines of the Chelsea Hospital (1687) and Les Invalides (1676).

In 1694 Christopher Wren was invited to prepare plans, which were gradually implemented over the next fifty years. The Webb axis was retained, but the view was opened up to connect the Queen's House to the river. The Hospital opened in 1705, closing in 1869 to be replaced in 1873 by the Royal Naval College, which moved from Portsmouth.

Behind the Palace, Greenwich Park had been first enclosed by Duke Humphrey in the fifteenth century, and

was later defined by a brick wall built in 1619 during the reign of James I. Late in the seventeenth century Charles II commissioned Andre le Notre, Louis XIV's gardener at Versailles, to replan the grounds as a formal park, with straight avenues up the hill and a flight of steps up the escarpment in line with the Queen's House. Only vestiges of the Le Notre design survive. The park was opened to the public in the eighteenth century and helped to make Greenwich one of London's most fashionable outer suburbs, spurring the growth of West Grove, Maze Hill and Crooms Hill and the mansions edging Blackheath. On the eastern side of the Park, Sir John Vanbrugh, one of the architects of the Royal Naval Hospital, built his own house (Vanbrugh Castle, 1719) in a characteristically individual form.

Within the Park itself the most significant development was the establishment of the Royal Observatory, on a site proposed by Wren for its clean air and elevated position. Wren's Observatory building was built for the Astronomer Royal in 1675 and remains the principal landmark on the Park skyline, despite the presence of larger and more recent observatories to the south.

The most impressive interior in Greenwich is Wren's Painted Hall, with monumental murals by Sir James Thornhill completed in 1727. The chapel opposite the Painted Hall was gutted by fire and subsequently remodelled by James (Athenian) Stuart in 1779-89. Stuart was also responsible for the Hospital infirmary of 1763, later to become the Dreadnought Hospital.

In 1807 the Queen's House was flanked by much larger buildings and linked to them by colonnades. These buildings included a school transferred from Paddington for the children of naval men, and in 1874 a gymnasium and assembly hall. All of these are now part of the National Maritime Museum which opened in 1937. From 1800 onwards, Greenwich to the east of the park was consolidating and became an established suburb when the railway line from Greenwich was tunnelled

beneath the College and a station opened in 1874 at Maze Hill. The Trafalgar Quarters on Park Row were built in 1813 and at this time, the boundary of the hospital was moved westwards. The gates were dismantled and re-erected at the head of College Approach.

As part of the improvements to the town centre by the Greenwich Hospital the Old Dover Road, which at one time ran beneath the Queen's House, was rerouted to the north to create Romney Road in 1697-99. After 1825 the road was later extended at each end, forming Nelson Road and Trafalgar Road.

Greenwich Park was opened to the public in 1830 by George IV and drew thousands of visitors to the town.

In the twentieth century the principal changes to the area were the building of the Nurses' Home (Sir Edwin Cooper, 1929) and, less positively, the demolition of George Basevi's St Mary's Church. The site was marked by a statue of William III that was moved from the City of London.

After the Second World War the Royal Observatory relocated to Herstmonceux in Sussex and the buildings are now in the care of the National Maritime Museum. In 1998 the Royal Navy left Greenwich and part of the former College is now managed by a charitable foundation. Following a comprehensive programme of repair and conversion, the buildings are now in use by Greenwich University and the Trinity College of Music. Much of the area is now open to the public.

4. Special interest and character assessment

Greenwich is situated on the southern bend of a deep loop of the Thames facing the Isle of Dogs, six miles south east of London. Greenwich Park Conservation Area, roughly rectangular in shape, extends from the Thames to the edge of Blackheath. It separates East and West Greenwich and has only one public vehicular route across it, Romney Road, although there are footpaths along the river, through the park and across the Old Royal Naval College.

The geology of Greenwich has been described thus: "The underlying geology consists of river terrace deposits, primarily sands and gravels. The highest points of the World Heritage Site lie on a level plateau of coarse pebbles and sands, which stretches south to Blackheath. The northern edge of this shelf or terrace is marked by a steep unstable escarpment, which drops some thirty metres, or nearly one hundred feet, across an outcrop of sands and loams interlaced with seams of clay. The seeping of water through the permeable Blackheath beds produced springs at the junction with the clay and led to the appearance over time of distinctive valleys. The foot of the slope covers a narrow outcrop of Thanet sands, which are mostly masked by sand and gravel Ice Age deposits."

(Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site Management Plan, 2004)

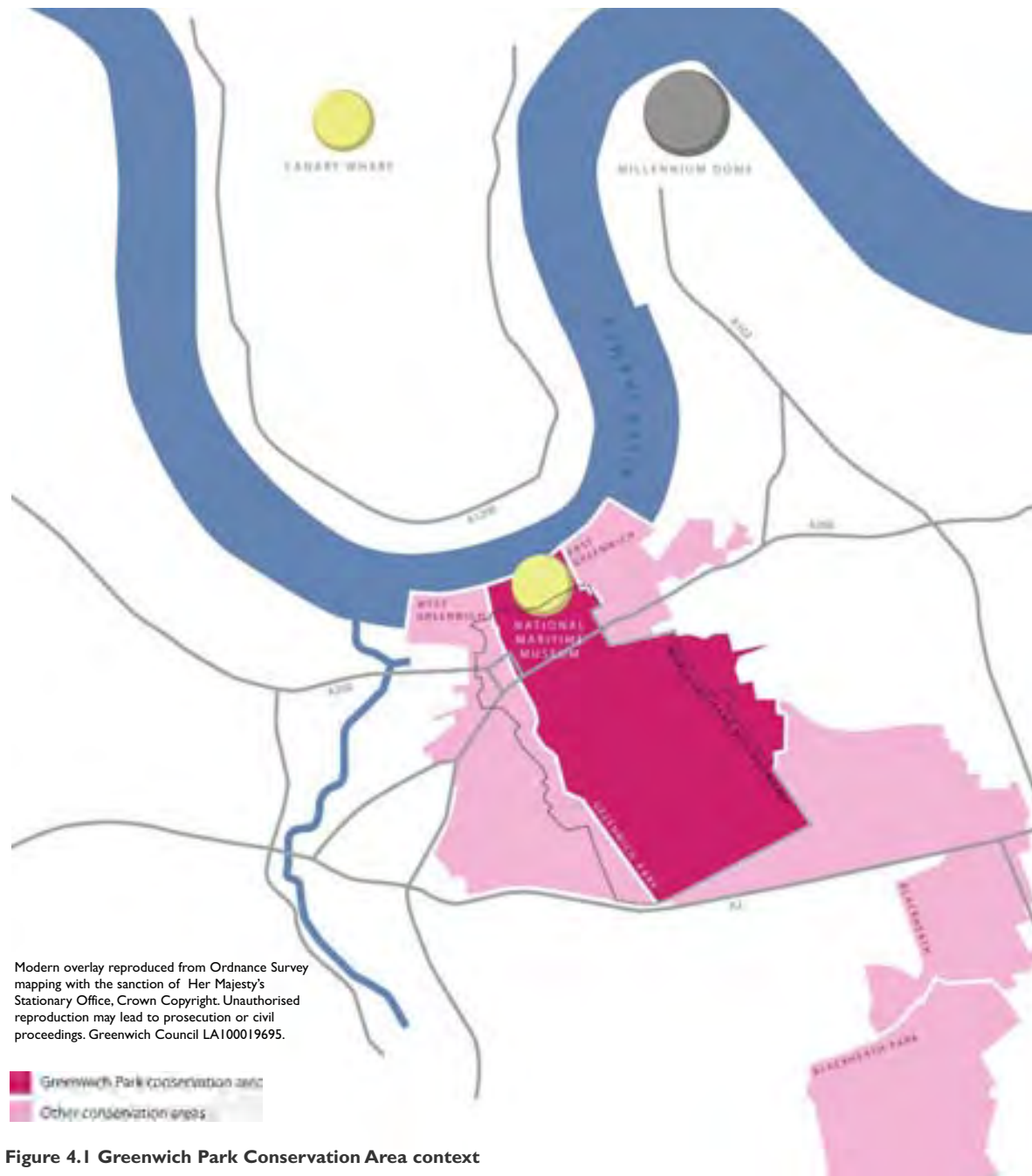


Figure 4.1 Greenwich Park Conservation Area context

General character and urban form

The plan opposite demonstrates the open grain of the conservation area. The Park itself dominates, but there are also generous spaces around the Old Royal Naval College and the Maritime Museum. The formal grid plan of the principal institutions is also evident and their substantial footprints are the equivalents of entire streets or terraces in the adjacent conservation areas.

The Baroque composition on the axis of the Queen's House is particularly notable. By contrast, Maze Hill and Park Vista are linear, fine grained and domestic in character, punctuated by large buildings including the John Roan School and Vanbrugh Castle.



Figure 4.2 Urban form

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Key landmarks and views

The general character of the conservation area can readily be perceived from the Wolfe Monument in Greenwich Park. The statue is erected at the crown of the escarpment, from which there is an outstanding panorama across the Park over the roofs of Greenwich, towards central London. Canary Wharf exerts its might, but the symmetrical, formal composition of the Queen's House, Old Royal Naval College and National Maritime Museum on the axis of Blackheath Avenue still impresses. The land falls away, steeply at first, then gently shelves towards the Thames.

