

Woolwich Conservation Area Character Appraisal SPD March 2022

- 1.0 Overview of the conservation area & Interactive Map
- 2.0 Character
 - 2.1 Heritage Assets and Detractors
 - 2.2 Character Zones
 - 2.3 Traditional Building Materials
- 3.0 Setting and Key Views
 - 3.1 Contributions of Setting to Significance
 - 3.2 Townscape Views
 - 3.3 Context Views
- 4.0 Open Space Assessment
- 5.0 Condition and Issues
 - 5.1 Built Environment
 - 5.2 Public Realm
- 6.0 Management Guidelines
 - 6.1 Public Realm
 - 6.2 Untapped Heritage Potential
 - 6.3 Demolition and Redevelopment
 - 6.4 Development in the Setting
 - 6.5 Additions to the Local Heritage List
 - 6.6 Repair, Maintenance and Alterations
- Appendix 1: Sources
- Appendix 2: Historical Development



I.0 Overview of the Conservation Area

Background

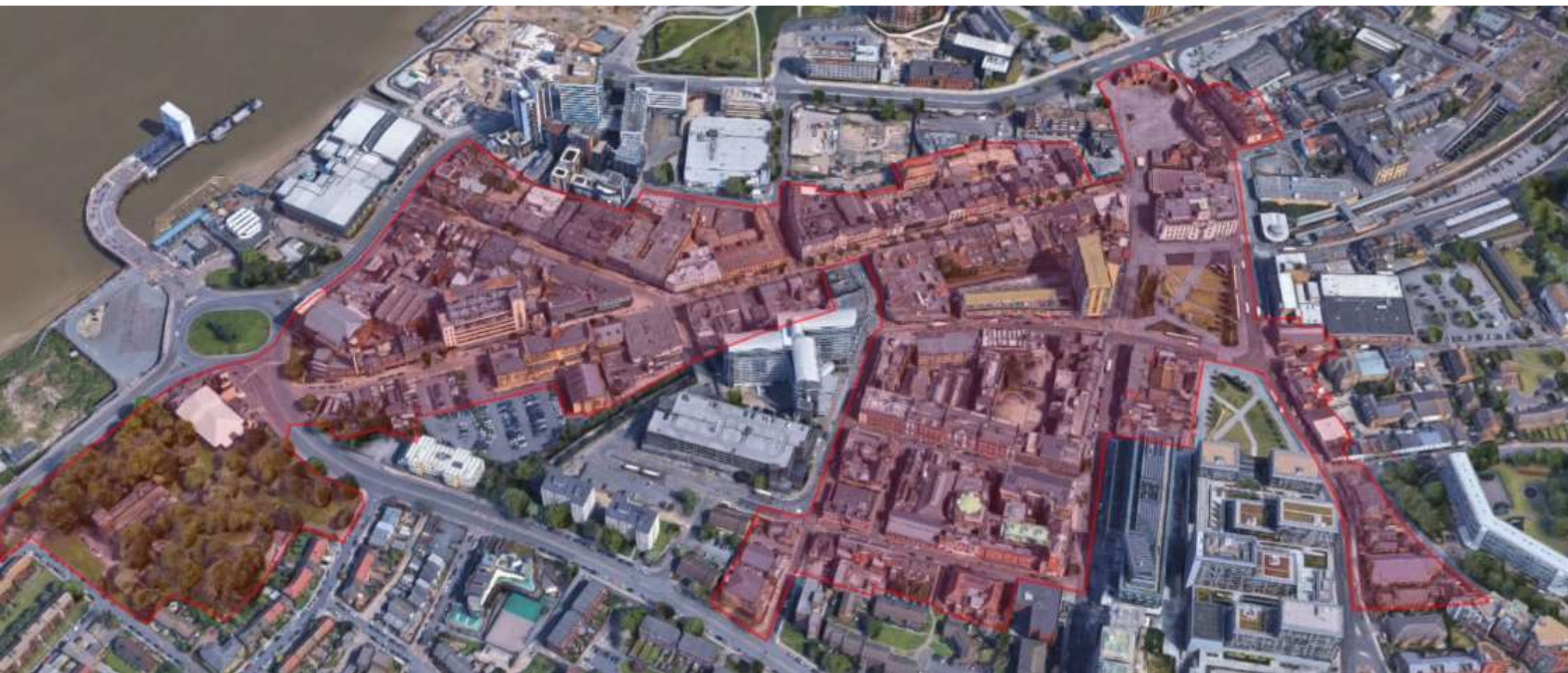
The **Woolwich Conservation Area** was designated in May 2019. The special architectural and historic interest of Woolwich was identified within the Woolwich Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (2012), the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy (2014) and within Survey of London Volume 48: Woolwich (2012). The [Woolwich Town Centre Heritage Study](#) (2018), commissioned to inform the review of the Woolwich Town Centre SPD, confirmed this special interest and forms the evidence base for the Conservation Area designation.

