

# Thames Barrier & Bowater Road

## Conservation Area Character Appraisal SPD

March 2021

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## I.0 Overview of the Conservation Area

### Summary of Special Interest

The main features of *Thames Barrier & Bowater Road Conservation Area's* special historic and architectural interest are:

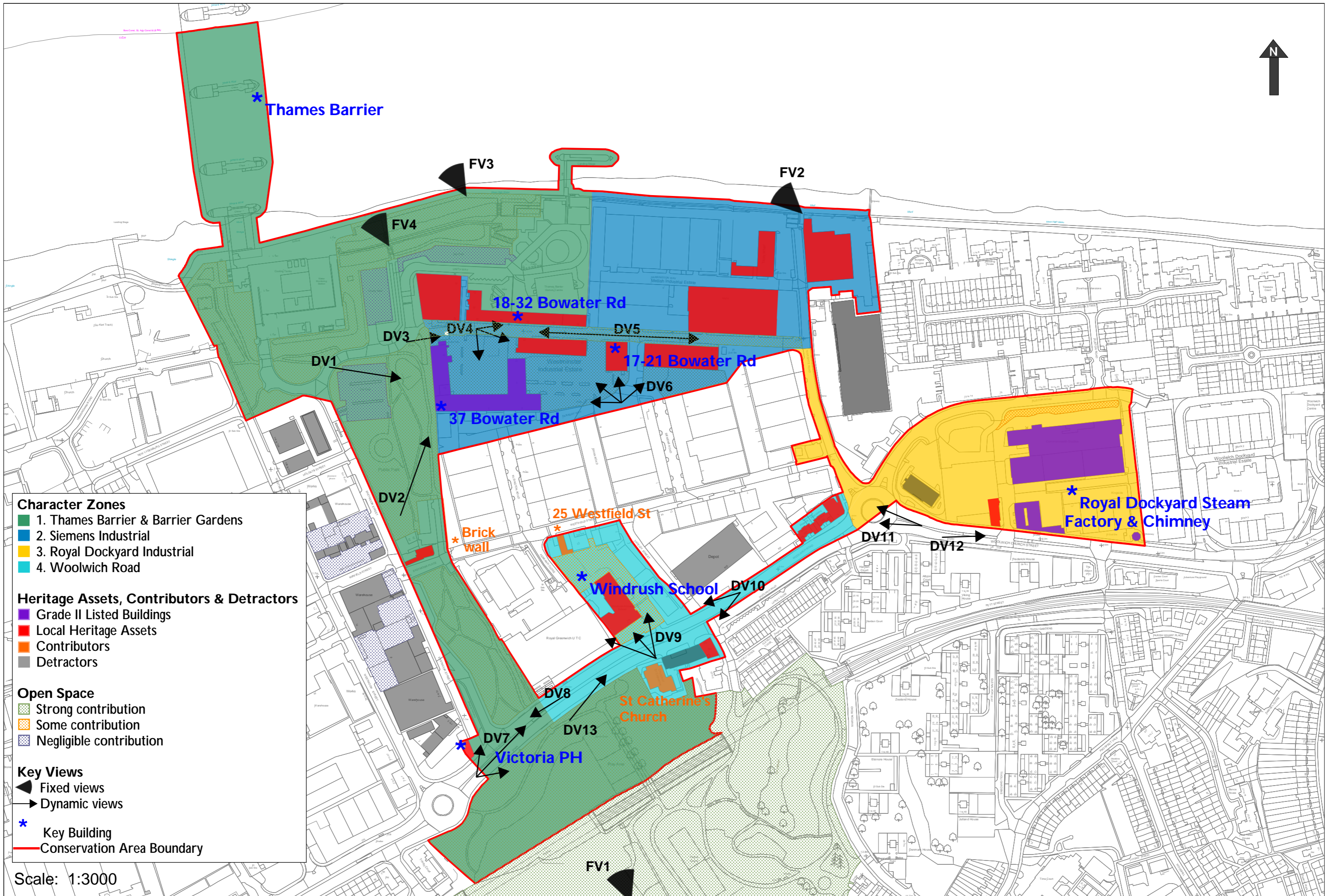
- Represents rare surviving legacy of London's once extensive **Victorian riverside industries**
- Celebrates **engineering innovation** and **excellence**
- Distinctive **industrial character** and unique sense of place due to intensive land use for manufacturing by the Royal Navy and Siemens Brothers, an early multinational telecommunications company
- Significance derived from association with C19 and C20 **British engineering**: naval steamship, submarine cable and flood defence engineering of national and international magnitude
- Two principal clusters of industrial heritage comprising former **Siemens Brothers works** and former **Royal Dockyard Steam Factory**
- Area includes a **Victorian Board school**, **four former ale houses**, early **social housing** and a **former Catholic church**,

which sustained the large community of Siemens and Dockyard workers and form an integral part of the area's industrial history

- Area also includes (part) of the **Thames Barrier**, the second largest flood defence barrier in the world and one of London's most striking and famous landmarks
- Majority of buildings are **heritage assets**
- **Building heights** predominantly 3-5 storeys with single storey units
- Overall style is functional, distinctive **industrial aesthetic** with brick clad or expressed structures, large casement windows
- Characteristic **materials** are brick, steel and reinforced concrete with iron/steel detailing
- Continuity of current and past **employment land use**; the area still has a predominant employment function and supports a vibrant and established manufacturing and creative industries hub
- Former Siemens factories house one of the largest **communities of artists** in the UK (Thameside Studios & Art Hub Studios)
- **River Thames** crucial to the area's historic development and distinctive identity







**Thames Barrier & Bowater Road Conservation Area - interactive map**

## Date of Designation

The **Thames Barrier & Bowater Road Conservation Area** was designated in March 2018 and was identified through master planning, within the Charlton Riverside SPD 2017 and accompanying evidence base (Heritage & Employment Study 2017).

## Heritage at Risk

The Conservation Area was placed on the **Heritage at Risk Register** in October 2019 due to the poor condition of its assets and public realm and high vulnerability to development proposals which could threaten its special interest.

## Location

The *Thames Barrier & Bowater Road Conservation Area* lies on the south bank of the Thames, approx. 1 mile west of Woolwich Town Centre. The conservation area is bounded by industrial estates to the west (Ashleigh Commercial Estate), the Woolwich Dockyard Industrial Estate and Harlinger Street housing estate to the east, Woolwich Road and Maryon Park to the south and the Thames to the north.

## Boundary

The conservation area comprises the southern half of the Thames Barrier (within RB Greenwich) with Barrier Gardens; the former Siemens factory buildings on Bowater Road (part of the Westminster and Mellish Industrial Estates); part of the former Royal Dockyard (Commonwealth Studios) and a section of Woolwich Road encompassing Windrush Primary School, Howick Mansions, St Catherine's Church and the northern portion of Maryon Park.

## Topography and geology

Located on the alluvial flood plain of the Thames River Basin, the terrain is flat and sits at and slightly above high tide level. Geology comprises layers of alluvial river silts and sands as a result of the post-glacial rise in sea level within the Lower Thames Valley.

## Planning and other designations

- **Strategic Industrial Location** - Business Park (excludes Barrier Gardens, Maryon Park, 18-32, 23-25, 34, 37, Bowater Road, Woolwich Road inc. 700, 704, 757 & Church of St Catherine, Windrush School)
- **Strategic Development Location** and **Opportunity Area**
- **Thames Policy Area** – includes **Barrier Gardens, Bowater Road** and area to north
- Includes parts of two **Areas of High Archaeological Potential (AHAPs)**
  - 5: *Greenwich Peninsula and Foreshore* (Eastmoor Street, Barrier Gardens, Eastmoor Place, Hardens Manor Way, Thames Barrier, Operations Area, riverside and foreshore)
  - 23: *Woolwich Dockyard* (western extent: Harrington Way, Warspite Road, Ruston Road, Woolwich Church Street)
- **Flood Zone 3** (high risk)
- **Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation** – the River Thames & Tidal Tributaries
- **Site of Borough Importance for Nature Conservation** – Maryon Park (Grade I, also SSSI), Barrier Gardens (Grade II)
- Four *walking trails* and *cycle routes* pass through the Conservation Area:
  - **Green Chain Walk** (*TFL Walk London*) - section 5 passes through Barrier Gardens & Maryon Park
  - **Capital Ring** (*TFL Walk London*) - section 1 passes along Ruston Road and the section of Woolwich Road within the Conservation Area
  - **Thames Path** (*TFL National Trail*) - section 4 passes along the riverside from the Barrier, and since 2018 diverts along Bowater Road with ramped access back to the riverside from Warspite Road
  - **Cycleway Q14** (*National Trail*) - completed in 2018, Quietway 14 closed the largest gap on the Thames Path and enables passage to and from the river via Bowater Road, avoiding the previous route along the busy Woolwich Road/A206



## 2.0 Character

### 2.1 Key Buildings: contributors and detractors

The buildings and structures of the conservation area contribute in different ways to its overall character and appearance, some positively (key buildings and local heritage assets, positive contributors) others negatively (detractors). The contributions of individual structures are shown on the layered map above.