The vista of the former Royal Naval Hospital through to the Queen's House from Island Gardens on the north bank of the Thames is also impressive, famous from Canaletto's painting from the 1750s. The outline of Flamsteed House on the skyline marks the rim of the escarpment.

Closer in, the waterfront offers a sequence of fine views of the front of the Queen Anne and King Charles buildings, especially from the west. The transverse axis can also be appreciated looking from College Approach through the re-sited gates to the pediment of the Trafalgar Quarters.

From King William Walk there is a clear view across the lawns of the Maritime Museum towards the south fronts of the William and Mary buildings of the Old Royal Naval College.

It should be noted that there are many other fine views to be enjoyed within the Park. Views along King William Walk towards the Cutty Sark and, in the opposite direction, to St Mary's Gate, are highlighted in the West Greenwich Conservation Area Appraisal report.

The Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site Management Plan identifies other important views, including long distance strategic views.

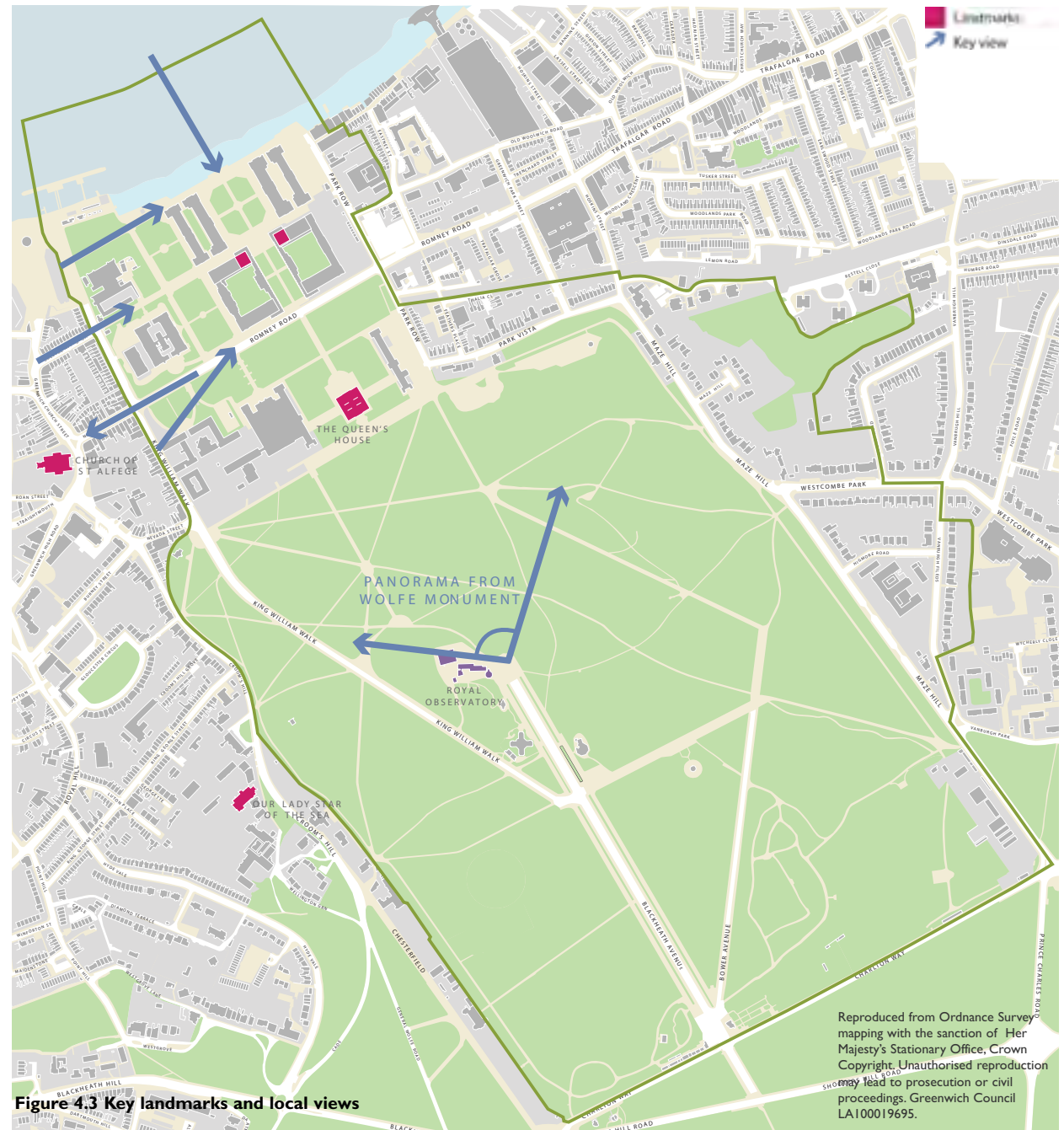


Figure 4.3 Key landmarks and local views

Key landmarks visible from within the Park include the tower of St Alfege, and the spire of Our Lady Star of the Sea on Crooms Hill. The twin domes of the Old Royal Naval College are an emblem of the area and visible from many vantage points in Greenwich and beyond. The Royal Observatory is equally recognisable and the red timekeeping ball on its roof was erected as a signal to vessels on the Thames.



KEY LANDMARKS AND VIEWS

Top left: Thames Waterfront at Old Royal Naval College

Top right: Old Royal Naval College view from West Gate

Bottom left: To Canary Wharf from Old Royal Naval College

Bottom right: Panorama of the Queen's House and Canary Wharf

Character analysis

For the purposes of this study, Greenwich Park Conservation Area can be examined as three broad character areas:

1. The Old Royal Naval College, the National Maritime Museum and the east side of King William Walk;
2. Maze Hill and the northern and eastern fringes to Greenwich Park; and
3. Greenwich Park and the Royal Observatory.



Figure 4.4 Character areas

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The Old Royal Naval College, the National Maritime Museum and the east side of King William Walk

The central axis from the Thames to Greenwich Park, between the domes of the Royal Naval College to the Queen's House, is one of London's defining views: perpendicular to the river, the maritime association is emphasised and the formality of the architectural set piece is offset by the green sward and treeline of the Park. The Royal Observatory is conspicuous in its crowning position on the ridge but is offset from the symmetry of the other buildings, providing an effective counterpoint.