This document has the status of an SPD and is a material consideration in planning decisions. An SPD provides guidance on the implementation of planning policy.

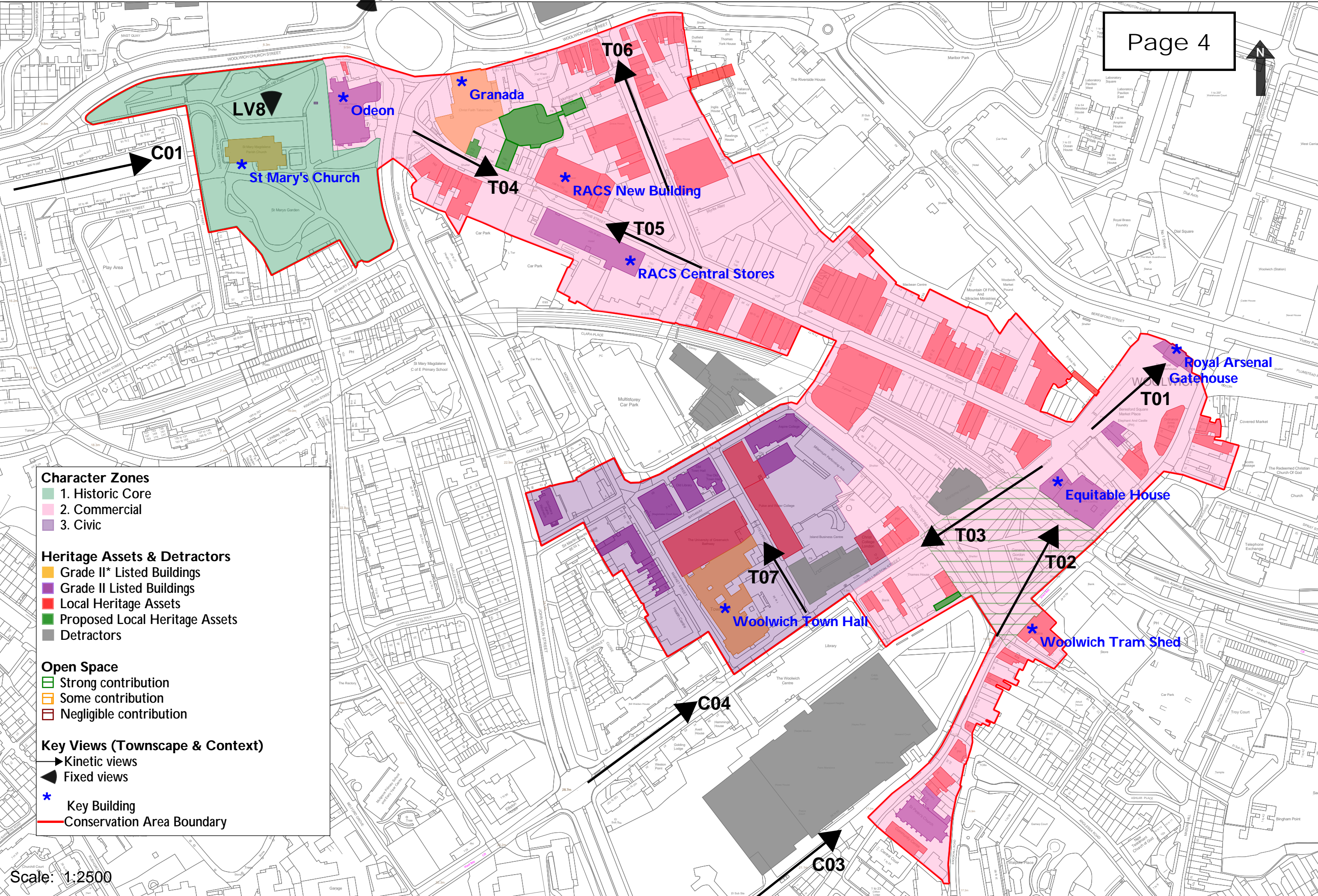
Summary of Significance

- Highlights Woolwich's fine **commercial, civic, cultural, co-operative** and **ecclesiastical** buildings spanning the 18C to 20C
- The London Plan 2021 defines Woolwich as one of eleven **former medieval market towns** (Character Map of London, figure 3.1)
- Part of a significant group of historic Thameside towns including Greenwich, Deptford and Chatham which developed to serve royal, naval and military ambitions but retain strong individual characters
- Buildings and public spaces illustrate development from a **historic market town** into a **thriving civic & commercial centre**
- Characterised by **low-rise built form**, public open spaces and **landmark historic buildings**
- Coherent townscape subdivided into three principal zones: **Historic Core, Commercial** and **Civic**
- Comprises principal public square, historic marketplace, 18C parish church and gardens, Victorian High Street, Catholic church complex, 1930s entertainment hub and late 19C-early 20C civic quarter

- Key **landmark buildings** have relatively tall vertical towers, which make an important contribution to Woolwich's skyline and aid wayfinding
- Includes 59 **local heritage assets** and 18 **listed buildings** including three at Grade II*
- Historic Interest: Influential in growth of **national co-operative movements**, the birthplace of one of Britain's foremost co-operative societies and one of its most successful building societies; associated with **General William Carr**, Governor General of the Royal Military Academy and **Tom Cribb**, world champion bare-knuckle boxer