#### Listed Buildings

Statutory Listed Buildings on the [National Heritage List England](#) (NHLE).

- Former Royal Dockyard Smithery, Erecting Shop and Brass Foundry (Commonwealth Studios): *Grade II*
- Former Royal Dockyard Police Station: *Grade II*
- Former Royal Dockyard Chimney to Steam Factory: *Grade II*
- Former Siemens Cable Factory at 37 Bowater Road: *Grade II*

#### Local Heritage Assets

Buildings designated by the Royal Borough as having architectural or historic interest and which feature on Royal Greenwich's [Local Heritage List](#) (see Appendix 1).

- Bowater Road: 8-10 (Thameside Studios Unit 8), 15, 17-21, 18-32, 23-25, 34 (Art Hub Studios)
- Hardens Manorway: 32 Barrier Animal Clinic (former Lads of the Village PH)
- Harrington Way: Mellish House (Thameside Studios Unit 7), Trinity Wharf
- Warspite Road: 1 (former Lord Howick PH), Submarine Cable Depot
- Woolwich Church Street: 2 Commonwealth Buildings (former Royal Dockyard Apprentice School), Gates & Dockyard Wall
- Woolwich Road: 704 (White Horse PH), 757 (former Victoria PH), Windrush Primary School, Flats 1-12 Howick Mansions

- Thames Path: Former Royal Dockyard River Wall including Trinity Stairs

#### Outside the boundary

- Thames Path: Former Dockyard River Wall (continues to east)
- Woolwich Church Street: old railway tunnel
- Woolwich Industrial Estate: Block I (former Woolwich Store Warehouse) *Outside the boundary*

#### Key Buildings and Landmarks

- Bowater Road: No. 37, 17-21, 18-32
- Woolwich Road: 757 (former Victoria PH), Windrush Primary School
- Former Royal Dockyard Steam Factory & Chimney
- Thames Barrier

#### Positive Contributors

Unlisted buildings or structures that help to shape the character and appearance of the conservation area.

- Church of St Catherine (Lithuanian Church) 698, Woolwich Road
- 25 Westfield Street (former electricity substation)
- Red brick wall, east side of Hardens Manorway (part of former Siemens Telephone Factory)

#### Detractors

Buildings that may be out of character due to their scale, design, facing materials or the way they relate to neighbouring buildings.

- Woolwich Church Street: McDonalds

The following buildings are outside the boundary of the conservation area but have a detrimental impact on its setting:

- Warspite Road: Depot
- Woolwich Road: 700-702, 815 (Depot)
- Sheds and structures on the west side of Eastmoor Street



The Thames Barrier

## 2.2 Character Zones

### Zone I: Thames Barrier & Barrier Gardens

#### Thames Barrier

- World-famous engineering structure and London icon, managed by the Environment Agency
- Second-largest flood defence barrier worldwide (after the Oosterscheldekering Barrier in the Netherlands)
- Engineered by Charles Draper in association with Rendel, Palmer and Tritton for the GLC
- Innovative and futuristic design, incorporating concept of rotating gates, devised in 1969, based on Draper's gas cooker taps!
- Construction began in 1974. Operational by 1982, first used in 1983, officially opened in 1984 by Her majesty Queen Elizabeth II
- Location chosen across 520-metre wide stretch between Charlton Riverside and Silvertown due to straightness of the riverbanks and strength of the underlying river chalk
- Comprises 9 concrete piers, 7 with iconic boat-shaped stainless-steel superstructures (4 in Royal Greenwich)
- Operates by rotating 10 half-circular steel gates into an upright position. When raised, 4 central gates are over 20m high, weigh 3,300 tonnes and can hold back 90,000 tonnes of water.
- Bomb-proof and failure-proof and protects 125 square kilometres of Central London from tidal flooding
- Represents strategic importance of this part of Thames in London's flood defences

#### Barrier Gardens

- Laid out by the GLC in 1980s along with the Control Tower and Centre, Visitor Centre & Café, in anticipation of tourism to the area



Thames Barrier from the Thames Path



37 Bowater Road seen from Barrier Gardens



- Landscaped ribbon park, providing a green corridor between the River Thames and Maryon Park across Woolwich Road
- Enables views of and provides an attractive setting for appreciation of heritage assets: former Lads of the Village pub, Victoria Inn and Grade II Listed Former Siemens Cable Factory at 37 Bowater Road
- Grade II Borough Nature Conservation Site, wildlife-friendly planting
- Includes mural entitled 'A Profile of the Thames' by artist Simon Read in the Thames Path tunnel beside the Barrier
- Important green space and local and regional leisure facility: Starting point for two long distance footpaths: Green Chain & Capital Ring

#### Lads of the Village pub (Barrier Animal Care, 32 Hardens Manorway)

- Former pub and 'Noted Stout House' rebuilt 1899
- Local landmark which contributes to landscape value of Barrier Gardens and which makes a distinctive contribution to the character of the conservation area
- Important townscape value as one of only two survivors (along with the Victoria Inn) of the dense network of terraced houses delineating the 3 streets between the river and Woolwich Road
- High quality façades retain their original stucco decorative features and lettering beneath the eaves

#### The Victoria (757 Woolwich Road)

- Late-Victorian public house by Truman's brewery
- High quality decorative tiled facades on Woolwich Road and Eastmoor Street of 1910 with Truman's impressive trademark eagles
- Local landmark and key building which contributes to landscape value of Barrier Gardens and which makes a distinctive contribution to the character of the conservation area
- Important townscape value as the only other survivor (with the Lads of the Village) of the area's fine-grain residential streetscapes



Former Lads of the Village pub seen from Barrier Gardens



The Victoria



## Zone 2: Siemens Industrial

### Bowater Road & Harrington Way

- **Significant cluster of industrial heritage** forming the most prominent heritage legacy in the Conservation Area
- **Continuity of use:** former factories are home to one of the UK's largest community of artists (Thameside Studios & Art Hub Studios)
- **Historic significance:**
  - Surviving legacy of Siemens Brothers, operational at Woolwich from 1863-1968, pioneers in the development of the steel, electric telegraph and telephone industries
  - Established by Sir William Siemens, remarkable inventor, electrical engineer and founder of Siemens in the UK
  - Key role in history of telecommunications: first transatlantic telegraph cable from England to USA in 1874 & first cross-channel telephone cable in 1891 produced at Woolwich
  - Key role in history of military technology: field telephone cable for WWI and a pioneering submarine pipeline for WWII (as part of Operation PLUTO to support the allies after the D-Day Landings) developed at Woolwich
- **Architectural significance:** imposing group forms strong architectural composition unified by distinctive industrial aesthetic. Buildings span mid-Victorian to post-war eras and have individual special interest and strong townscape (group) value
- Majority of buildings are **heritage assets:**
  - *Local Heritage Assets*  
Bowater Road: 8-10, 15, 17-21, 18-32, 23-25, 34  
Harrington Way: Mellish House  
Warspite Road: Submarine Cable Depot
  - *Grade II Listed Bowater Road:* 37 (Siemens Cable Factory)
- **Key Building:** 18-32 Bowater Road (Gutta-percha Range)
  - Oldest building range of two to three storeys, 1871-1894



8-10 Bowater Road



18-32 Bowater Road







- For processing and testing of gutta-percha cable insulation
  - Architectural interest: only survivor of Siemens' Italianate 'house' style of building
  - Historic interest: association with earliest phase of Siemens' operation at Woolwich and with William Siemens
  - Makes strong townscape contribution with continuous rhythm of arched windows, framing narrow street
- **Key Building: Former Siemens Cable Factory at 37 Bowater Road**
    - Substantial five-storey and basement L-plan building designed for manufacture of rubber-coated copper wire cable in 1910-11; extended in 1942
    - Grade II Listed in 2020
    - Architectural interest: fine surviving example of an early C20 factory, one of London's largest when built; monumental scale, powerful massing and stark utilitarian elevations anticipate later C20 factory design; an early example of a reinforced concrete frame building employing the 'Kahn' Daylight system
    - Historic interest: its role in military communication and technology; extended for the development of the submarine pipeline 'PLUTO' for WWII, the only surviving UK factory involved in this manufacture
    - Remarkably unaltered: many original steel casements, timber half-glazed doors and fire safety features survive
    - Most prominent and defining building in the conservation area; significant local landmark which defines key views
  - **Key Building: 17-21 Bowater Road (Office Block)**
    - Five storey office building dating from 1911 expansion; mansard added during 1940s
    - Tall, narrow block with distinctive profile visible from Woolwich Road and the Thames Path
    - Link between earliest Victorian range (elevational treatment) and 1911 modernisation: (modern concrete construction and impressive scale and massing)