A comprehensive analysis of the evolution of the former Royal Hospital may be found elsewhere (John Bold *Greenwich - An Architectural History of the Royal Hospital for Seamen and the Queen's House* [London: Yale University Press 2000]) and an account of the recent archaeological discoveries of the Tudor Palace also lies outside the scope of this report. It is instructive, however, to contrast the spacious, disciplined forms of the institutional buildings with the intimacy of the streets on either side, in most cases developed speculatively for a multitude of different uses.

The Queen's House, mathematically pure in its proportions, is in a commanding position and serves as a pivot between the Park and the Naval College. The traffic on Romney Road disrupts the setting but the line of the road itself is defined by handsome cast iron railings.

Park Row is defined by the eastern boundary of the Tudor Palace and runs parallel to the central spine. The Trafalgar Quarters (1813) and the Trafalgar Tavern (1837 by Joseph Kay, architect to Greenwich Hospital) are its principal buildings and have a clear nautical association. To the west, the conservation area boundary runs along King William Walk, with good views of the Cutty Sark in one direction and the Park in the other.



CHARACTER AREA 1: OLD ROYAL NAVAL COLLEGE

Top left: Old Royal Naval College

Bottom left: West Gates, Old Royal Naval College

Bottom right: Trafalgar Quarters

There is a substantial gap between the backs of the Charles and William blocks and the start of the more recent buildings.

Maze Hill and the northern and eastern fringes to Greenwich Park

James I's brick wall around the Park prevented any significant encroachment on the Royal estate. Houses on its eastern boundary were therefore slow to develop in comparison to those on Crooms Hill above the town centre. The notable exception was Sir John Vanbrugh's Castle, built in 1719 as his family residence until his death in 1726, evoking the architect's military past. Vanbrugh built other houses on the twelve acres in his ownership, but his own house - extended and altered, but recognisably intact - is the only survival.

Other groups of note include the south-facing terraces on Park Vista, built approximately in line with the Queen's House.

A plain brick terrace is the only building on the Park side of Maze Hill. It was built in 1806 as the infirmary for the Naval Asylum School, which at that time occupied the Queen's House. The buildings opposite are mixed in form and character, ranging from modern, four storey flats to substantial early Georgian town houses. Westcombe Park Road has a group of substantial nineteenth century villas on its north side.

Maze Hill rises to reach John Roan School, a substantial and well detailed classical revival building of 1928, designed by Sir Banister Fletcher and P. B. Dannett, before opening out at the junction with Blackheath.



CHARACTER AREA 2: MAZE HILL

Top left: Park Vista

Top right: Boundary wall to Greenwich Park

Bottom left: Former Naval Asylum School, Maze Hill

Bottom right: John Roan School

Greenwich Park and the Royal Observatory

Greenwich Park is the oldest of London's Royal Parks and is arguably the most complex in terms of its historical development and archaeological significance. Prehistoric and Roman remains are overlain with the vestiges of the formal landscape in the seventeenth century, including traces of the grand steps beneath the Wolfe monument.