- Architectural interest: includes fine examples of the work of **leading Victorian, Edwardian and inter-war architects** including: A.W.N. Pugin & Sir Alfred Brunwell Thomas; Met Police architect John Dixon Butler; cinema architects George Coles, Cecil Masey & Reginald Uren; modernist architects Hector O'Hamilton & Robert Lutyens
- **Edwardian opulence** of the first RACS building and Woolwich Town Hall and **monumental scale and avant-garde designs** of the cinemas and commercial buildings of the 1930s reflect Woolwich's substantial growth in economic prosperity and social mobility in the early 20th century.
- Artistic Interest: includes **exceptional interior design schemes** by stained glass artist Geoffrey Webb & theatre designer Theodore Komisarjevsky
- **River Thames** is important to the area's historic development and distinctive identity
- **Consistent building heights** predominantly 2-3 storeys, with several landmark buildings of 4-5 storeys
- **Characteristic materials**: 19C & early 20C buildings in yellow stock, red or buff coloured brick with stone, stucco or terracotta detailing; inter-war buildings faced in red brick, fine ashlar or pale-coloured faience tiles. Shopfronts of red and black granite



Aerial View of the Conservation Area



Heritage at Risk

The Conservation Area was placed on the **Heritage at Risk Register** by Historic England in October 2019 for its poor condition due to the number of neglected, vacant buildings and its high vulnerability to development proposals which could threaten its special interest.