Former Siemens cable Factory, 37 Bowater Road



17-21 Bowater Road

### Zone 3: Royal Dockyard Industrial

#### Former Steam Factory (West Dockyard; 'Commonwealth Buildings')

- **Significant cluster of industrial heritage** associated with the Royal Navy dating from 1830s-1840s
- **Historic significance:**
  - Pioneering naval establishment responsible for the repair and maintenance of the Royal Navy's steamship fleet (from late 1820s until 1869)
  - Represents surviving legacy of the steamship era and of naval shipbuilding in Woolwich since 1512
  - First UK establishment for naval service training
  - Site of *Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society's* manufacturing operation since 1927, *Co-op Funeral Care* still in operation
- **Architectural significance:** Prominent and imposing cluster visible from Woolwich Road; built to high quality designs of the military commissioner. Strong architectural composition unified by palette of yellow stock brick and complementary features: stone detailing and rows of arches.
- Majority of buildings **grade II Listed** or **local heritage assets:**
  - **River Wall** (northern section): 1831-7 (local heritage asset)
  - **Boundary Wall** (southwest part): 1833 (local heritage asset)
  - **Erecting Shop, Foundry/Smithery:** 1838 & 1846 (Grade II)
  - **Steam Factory Chimney:** by 1843 (Grade II)
  - **Dockyard West Gate:** 1843 (local heritage asset)
  - **Police Station, Barracks, Inspector's House:** 1844-5 (Grade II)
  - **Dockyard Apprentice School:** 1848-9 (local heritage asset)
- Distinctive character and sense of place derived from inter-relationships of varied building types; distinct from main Dockyard
- 55m tall (originally 63m) octagonal chimney forms a conspicuous landmark; designed by a specialist chimney engineer and modelled on contemporary Lancashire/Midlands textile mill chimneys



Steam Factory (former Erecting Shop, Brass Foundry and Smithery)



Steam Factory Chimney



## Zone 4: Woolwich Road

### Windrush Primary School (former Maryon Park School)

- Fine example of a Late-Victorian Board School which is still in educational use
- Local Heritage Asset and key building
- Built 1894-6 to plans by London School Board architect T.J. Bailey in the Queen Anne revival house style; extended 1909-10 and 1914-15
- Impressive in scale and design; survives substantially as built with original features and architectural enrichment including timber sash/casement windows, red brick gables and iron rainwater goods
- Prominent local landmark with its signature copper-clad turrets, tall brick gables and steeply-pitched red tiled roofs; visible from long distances on a major transport route
- Important townscape value as one of few surviving historic buildings on ancient riverside route between Woolwich and London; makes a distinctive contribution to the character of the conservation area
- Social and historical value and part of the area's industrial narrative, providing education for the children of Siemen's workforce

### Lord Howick (1 Warspite Road) and Howick Mansions (Flats 1-12, 825 & 831 Woolwich Road)

- Associated local heritage assets with strong townscape value
- Lord Howick pub rebuilt 1895-6 by landlord Alfred Saunders; adjoining Mansions subsequently built by Saunders in 1898 to alleviate housing conditions of local workers
- Significance of Howick Mansions:
  - Significant townscape value as an early and sole surviving example of social housing in the area
  - Early example of a mixed-use development: 12 flats combined with 4 shops within projecting gabled ranges



Windrush School, south elevation



Windrush School, west elevation

- Strongly articulated symmetrical composition with decorative brickwork and feature chimneys
- Historical and communal value through association with Siemens and the Royal Dockyard depot, early occupants worked at both
- Significance of Lord Howick:
  - Tall building with pedimented dormers which dominates its prominent corner site on Woolwich Road and is another positive contributor
  - Integral part of the area's industrial history, sustaining the large community of industrial workers at Siemens' factories
- Unique surviving group of related residential and commercial buildings on Woolwich Road which represent the fine grain urban development that characterised the perimeters of the large factory sites

#### White Horse (704 Woolwich Road)

- Late-Victorian public house with 18C origins as a 'beerhouse', rebuilt 1897
- Local Heritage Asset
- Distinguished building with fine neoclassical detailing and ornate features in high quality materials, substantially intact
- Distinctive local landmark, on a major transport route, which makes a strong contribution to the character of the conservation area
- Important townscape value as one of few survivors of the fine grain buildings lining Woolwich Road and one of the areas few surviving historic pubs
- Integral part of the area's industrial history, sustaining the large community of industrial workers at Siemens and the Royal Dockyard for over 100 years



Lord Howick and Howick Mansions



White Horse



### 3. Building Materials

#### Zone 1: Thames Barrier

- Barrier: concrete piers with shiny stainless steel hooded superstructures, movable steel gates
- Operations Centre and Control Tower: concrete panelled walling, shiny steel roofs, concrete boundary walls

#### Zone 2: Siemens Industrial (Bowater Road)

- Walls: multi-stock brickwork with red brick dressings and detailing (arched window heads, bands); Fletton brickwork with some expressed reinforced-concrete frames, cast iron external staircases; red and painted brickwork; reinforced-concrete
- Construction: reinforced concrete 'Kahn Daylight System' (Nos. 17-21 & 37); steel-framed (No. 23-25)
- Roofing: modern corrugated metal and asbestos sheeting
- Windows: wrought iron and steel casements with small panes (original), some aluminium/uPVC replacements; segmental-arched window heads in brick, concrete lintels
- Doors: timer panelled, some timber/uPVC/aluminium replacements, metal roller shutters

#### Zone 3: Royal Dockyard Industrial (Woolwich Church Street)

- Walls: yellow stock brick, with pale yellow brick window heads/arches, stone bands and other stone detailing; granite ashlar (River wall)
- Roofing: natural slate; modern corrugated metal and asbestos sheeting; iron-framed roof construction with king-post trusses, supported on cast iron columns
- Windows: large multi-paned casements of cast iron (original), timber with leaded lights (original) and aluminium replacements; Georgian-style sashes with 6-over-6 glazing pattern

- Doors: modern timber/glazed/aluminium replacements, projecting stone/timber frame porches

#### Zone 4: Woolwich Road

- Walls: yellow stock brick with red brick gables and chimney stacks, red brick/stucco/ limestone dressings and decorative detailing, decorative glazed tiling
- Roofing: traditional red clay tile, copper-capped domes,
- Windows: timber casements and timber sashes with multi-pane glazing pattern; uPVC sashes and casements; shopfronts with timber joinery, granite stall risers and pilasters with ornate stucco capitals and friezes, windows with semi-circular fanlights, engraved glass and ornate iron ventilation grills; aluminium shopfronts with solid metal roller shutters
- Doors: timber panelled, modern timber/glazed/aluminium replacements

#### Boundaries and streetscape

- Pavements: largely asphalt or concrete paving slabs with granite kerbs
- Road surfaces: asphalt
- Street furniture: modern galvanised steel lampposts, modern steel street signage, traditional fingerposts for Thames Path
- Boundaries: brick walling (yellow stock, red and multi) some with stone copings, cast iron decorative and vertical-bar railings, galvanised steel palisade fencing and vertical-bar railings







Royal Dockyard Industrial Zone



Royal Dockyard Industrial Zone



Woolwich Road Zone



Woolwich Road Zone



### 3.0 Key Views

Views make an important contribution to our capacity to appreciate the character, appearance and setting of the Conservation Area. Views also contribute to the significance of the Area's listed and locally listed buildings and form an important aspect of the setting of those heritage assets.

Significant views are identified on the layered map above, either as dynamic views or general views. Arrows indicate sightlines to key heritage assets and landmarks i.e. the direction and focus of the view(s). Dynamic or kinetic views are those slowly revealed through the movement of the viewer which give a sense of spatial character and architectural quality. The principal dynamic views (DVs) in the Conservation Area are along Bowater Road and Woolwich Road. General or static views are those seen from a particular viewpoint. The majority of the key views in this Conservation Area are dynamic.

#### Bowater Road: Siemens Industrial Zone

The heart of the Conservation Area and a significant linear route lined with heritage assets within the Siemens Industrial zone. The re-routing of the Thames Path along Bowater Road provides pedestrians and cyclists with an excellent opportunity for close-up views and appreciation of the former Siemens' factories. Bowater Road is therefore an important piece of townscape and setting for heritage assets, including three of the Conservation Area's key landmark buildings. It is important that views along this route can continue to be appreciated.