Flamsteed House and the Royal Observatory complex are the dominant buildings in the Park and can clearly be seen from the river, as well as from the main axis through the Royal Naval College.



CHARACTER AREA 3: GREENWICH PARK AND THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY

Top left: View of the Queen's House from Wolfe Monument

Top right: Old Royal Observatory

Bottom left: View from Greenwich Park

Architectural and historic building quality

A high proportion of the buildings in the Greenwich Park Conservation Area are listed and a substantial part of the area is a scheduled ancient monument. The Old Royal Naval College and the National Maritime Museum come together to form an outstanding ensemble.

Key buildings include:

Inigo Jones's **Queen's House** is of unrivalled influence on the development of English architecture, presaging the Baroque and the later spread of Palladianism. The National Maritime Museum is distinguished by the linking colonnade and, most recently, by the structurally daring, glass roofed Neptune Hall (Rick Mather Architects).

The Royal Hospital buildings are of comparable importance for their formal planning as well as their intrinsic merit. The Painted Hall is the grandest of its kind in Britain and all the buildings are of interest for their authorship by the leading architects of the late seventeenth century.

The Royal Observatory, built by Wren and subsequently extended with a range of other buildings, is of scientific as well as architectural significance.

Vanbrugh Castle the private house of Sir John Vanbrugh, architect of Blenheim Palace and Castle Howard as well as several buildings in Greenwich and Woolwich, is a rare survivor and of exceptional historic interest.

The Trafalgar Quarters on Park Row, was built in 1813 as lodgings for officers at the Royal Naval Hospital.

The Trafalgar Tavern, (1837) is Greenwich's most historic waterfront inn and was designed by Joseph Kay.

Nos 47 - 49 Maze Hill, early Georgian town houses.



Top: 49 Maze Hill
Bottom: Vanbrugh Castle

Land uses and activity

The conservation area is characterised by its greenness; the formal spaces of the Old Royal Naval College, the lawns of the National Maritime Museum and the sweep of Greenwich Park itself. The main activities are recreation and tourism; enjoying the park, strolling through the buildings or visiting the outstanding interiors and collections. There are also many students enrolled at Greenwich University or the Trinity College of Music, which have brought a new vitality to the Old Royal Naval College.

The conservation area also includes a residential component to the north and east of the Park at Park Vista and Maze Hill. The John Roan School is an important component in the townscape.

Apart from the facilities in the museum and parks there is little commercial activity. The important exception is the Trafalgar Tavern, whose custom spills out onto the waterfront on warm summer evenings.



Greenwich Park: Local details

Local distinctiveness

Greenwich Park is, by virtue of its history and topography, unique amongst London's open spaces. Its contrasting and varied character is also the product of its relationship with its surroundings - the town of Greenwich, the Heath and the Thames.

Local details

The principal set pieces in the conservation area are buildings of great originality and distinction that have come to define the identity of Greenwich itself.

Numerous seafaring motifs embellish the area, but the academicism of the buildings and their high social status has meant that there is no Greenwich vernacular.

Prevalent local and traditional building materials and the public realm

There is a notable contrast between the institutions and the private houses on the fringes of the park. Following the example of the Queen's House - itself inspired by the stucco and Istrian marble of the Veneto - Portland stone was widely used by Webb, Wren and their successors for the principal buildings. Red brick was also used, including the King William Block and in the Park, the Royal Observatory. Chesterfield House (now Rangers House) was similarly in red brick. From the mid-eighteenth century onwards, yellow London stock brick became the norm and stucco was widely adopted for later structures such as the Pepys building.

Listed buildings

Figure 4.5 identifies the statutorily listed buildings in the conservation area. The Greenwich Unitary Development Plan contains policies for the preservation of listed buildings and their setting.

Much of the Greenwich Park Conservation Area falls within the boundary of a Scheduled Ancient Monument. All works of alteration or repair within the scheduled area require Scheduled Monument Consent from the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. A high proportion of the principal buildings are listed Grade I.



Figure 4.5 Listed and locally listed buildings

Key unlisted buildings

Key unlisted buildings in the Greenwich Park Conservation Area include the villas on Westcombe Park Road and the Park Lodge at Blackheath Gate. The Pepys building provides an appropriately substantial point of arrival to the Royal Naval College.

Almost all other buildings of significance are listed.



Top left: Greenwich Park Lodge, Blackheath Gate
Top right: Westcombe Park Road

Natural features

The Greenwich Park Conservation Area, unusually for an inner city area, comprises predominantly green open space, attracting local people and tourists alike. Much of the conservation area provides a sense of continuity and timelessness that, despite its proximity to the noise and bustle of London, acts as an oasis for visitors.

The orientation of the slope that rises approximately 40 metres from the waterfront to the Royal Observatory has largely influenced the layout of the open spaces within the conservation area. The most prominent of these are located along the central axis that stretches from the Thames, through the sites of the Old Royal Naval College and the Maritime Museum, to the Royal Observatory and to Blackheath Gate. To the east and west of these sites, open spaces become increasingly residential in scale and style. To the south, the Heath (Blackheath) provides a substantial buffer between Greenwich and its neighbours. The views from the Wolfe Statue (adjacent to the Royal Observatory) and from the Isle of Dogs to the Old Royal Naval College are protected within the London Plan and the Greenwich Unitary Development Plan.

Green open spaces

Greenwich Park is an open space, which is hugely significant for historical, cultural and ecological reasons, as recognised in the inscription as a World Heritage site in 1997.

The Park's long history has seen a number of changes of style and design, all of which have taken advantage of the height of the site and the views obtained from it. When the park was first enclosed in 1433, it was noted that it contained 200 acres of land (scrub), pasture, wood, heath, furze and gorse. During the medieval period the land was used as a deer park, a practice still continued today albeit on a smaller scale. In addition, the land was used as pasture for sheep, cattle and pigs.