- DVI-2** Significant dynamic views of key building **37 Bowater Road** from Unity Way and Barrier Gardens. The latter provides a contrasting green landscaped setting for this building and for the Siemens Industrial zone
- DV3** Strong gateway views into the zone from the west end of Bowater Road of building cluster **18-32, 23-25, 34 and 37**
- DV4** Significant dynamic views of building cluster **18-32, 23-25** and imposing key building **37 Bowater Road**; set back building line of



DV2: View of 37 Bowater Road from Barrier Gardens



DV3: Gateway view into Siemens Industrial Zone via Thames Path/Cycleway Q14



the latter enables appreciation of impressive scale of this local landmark

- DV5** Moving eastwards the buildings tightly frame the narrow street and characterised by close views of individual buildings or pairs on either side of the street: 18-32 & 23-25 or 8-10 and 15 or 17-21
- DV6** Expansive views of 37, 23-25, 17-21 and 15 from Faraday Way which convey the impressive scale of this group of buildings on the site. Key building Windrush Primary School is also visible

### Woolwich Road

A strategic transport route with a varied sequence of long and short views, punctuated with memorable key buildings, landscape features and terminated with landmarks, as follows:

- DV7** Gateway views from the west framed by key building Victoria Inn on the left and mature trees lining the road and landscaped parkland settings of Maryon Park and Barrier Gardens, with distant views of 37 Bowater Road; terminates in local landmark Windrush Primary School, whose turreted roofscape adds visual interest to the skyline
- DV8** View framed by mature trees of Maryon Park and Barrier Gardens and terminates with Victoria Inn as the focal point
- DV9** Close view of imposing landmark Windrush Primary School in the foreground, with glimpses of prominent key building 37 Bowater Road in the background
- DV10** Dynamic views of the White Horse pub on the left and Windrush Primary School on the right
- DV11** View of Howick Mansions and former Lord Howick pub, a closely associated group of local heritage assets, with a view of the Siemens industrial zone in the background including two large key buildings: 17-21 and 37 Bowater Road
- DV12** Oblique view of Royal Dockyard industrial zone and listed and locally listed Steam Factory complex, terminating with conspicuous landmark, the 55m high Steam Factory Chimney



DV6: 15 and 17-21 Bowater Road seen from Faraday Way



DV9: View of Windrush School and 37 Bowater Road from Woolwich Road





View of the Thames Barrier and Former Siemens Cable Factory at 37 Bowater Road from Maryon Park

### Maryon Park

**DVI3** The lower slopes adjacent to Woolwich Road provide a landscaped setting in the foreground for significant views of key building Windrush Primary School

**FVI** Long-distance fixed views from the two elevated mounds within the park (including 'Cox's Mount') convey the vast scale of the two defining landmark structures of the Conservation Area: the **Former Siemens Cable Factory at 37 Bowater Road** and the **Thames Barrier**

### Thames Path

**FV2-4** The sections of Thames Path at the end of Warspite Road and between the Barrier and Barrier Information Centre - and the bank adjacent to the latter – afford panoramic views of the **Thames Barrier**, Royal Iris ferry and Tate & Lyle Sugars Factory on the north bank

## 4.0 Open Space Assessment

There are several areas of open space both inside and immediately outside the Conservation Area, some of which make a strong contribution to character and appearance, others some, no or negligible contribution. Open space contributes in two ways:

- By enabling views through, into and out of the conservation area
- By providing a setting for the area's heritage assets

Open space is defined as any green space, undeveloped land or area of water and here it includes the Thames, public walking/cycling routes, parks, car parks and industrial yards. The contributions of open space are mapped on the interactive map at the beginning of the document.

#### Strong Contribution

- **Barrier Gardens** makes a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and to the settings of Grade II Listed key building **37 Bowater Road**, key buildings and local

heritage assets **Windrush Primary School** and **Victoria Inn** and local heritage assets **34 Bowater Road (Art Hub Studios)** and **32 Hardens Manorway (Barrier Animal Clinic)**

- **Maryon Park** makes a significant contribution to the character, appearance and setting of the Conservation Area and to the settings of local heritage assets and key buildings **Windrush Primary School** and **Victoria Inn**
- **Bowater Road** itself, **The Thames Path/Cycleway Q14** and the **Green Chain** are important public walking and cycling routes and corridors of open space; they make a strong contribution and enable appreciation of the Conservation Area's heritage assets. Bowater Road has significant townscape value as part of the setting for heritage assets within the Siemens Industrial Zone, including three of the Conservation Area's key landmark buildings.
- **The Thames** provides expansive open vistas and is an essential part of the Conservation Area's character

#### Some contribution

- Storage areas, yards and service areas associated with the industrial estates and artists' studios, though hard landscaped, are an essential part of the area's industrial riverside character and contribute to the settings of key buildings **17-21, 18-32 and 37 Bowater Road**
- **Windrush Primary School** playgrounds provide an open setting which enable appreciation of the building
- Area of waste land to north of Commonwealth Studios provides a setting for the **Royal Dockyard Former Steam Factory**

#### Negligible or no contribution

- 3 no. large and mostly under-used coach and car parks associated with the Thames Barrier
- Rundown, ad hoc storage yards and service areas to the west between Eastmoor and Westmoor Street do not contribute positively to the Conservation Area's setting.



## 5.0 Condition and issues

### 5.1 Built Environment

In general, lack of repair and maintenance and overall investment in the area has resulted in gradual deterioration of the built fabric. The Conservation Area's industrial and commercial historic buildings are especially vulnerable to neglect and poorly considered change and subject to high pressure for residential development.

As a result, the Conservation Area has been classified as 'at risk' by Historic England in 2019. Its poor condition is highlighted on the Heritage at Risk Register due to neglect and inappropriate change, along with its high vulnerability to development proposals, which could threaten its special interest.

The following buildings are suffering from lack of maintenance and inappropriate alteration:

- 1-12 Howick Mansions Woolwich Road (poorly designed shopfront signage and unsympathetic materials)
- Commonwealth Studios: eastern parts of former Steam Factory

The following buildings are wholly or partially vacant and deteriorating due to disuse and neglect:

- Former Siemens works known as Westminster Industrial Estate (owned by Royal London): 18-32 Bowater Road, 23-25 Bowater Road, 37 Bowater Road
- Commonwealth Studios: eastern parts of former Steam Factory
- The Victoria, Woolwich Road: (interiors fire-damaged)

The lack of activity, vacancy and disuse contributes to an air of neglect and abandonment. Carefully considered investment, which retains historic fabric, offers the opportunity for significant enhancement.



18-32 Bowater Road



23-25 Bowater Road





Former Siemens Cable Factory 37 Bowater Road



The Victoria, Woolwich Road



Steam Factory, Former Royal Dockyard, north elevation



The Victoria, detail



## 5.2 Public Realm

The poor condition of the public realm is highlighted on the Heritage at Risk register. Paving, road surfaces and boundaries are poor, and signage and interpretation is limited, despite the many walking and cycling routes that pass through the Conservation Area. Main issues are:

- **Woolwich Road** is highly trafficked which affects the ability to use and appreciate the historic character of the area
- **Walking and Cycling Routes:**
  - Despite completion of the Thames Path ‘missing link’ in 2018 via Bowater Road (and the introduction of Cycleway Q14) older wayfinding signage indicates ‘interim routes’ via the A206 Woolwich Road which poses unacceptably high road danger to cyclists and pedestrians
  - Online route maps for the Thames Path and the Capital Ring have not been revised with the Bowater Road ‘missing link’ and still divert pedestrians and cyclists along the A206 (Woolwich Road) and Ruston Road
  - Access to and from Bowater Road along the Thames Path is limited by a pedestrian gate and opening hours of 6am-9pm
  - Misleading proliferation of wayfinding signage at the Barrier and within Barrier Gardens: e.g. riverside path east of Barrier Information Centre is not accessible, despite signage to the contrary at the Barrier
- Lack of **heritage interpretation and signage** for the Siemens and Royal Dockyard industrial building clusters along walking/cycling routes discourages stopping en route
- **Thames Barrier:**
  - Low footfall as a visitor attraction
  - Visitor Centre, café and car parks are dated and underused
  - Uninviting public realm to surroundings including concentration of herringbone block paving



Misleading signage



Heavy traffic on Woolwich Road

- **Public cafes:** There are several on the walking/cycling routes: *Thames Barrier Café* on the Thames Path, *Arts Café* and *Riverside Café* (Thames Side Studios) and *The Chef House Kitchen* (Westminster Industrial Estate) on Cycleway Q14. However, signage is limited, and it is unclear whether they are open to the general public
- **Lack of soft landscaping, parks and green spaces** in the eastern part of the conservation area

## 6.0 Management Guidelines

### 6.1 Demolition and Redevelopment

*Guidance: Redevelopment proposals should ensure the retention, conservation, enhancement and creative re-use of the area's heritage assets and preservation and enhancement of the conservation area including the setting and views of 37 Bowater Road as a significant local landmark. New infill development must be of high design quality putting heritage at the heart of place-making. Redevelopment of buildings and areas which detract from the character of appearance of the conservation area and its setting is encouraged.*

As part of an Opportunity Area and a Strategic Development Location, the Conservation Area demonstrates opportunities for enhancement through repair, reuse and intensification. However, new development needs to be sensitively sited and designed. Historic England have confirmed that the Conservation Area was placed on the Heritage at Risk Register partly due to a high level of development pressure which could threaten its special interest.

Understanding the significance of this Conservation Area, as defined in this document, is an essential step in securing well-designed places. The Royal Borough therefore encourages development which is sensitive to local character and history while not preventing innovative change, in line with Nation Planning policy Framework (NPPF) Policy 127.

Royal Greenwich will seek the retention of those heritage assets, structures and features that make a positive contribution to the conservation area, as identified in section 2.1. These buildings and structures are central to the

area's character, individually and collectively and make a strong contribution to significance. Therefore, proposals for alteration or demolition that are considered to constitute substantial harm to the significance of the conservation area and outweigh any public benefits as set out in the NPPF, will not be considered acceptable.

There is a presumption in favour of the preservation of the industrial buildings on Bowater Road, The buildings are part of an important cluster of industrial heritage which should be used as a catalyst for heritage-led regeneration of the area, and any new infill development must reinforce their significance to create a distinctive, attractive and cherished place. The overarching development objective is to bring these heritage assets back into use to support the creative industries cluster in this part of Charlton Riverside.

Within the Conservation Area, total or substantial demolition of a front boundary or building over 115m<sup>3</sup> or requires planning permission. If demolition occurs without the necessary consent, the Royal Borough is likely to pursue enforcement action that may result in prosecution and a substantial fine.

Proposals for new development should integrate creative, contextual design with the preservation and enhancement of the area's distinctive industrial character. Scale and massing of new buildings must retain the prominence of Grade II Listed 37 Bowater Road as the principal landmark building in the area, preserving its setting and key views of it into and within the conservation area. Proposals must be informed by careful historic analysis and integrate with and complement the existing context by being sympathetic to historic building form, scale, technology, materials, design and detailing.

There is an opportunity to improve the character of the Conservation Area through the demolition and redevelopment of detractor buildings and sites identified on the interactive map above. Consent will not be granted unless a redevelopment scheme is of sufficiently high quality to preserve or enhance the Conservation Area. Redevelopment of buildings identified as making a neutral contribution to the conservation area may also be accepted, subject



to the quality of the replacement scheme. In terms of vacant sites, it should not be assumed that any development is better than the current situation.

Applications within the designated Areas of High Archaeological Potential must be accompanied by an archaeological assessment; the archaeological resource is fragile and non-renewable.

## 6.2 Development in the Setting of the Conservation Area

*Guidance: Applications for development schemes within the setting of the conservation area should be determined with reference to the identified views and open space assessment in this appraisal.*

Development within the setting of the Conservation Area should take opportunities to reinforce its local distinctiveness and industrial riverside character. Redevelopment should also look to enhance or better reveal the Area's significance, in line with NPPF policies 185 and 200. Development should be of an appropriate scale and design, having regard to the prevailing scale of development of one to five storeys within the Conservation Area.

As identified above, different areas of open space in the setting of the conservation area make a different contribution to its character and appearance (see section 4.1).

- Development on areas of existing open space which make a strong contribution to the character of the conservation area is likely to have a harmful impact;
- Development in areas which make a negligible contribution may be possible without causing harm, subject to design, siting, scale, density, choice of materials and retention of mature trees.

When proposing new development within the setting of the conservation area, applicants should assess and describe the likely impact of their proposals on the significance and character of the area, and on the views and open space identified above using Historic England's best practice guidance on *Setting of Heritage Assets* (2nd edition 2017). This advocates a staged methodological approach for assessing impacts on setting of heritage assets.

## 6.3 Public Realm

*Guidance: Streets and public spaces should be managed in a way that enhances their character and contribution to the conservation area.*

Character and appearance are sensitive to changes to the public realm and careful consideration is needed. Small changes made over time can have an adverse cumulative impact, as can be seen here where piecemeal alterations, neglect, heavy traffic and lack of an overall strategy have resulted in disparate and degraded road and footway surfaces and signage, as identified above.

More sensitive, better quality, consistent design and removal of superfluous street furniture, signage or road markings would help to improve the conservation area, along with the reinstatement of historic boundary treatments and traditional surfaces.

Public realm improvements could also incorporate parks and green spaces to improve amenity and community health, though these would need to balance with the area's industrial character. Developer contributions could also be utilised to deliver a better public realm. New schemes should retain any historic surfaces and features and preserve and enhance the conservation area, using materials and colours that are consistent with its character and appearance.

Public realm improvements should be in line with Historic England's guidance in 'Streets for All', see: [www.historicengland.org.uk/publications](http://www.historicengland.org.uk/publications), the London Plan and the Mayor's [Healthy Streets Approach](#).

## 6.4 Untapped Heritage Potential

*Guidance: explore the untapped potential for place-making and reinforcing the Conservation Area's industrial riverside character, including opportunities to:*

- Repair, restore and secure the future of the former **Siemens factory buildings at 18-32, 23-25 and 37 Bowater Road** which have huge potential for adaptive re-use given their large, open floor plates and robust and flexible internal layouts
- Restore the façade and redevelop the **Victoria Inn** as a gateway building framing Barrier Gardens, signposting the Barrier and River beyond

- Coordinate with TfL's Local Connections Study to ensure a consistent approach to proposed public realm improvements
- Optimise the Thames Barrier as a destination and visitor attraction and upgrade and enhance its surrounding **landscaping**
- Capitalise on the frequent use of the **multiple walking/cycling routes** in the area, especially **Quietway 14** which passes the heritage assets along Bowater Road and encourage users to recognise, engage with and appreciate the area's heritage:
  - By creating interpretative signage, heritage trails, guided walks etc.
  - By drawing on the strong **creative, artistic community** in the area to develop ideas and community-led arts projects and animate the area (see opposite for recent example)
- Amend published **Thames Path and Capital Ring route maps** with 'missing link' section via Bowater Road (Quietway 14), completed 2018
- Rationalise existing **wayfinding signage** and improve co-ordination between walking and cycling routes through the Conservation Area
- Capitalise on the existing **food and drink offer** by improving signage and accessibility to attract residents and visitors using the walking trails and cycle routes
- Address the heavy **volume of traffic** on Woolwich Road. As part of the Mayor's Transport Strategy, TfL are proposing improvements including a dedicated segregated cycleway to reduce road danger, congestion, improve air quality and encourage walking and cycling.
- Create new parks and green spaces which balance with the area's industrial character

The Royal Borough encourages discussions with the community and welcomes proposals to work collaboratively to realise the area's potential.



#### Community Arts Project 2020

Public hoarding along Thames Path extension on Bowater Road which explores the industrial history of the Conservation Area using artwork developed by Art Hub Studios in collaboration with local schools (funded by developer U+I)



## 6.5 Additions to the Local Heritage List

*The following buildings, structures and landscapes identified as positive contributors on the interactive map meet the selection criteria for local listing and will be added to the Royal Greenwich's Local Heritage List:*

### 25 Westfield Street (former electricity substation)

Small, single storey gable-fronted building of brick, painted white with pitched roof. Simple building with tall central opening for vehicles flanked by round headed niches within gable front. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century substation and the only surviving remnant of Siemens Brothers' extensive electrical works and vast factories on Westfield Street.

### Red brick wall (Hardens Manorway, remnant of 1911 Telephone Factory)

Tall red brick wall with row of bricked-up window openings with concrete lintels at low level. Southern section returns onto Westfield Street and features projecting brick quoins at the eastern end, indicating an entrance. Marks the south-eastern extent of Siemens Brothers' site and represents the only surviving remnant of the company's vast Telephone Factory of 1911. The doorway was the entrance to a tall five-storey frontage building; the wall with windows behind formed the western extent of a vast area of single-storey workshops with saw-toothed roofs.

### Church of St Catherine, 698 Woolwich Road (Lithuanian Church)

Single storey gable-front building of yellow stock brick, with bath stone dressings and a pantile roof. Greek-cross plan with queen post roof. Street façade is of simple design with a single decorative feature: a five-light window with scalloped heads and roll-moulded finials. Built as a Chapel of Ease in 1961 to designs by Walters & Kerr Bate to serve the local Catholic community working for Siemens and other local factories. Restored and reordered in 2013 by Nicholas Kirk Architects for the Lithuanian Church Community.