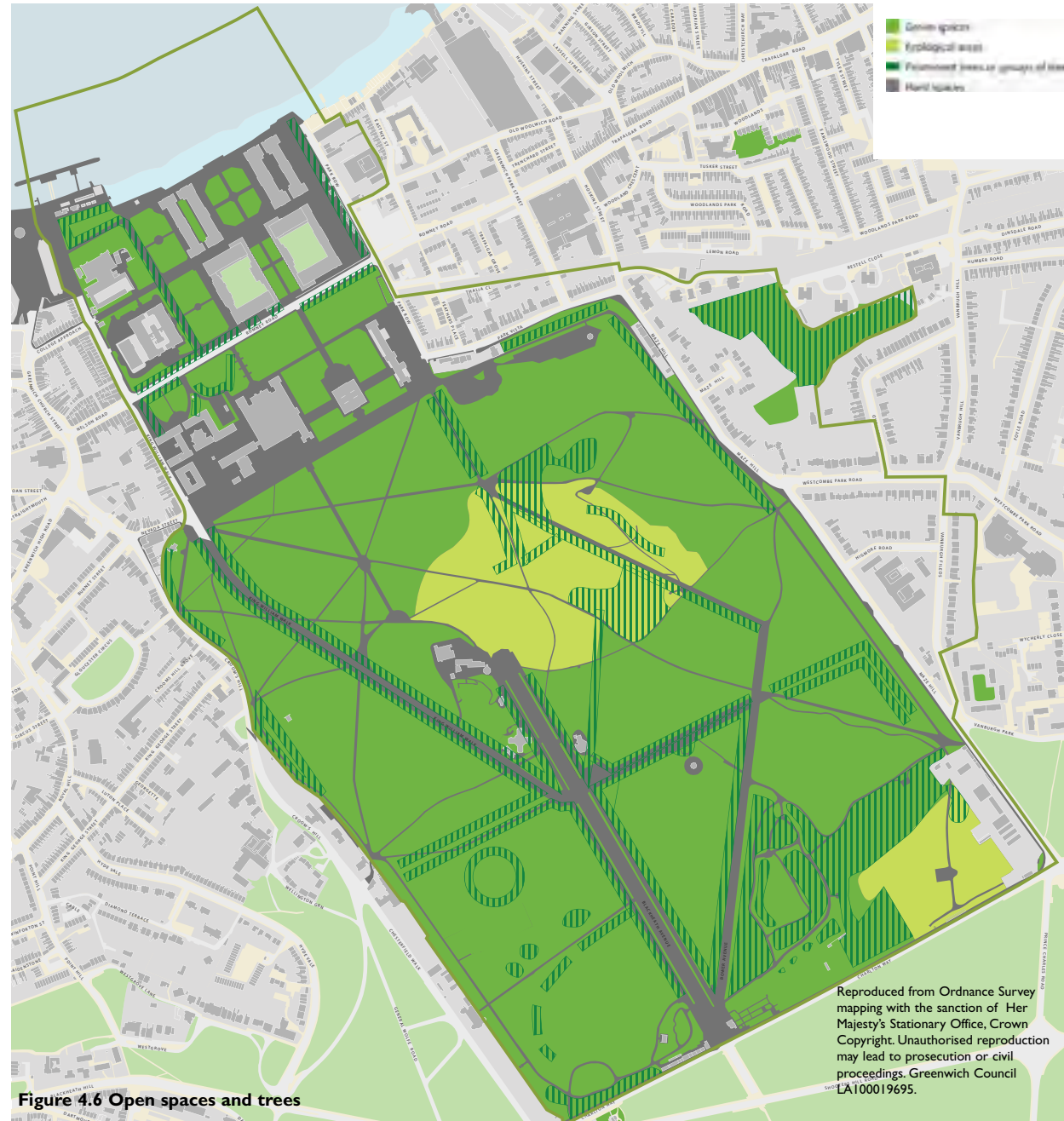


Figure 4.6 Open spaces and trees

From the Tudor era, the Park slowly became more formalised with areas set aside for large events and a path from the Queen's House to the top of the escarpment (where the Observatory now stands). Other pathways evident on the 1558 plan remain today such as Lovers Walk, which runs along the western side of One Tree Hill. It was not until the early 1600s (between 1619 and 1624) that the enclosure wall was constructed. In places, some sections of the original 12 foot wall survive, although most parts were replaced between the eighteenth and twentieth century. The Maze Hill boundary is formed by a wall with a careful coping detail designed to deal with the topographical change towards the escarpment. High brick walls are a feature of most of the conservation area and have been adopted in other areas, such as the wall surrounding Vanbrugh Castle.

The formal design of Greenwich Park was instigated by Charles II in the 1660s and the plans intended a formal park of great similarities to the French designs of Le Notre and his contemporaries. Many of the plans were not implemented due to the challenges of the topography and shapes of the boundary, but the formal avenues survive and successfully create a strong sense of order. This, combined with the more rugged topographical elements, create a contrasting landscape that has evolved from its European inspiration rather than being a copy.

The circular reservoir south of Great Cross Avenue (1844) was built to improve water supply to the Royal Hospital. Its original site nearer Great Cross Avenue was a source of public contention due to its location on the site of an Anglo-Saxon burial site that contained several barrows. Unfortunately, by the time the outcry succeeded in stopping works and agreeing a new site for the reservoirs (where it currently stands), several of the barrows had been destroyed. Today, the reservoir is mostly hidden by mature trees, and the circular mounded construction has become integrated into the



Top left: Greenwich Park flower garden
 Top right: St Mary's Gate
 Bottom left: View up The Avenue, Greenwich Park
 Bottom right: View from Greenwich Park visitor centre

landscape. Wider scale alterations to the Park that occurred in the nineteenth century include the move towards the 'landscape style' of Capability Brown, when the deer park was transformed into public parkland and the avenues became footpaths.

During the Second World War, Greenwich Park was used to accommodate anti-aircraft stations and the lower areas were converted to allotments. Post-war, both interventions were removed and the Park was restored. The second half of the twentieth century saw a dramatic change when Dutch elm disease wiped out many of the Park's specimens, including the circle of trees known as Queen Elizabeth's Bower.

Today, open areas of grassland and informal groups of trees, some over 400 years old such as the gnarled sweet chestnut at the Maze Hill Gate, give way to formal avenues, each planted with different species such as lime, beech and London plane. The eastern-most corner of the Park takes on a more gardenesque character and contains the flower gardens and lake, where planting densities change to provide a series of open and closed views through formal planting beds, each with a different character: The deer park provides a further contrast with informal grassland and mature trees providing a home to a herd of small deer. To the south-west, the Park adopts a more recreational focus, with tennis courts and a putting green all well placed within groups of mature trees. Rangers House has determined the layout of this corner, with a strong avenue of sweet chestnuts leading from the avenue towards the building. Towards the north-west, the knot garden provides an alternative planting style, but lies in the shadow of the grand St Mary's Gate which is a hub of activity and the main space between the Park and the town centre.

Greenwich Park today is a highly significant public space within the city of London. Its rolling landform is inviting and the range of routes and logical sequence of spaces makes it an easy landscape to experience. Despite the



Top: Greenwich Park Knot Garden
Middle: Greenwich Campus
Bottom: Greenwich Park pond

neighbouring open space of Blackheath, it feels distinctly separate due to the strong boundary walls that provide a sense of enclosure and prevent views in and out of the Park.

The lower parterres of Greenwich Park are, in effect, extensions of the flatter, formal lawns that provide the setting for the Maritime Museum and the Royal Naval College. Here, the simple landscape treatment of well maintained lawns, bound gravel pathways and avenues of London planes (with some exceptions) complement the architectural elements. Access to the Park from the town centre, as already noted, is focused at St Mary's Gate. In comparison, Park Vista Gate is relatively insignificant and does not reflect the true grandeur of the Park. In addition, access to the Park through the Maritime Museum itself is modest.