### Maryon Park

Maryon Park is of historical, archaeological, geological and cultural significance. It includes Gilbert's Pit, former sand quarry and geological Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which displays one of the most complete



25 Westfield Street



Wall on Hardens Manorway

sedimentary sequences in Greater London; and an excavated Romano-British hill fort on Cox's Mount, at the summit of Gilbert's Pit. The Park is also a remnant of Hanging Wood, ancient woodland and highwaymen hideout and was the most important location in *Blow-Up* (1966) a well-known film directed by Michelangelo Antonioni.

## 6.6 Repair, Maintenance and Alterations

*Guidance: property owners within the Conservation Area are strongly encouraged to undertake regular maintenance and sympathetic minor works to improve the condition and appearance of their properties, which will have a wider positive impact on the conservation area as a whole.*

Maintenance and upkeep of buildings within a Conservation area is generally a matter for the freeholders and leaseholders. Property owners are encouraged to maintain them to a good standard and to consider the effect of minor alterations on the wider character and appearance of the conservation area. Regular maintenance can prevent serious and expensive problems at a later date.

The conservation area could be enhanced through the reinstatement of historic features, including:

- Removal of uPVC or aluminium windows and replacement with well-designed timber alternatives in keeping with the building's and area's character
- Removal of non-historic render, paint or pebbledash without damage to the underlying surface
- Reinstatement of painted metal rainwater goods and historic boundary treatments

Alterations and extensions to heritage assets will only be supported where they sustain and enhance their heritage significance. Most external changes will require planning permission. For further information, please consult the

[Planning Portal](#) or the Royal Borough's [Planning and Building Control webpage](#).



Church of St Catherine, Woolwich Road window (Lithuanian Church)



Maryon Park, still from Blow-Up (1966) directed by Antonioni



## Appendix I

### Sources

- Listing descriptions for the Former Siemens Cable Factory at 37 Bowater Road and the Steam Factory complex in the former Royal Dockyard can be found online on the [National Heritage List England](#).
- The [Royal Greenwich Local Heritage List](#) contains detailed descriptions of the local heritage assets referred to in this Appraisal. It is available online and updated regularly.
- Appraisal and description of Royal Greenwich's *Areas of High Archaeological Potential* by the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service (GLAAS) can be found on Historic England's website here: [Greater London Archaeological Priority Areas](#).

## Appendix 2

### Historical Development

#### The 18th Century

This part of the riverside west of Woolwich was originally low-lying marshland. It was drained for agricultural use in the 18th and early 19th centuries and subsequently adopted for industrial uses during the 19th and early 20th century.

Rocque's map of 1741-45 shows the area as a network of fields comprising a mixture of ploughed land and pasture. However, the principal street pattern is already recognisable. **Woolwich Road** is clearly delineated as a wide, sinuous thoroughfare. A historic riverside route since Roman times, it was located slightly inland on raised ground above the marsh. **Hardens Manor Way** and **Trinity Street** (now **Warspite Road**) originated as access routes into the fields during the 18th century and can be seen branching off Woolwich Road to the north. At this point they did not extend to the river.

**Maryon Park** is another clearly recognisable feature, just south of Woolwich Road. On Rocque's map it is referred to a 'Hanging Wood', an area of ancient woodland within the Charlton manorial estate, reputed to be a highwayman's hideout (see 19th century illustration overleaf). The land was given to the London County Council by the Lord of the Manor Sir Spencer Maryon-Wilson and laid out as a park in 1891.

#### The Dockyard and the beginnings of Industry

In Rocque's 18th century map the **Royal Dockyard** - 'The King's Yard' - can be seen confined to the eastern fringes of Woolwich. Just over 100 years later the Tithe Apportionment notes that the former meadow and garden east of Trinity Way is 'now dockyard' belonging to the Admiralty. The 1847 Tithe map reflects the significant expansion of the Dockyard from the late 1820s onwards following the acquisition of the western lands in 1808-11. This included the reconfiguration of the water system, involving two large steam basins for fitting and repairing engines to ships whilst afloat, and the construction of the **Steam Factory** between 1838-1847.



John Rocque's map of London 1741-45



1847 Tithe Map





"Looking towards Woolwich", sketch of what is now Maryon Park from *Hanging Wood, Charlton and Other Poems* by William Bance, 1844

This illustration of 1844 shows the Steam Factory towards the end of its construction phase. The factory Chimney towers over the surroundings and was evidently already a prominent local landmark. The highest point of Hanging Wood (later Maryon Park) is depicted in the foreground; this was known as 'Cox's Mount' and was used by the Romans as a hill fort and later to adjust ships' compasses in the 1850s.

The sketch derives from a book of poems paying homage to Hanging Wood and its environs: "Hail, Hanging Wood! Thy beauties are unsung!", though reference is made to its name and dark origins as a haunt of highwaymen, "They called thee hanging! Thou hast been, 'tis said, A nursing place of crime; where evil men to plot their schemes of wickedness, have laid". Maryon Park also featured in Antonioni's cult 1960s film 'Blow-Up'.

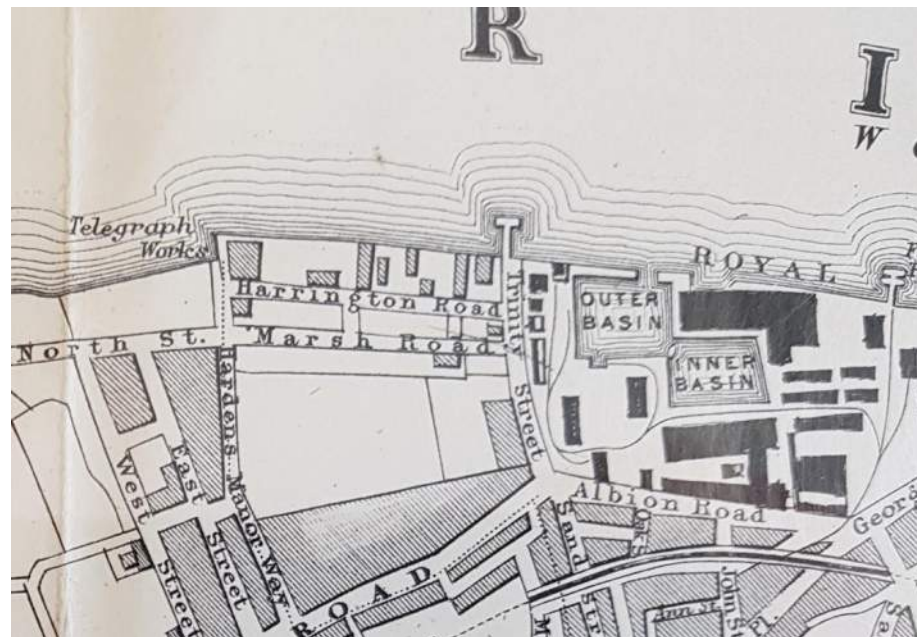
The Steam Factory buildings at the Dockyard are not illustrated on subsequent maps including the Ordnance Survey map series, presumably for reasons of national security! However, a map from the 1860s has had the buildings added, no doubt after the Factory's closure. The existing building cluster comprising **Erecting Shop, Foundry & Smithery, Chimney, Police Station** and **Apprentice School** is clearly identifiable south of the 'Inner Basin'. The Steam Factory was a distinctly separate entity from the rest of the Dockyard, with its own entrance, the West Gate, and even a second police station to patrol and control the workforce.

The 1847 Tithe map and the Gossett map of 1853 both show piecemeal housing development along Woolwich Road but with the exception of the Royal Dockyard no significant industry, only a small rocket factory and a timber yard. By this time **Bowater Road** had been laid out, though it was originally known as Marsh Road, alluding to the area's paludal origins.