The landscape setting of the Maritime Museum differs from that of the Royal Naval College and is slightly less formal with occasional groups of trees set within the lawn. Romney Road divides the two sites and is flanked by partial avenues of limes and planes. The trees reduce the impact of the road and reinforce the approach to Greenwich town centre.

The Thames Walk stretches past the front of the Royal Naval College. Moving east from Greenwich Pier, the low rendered wall to the terminal building blocks riverside views but is offset by views through the iron railings to the College. The sense of enclosure experienced briefly in this stretch contrasts with the openness felt further on where panoramas extend east along the Thames. Here, the waterfront provides contrasting snapshots of riverside life with the Isle of Dogs and Canary Wharf development to the north, the industrial buildings of the East Greenwich Power Station and gas works downstream and to the south, the Royal Naval College, Maritime Museum and Greenwich Park. The river walk provides the opportunity to experience the daily ebb and flow of the river and the changing

foreshore. The narrow Thames pathway reinforces the presence of the river which at high tide, splashes through the railings and gateways that line the river wall.

To the east of the Royal Naval College, the streetscape becomes less consistent with car parks creeping into the conservation area and residential gardens of various levels of maintenance. There is an open space behind Vanbrugh Castle and the railway which provides private amenity to the houses backing on to it. This undisturbed site is likely to be a haven for wildlife.

Loss, intrusion or damage

Most of the land and properties in the conservation area is in the hands of a few bodies, namely the National Maritime Museum, the Royal Parks, Greenwich University, the Trinity College of Music and the Greenwich Foundation. Their stewardship has been excellent and there has been no demolition or ill-conceived development in recent years.

The main challenge is the intrusion of development from the fringes of the conservation area and from distant views. Canary Wharf is a forceful presence in the vista from the Wolfe monument and looms large in many other views from the Park, but it is relatively self-contained and further development in the defined area is unlikely to challenge the pre-eminence of Greenwich's set pieces.

Neutral areas

With some notable exceptions, most of the interwar and postwar houses on Maze Hill are of no architectural significance. They are, however, of a scale, height and form to have no discernable effect on the broader character of Greenwich Park.

General condition and Buildings at Risk

There has been substantial investment in the major listed buildings over the past ten years and they are in as good a condition as in any time in their history. Their future seems secure. The residential fringe is similarly well maintained and there are no buildings at risk in the conservation area.

Conservation area boundary review

The conservation area boundary is logical and well defined. No amendments are proposed.

Problems, pressures and capacity for change

Romney Road has severed Greenwich Park from the river for many years, and continues to be a divisive obstacle for pedestrian movement. Congestion caused by bottlenecks of visitors at peak periods are common. This puts pressure on parts of the World Heritage Site, including the Park entrance and the King William Walk area, although proposals to the south west wing of the Maritime Museum should help to alleviate this problem.

Uncontrolled visitor numbers puts pressure on the Park, and could result in the erosion of landscape and archaeological remains. In particular, numbers of visitors during the events of the 2012 Olympics will require appropriate planning and management.

Beyond the conservation area, the panoramas and view corridors could be harmed by inappropriate development in and beyond the World Heritage Site buffer zone.

There are opportunities to improve the quality of the public realm in areas - one example is the paving in Park Vista. The Park Management Plan identifies several areas which would benefit from physical improvements, including the restoration of the roundel trees at Blackheath Gate.

The new Planetarium will encourage more visitors to the Observatory, and there is an opportunity to encourage them to explore the less visited areas in Greenwich. The Seascope Project at the National Maritime Museum will introduce an improved interface with the Park.

5. Appendix: useful information and contact details

Urban Practitioners wishes to acknowledge all those who, in print or in person, have contributed to the historical and architectural content of these reports. They include staff of Greenwich Council, English Heritage and the London Metropolitan Archives. Particular thanks are due to the Greenwich Heritage Centre and to Neil Rhind, historian of Blackheath, who has generously shared more than forty years' research for these volumes.

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Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site Management Plan (revised 2004)

Available online at:
www.greenwichwhs.org.uk/

Archives and libraries

Greater London Sites and Monuments Record, English Heritage, 1 Waterhouse Square, 138-142 Holborn, London, EC1N 2ST

Greenwich Heritage Centre, Artillery Square, Royal Arsenal, Woolwich SE18 4DX

London Metropolitan Archives, 40 Northampton Road, Clerkenwell, London EC1R 0HB