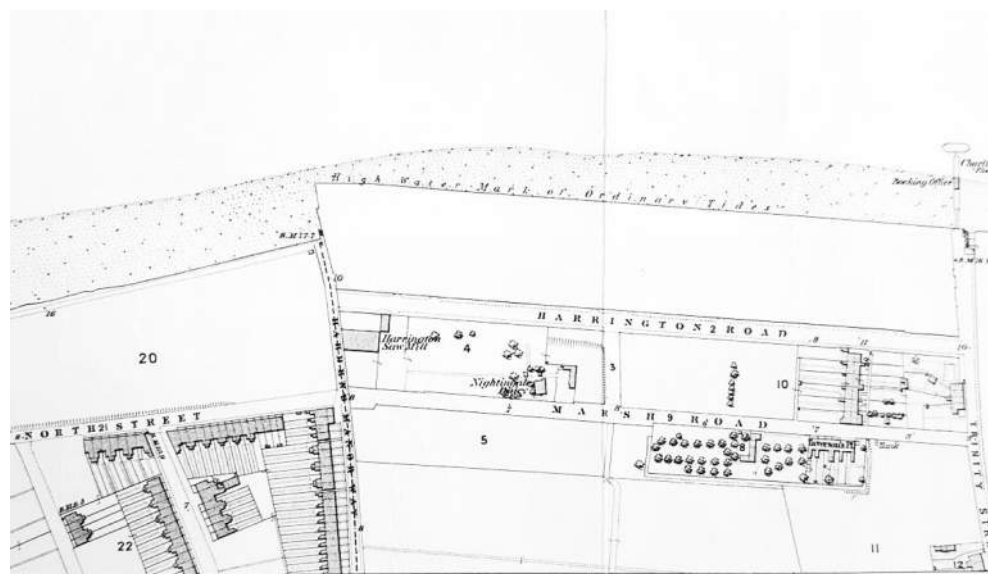
The first edition Ordnance Survey map indicates that by 1869 **Harrington Road** (now **Harrington Way**) had been laid out between Marsh (**Bowater Road**) and the river. The name was derived from the Harringtons, landowners of the majority of the cultivated lands north and south of Marsh Road and who operated a sawmill at the end of Harrington Road in 1867.

### Housing and Education

The intensification and major expansion westwards of the works at the Dockyard was exploited by local developers. During the 1840s Woolwich Road became densely built up, with courtyards and back-to-back housing on the north side, and tightly packed terraces to the south, no doubt rented out to skilled workers at the steam factory. The land between Woolwich Road and the river was also progressively developed as low-cost, working class housing for boatmen and industrial workers. This dense network of terraced houses on North Street (now **Herringham Street**), East Street (now **Eastmoor Street**) and West Street (now **Westmoor Street**) became a notorious Victorian slum: according to Charles Booth the 'wretched homes of a very poor class' (Life and Labour in London, 1890). The houses became uninhabitable due to damp and poor sewerage and were demolished in the 1930s and after WWII.

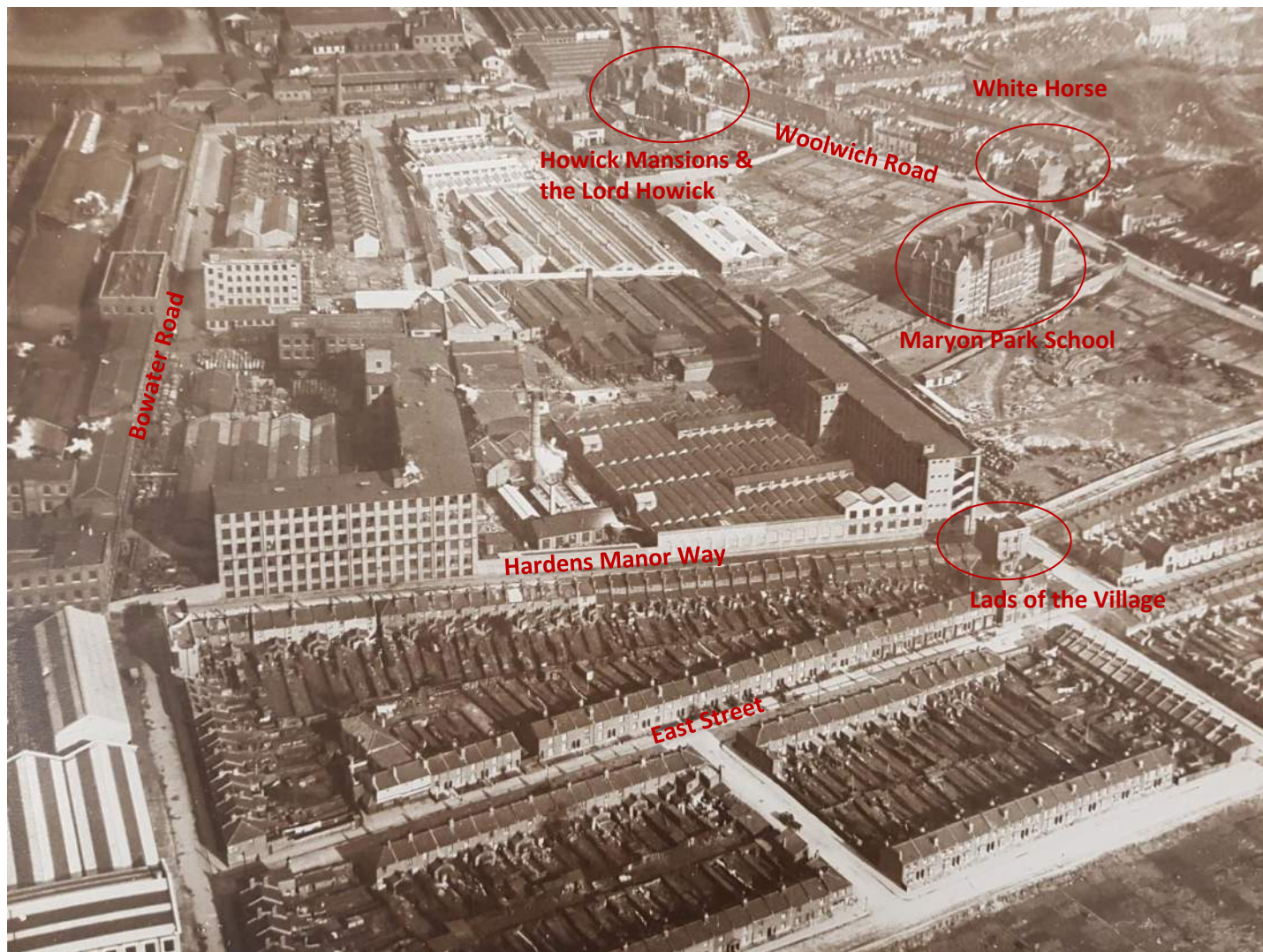


Map of the 1860s



1869 edition Ordnance Survey map





The area looking east c. 1925; the cramped terraces of East, North and West Streets can be seen in the foreground with Siemens's factory behind

This period of rapid local population expansion prompted the building of **Maryon Park School** (now Windrush Primary) in 1894-6 on Woolwich Road opposite Maryon Park; the photograph shows the school in 1925 after its two extensions. The cramped terraces on Woolwich Road and up to the river formed the catchment area, principally housing skilled workers from the adjacent Siemens factory.

None of this housing survives today. The north side of Woolwich Road was cleared for further expansion of Siemens' works when the road was widened c.1900, as can be seen in the photograph; the terraces on Woolwich Road south side were demolished at the end of the 20th century.

Whilst the housing was swept away, the commercial buildings survive. The former **Lads of the Village** public house (now Barrier Animal Care) is the only building still standing in the once dense network of terraces between Woolwich Road and the river. The three pubs on Woolwich Road also survive: the Lord Howick, White Horse and Victoria.

The sole survivor of the area's modest 19th century housing is **Howick Mansions** on Woolwich Road, built by the proprietor of the adjoining Lord Howick in 1898 to house Siemens' and Dockyard depot workers. This development is also significant as an early example of social housing and of tenement-type housing combining flats and shops.

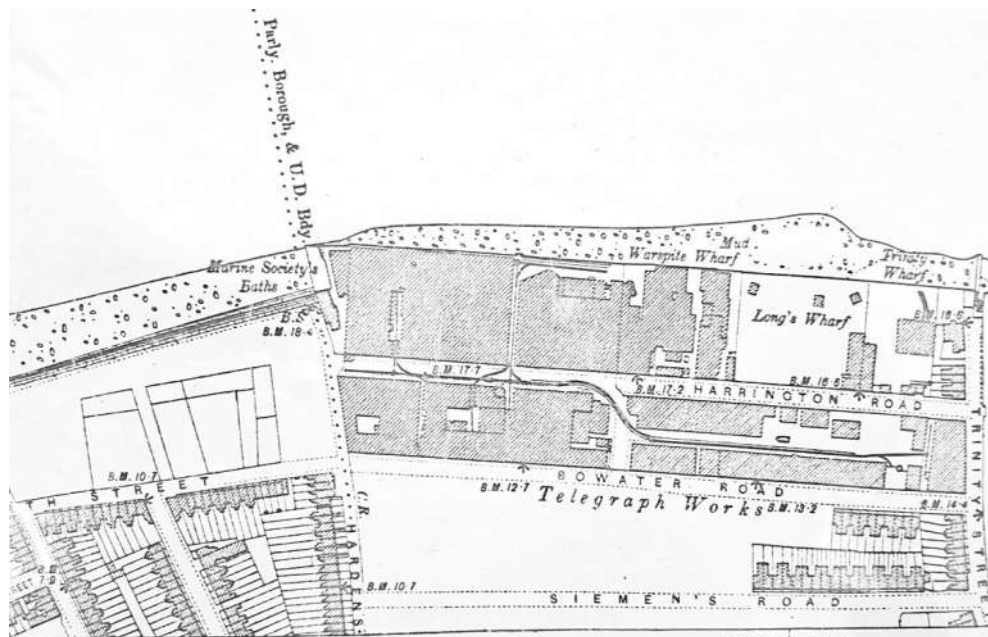


## The arrival of Siemens Brothers

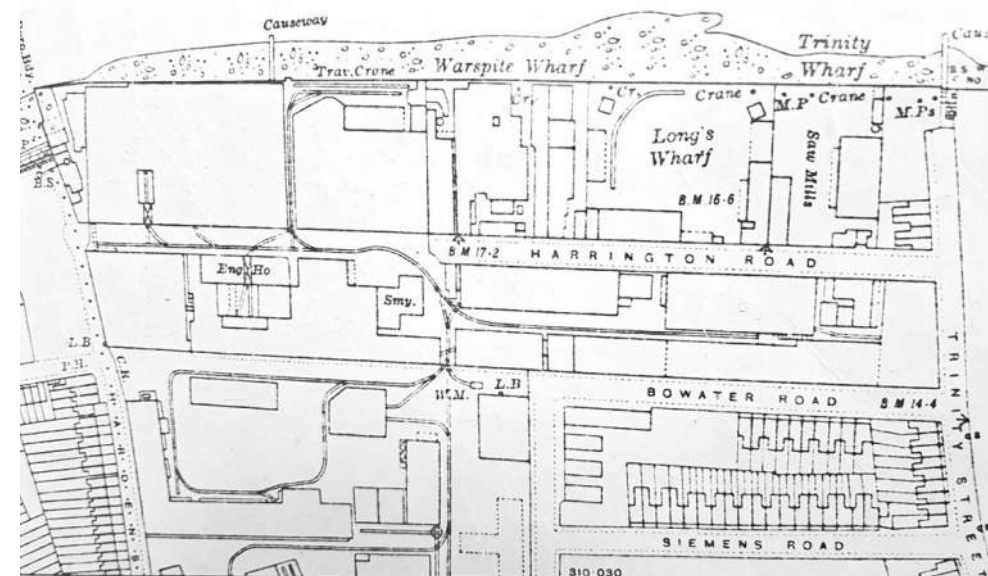
As the photograph of 1925 shows, the area was dominated by the Siemens works. **Siemens Brothers** arrived on the riverside west of Woolwich in 1863. The 1897 edition Ordnance Survey map reflects the company's rapid expansion; during 1870-74 the works trebled in size to over 1.6 hectares including a brick-built range used to store, process and test gutta-percha and India-Rubber for cable insulation. This range can be seen on the map on the western half of Bowater Road; part of this range survives today as **18-32 Bowater Road** and is a local heritage asset.

The works expanded further eastwards in the 1890s, infilling all available land between the river and **Bowater Road**, as the company branched out into electrical cable and telephone wire production. This expansion is reflected in two other surviving building ranges on the eastern end of Bowater Road and southern side of Harrington Way. The two workshop ranges of 1889 and 1895 at **8-10 Bowater Road** housed dynamo shops and milling machinery; the 17-bay range of 1898 known as **Mellish House** on Harrington Way (now Unit 7, Thames-side Studios) was originally built as workshops for cable armouring and lead-sheathing.

The early twentieth century marked a significant period of expansion south of Bowater Road, as the 1916 edition Ordnance Survey map illustrates. The need for large, open well-lit floor plates resulted in three substantial concrete-framed factories, two of which survive: **37 Bowater Road**, now Grade II Listed and **17-21 Bowater Road**, locally listed. The works continued to grow south of Bowater Road and buildings were erected up until the late 1950s. Three of these survive on Bowater Road: **Nos. 15** (1937), **23-25** (1926) and **34** (1947, now Art Hub Studios), also local heritage assets.



1897 edition Ordnance Survey map



1916 edition Ordnance Survey map



### Siemens Brothers: global player and industry leader

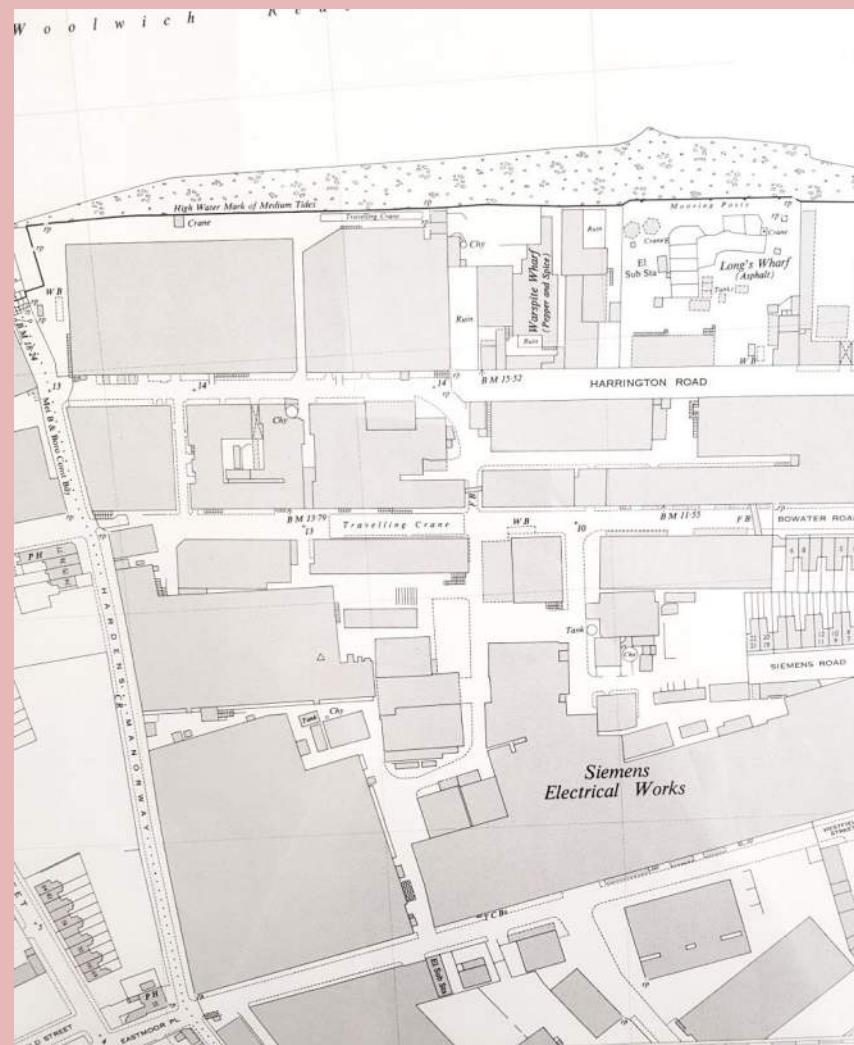
Siemens Brothers' Telegraph and Telephone works were established at Woolwich in 1863 by Sir William Siemens, eminent engineer, inventor and founder of Siemens in the UK. For over 100 years, this part of the Borough was moulded by Siemens Brothers, the first German multinational corporation in the UK.

The large site at Woolwich enabled Siemens to manufacture their own submarine telegraph cable and the company expanded quickly. Siemens were responsible for some of the earliest transcontinental cable systems: they laid the first transatlantic cable from England to the USA in 1874; Paris to New York in 1879 and London to Nova Scotia in 1881-2. By 1884 the company was producing an average of one major Atlantic cable every year and according to the Survey of London (Vol. 48, Woolwich) Siemens had established itself as the industry leader in submarine-cable manufacture.

Siemens was not only pioneers in cabling for telegraphy but also for telephony and electrification (lighting, railways, power stations etc.) as well as in telephone exchange systems and the telephone itself. In 1891 Siemens designed and laid the first British submarine telephone cable between England and France. And in 1930 Siemens invented the Neophone, the popular telephone marketed for 'noisy situations'!

The Woolwich works also played a significant role during both world wars: manufacturing thousands of miles of field telephone cable for WWI. During WWII the Admiralty turned to Siemens to devise a cable capable of exploding magnetic bombs and so Siemens developed the 'Clyde Loop'. Siemens was also the key player in the development of the high-pressure Pipeline Under the Ocean (PLUTO), as part of Operation Overlord to support the allied invasion forces following the D-Day Landings. Remarkably, the works were extended specifically for this purpose in 1942, despite suffering bomb damage on no less than 27 occasions and losing over 32,500 sq. m. of floorspace.

The company was one of the Borough's largest employers for over a century and ceased production in 1968, resulting in the loss of 6000 jobs. Despite much demolition during the latter part of the 20th century, the surviving buildings remain the area's most significant and prominent legacy.



1954 edition Ordnance Survey map