Location

Woolwich town centre is located on the south bank of the Thames opposite North Woolwich and approximately 3 miles east of Greenwich. The town is an important river crossing point via the Woolwich Ferry and the Woolwich Foot Tunnel to the Royal Docks, London City Airport and the ExCel Centre on the other side of the Thames.

The Conservation Area is bounded by the A206 and the Woolwich Ferry pier to the north; the A206 and the Royal Arsenal Conservation Area to the northeast; the A205 and post-war residential development to the west; the north-eastern arm of the Woolwich Common Conservation Area to the southwest and Victorian and post-war housing to the east and southeast.

Key arrival points to Woolwich town centre are located within the Conservation Area at Greens End (Woolwich Arsenal DLR Station) and General Gordon Square (bus stops), and immediately adjacent to the Conservation Area (Woolwich Arsenal Train Station).

Boundary

The Conservation Area comprises Beresford Square, Greens End and General Gordon Square; Powis Street, Hare Street, Mortgramit Square and most of Woolwich High Street (south); St Mary's Church and Gardens; Thomas Street, Market Street, Bathway, Polytechnic Street, parts of Wellington Street and Calderwood Street; and sections of Woolwich New Road adjacent to Beresford Square and between Vincent and Sandy Hill Road.

Topography and geology

Unlike the adjoining alluvial marshes at Greenwich and Plumstead, Woolwich was ideally suited for riverside settlement. It is fortuitously located on a large spur of Thanet Sand, one of the few places where firm

ground reaches the Thames between the adjoining marshes lining the alluvial flood plain of the Thames River Basin.

The terrain rises gently from Woolwich High Street along Powis and Hare Street. The gradient is more pronounced in Beresford Square and General Gordon Square and Wellington Street rises steeply up towards Woolwich Common.

Planning and other designations

- Major Town Centre and Strategic Development Location
- Opportunity Area within the London Plan 2021
- Area of High Archaeological Potential **Civic Core (AHAP 22)**. Zone includes Market Street, Bathway, southern side of Calderwood Street and northern side of Wellington St.
- Area of High Archaeological Potential **Woolwich Dockyard (AHAP 23)**. Zone includes St Mary's Church and Gardens
- Area of High Archaeological Potential **Old Woolwich (AHAP 24)**. Zone includes Woolwich High Street, Hare Street, north side of Powis Street, Beresford Square and adjacent section of Woolwich New Road.
- Community Open Space: **General Gordon Square & St Mary's Gardens**
- Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (NC49) – **St Mary's Churchyard & Gardens**

2.0 Character

2.1 Heritage Assets and Detractors

The buildings and structures of the conservation area contribute in different ways to its overall character and appearance, some positively, others negatively (detractors). Key buildings are highlighted in blue text. The contributions of individual structures are shown on the layered interactive map on page 4.

Local Heritage Assets

Buildings which feature on Royal Greenwich's [Local Heritage List](#).

Bathway

- Former Woolwich Public Baths

Beresford Square

- 13-14
- 15-19 incl Ordnance Arms

Calderwood Street

- Polytechnic Hall

Hare Street

- 18-28
- 23-25
- 27a
- 29-31
- 33-37
- 44-46
- 47-49 Prince Albert PH/Rose's
- 50-58
- 51-61 (with 118-119 Woolwich High Street)
- 62 & 62a-c

Macbean Street

- 41-44

Polytechnic Street

- Former Thames Polytechnic (part)

Powis Street

- 1-7 Natwest
- 12 (former William Shakespeare PH)
- 22-28
- 23-25, 27
- 32, 34-38, 40-42
- 44-48 (former Electric House)
- 51-53
- 55-63 (former Marks & Spencer)
- 66-86
- 79-81
- 83-85

- 87-89
- 91-95
- 103-109
- 111-113
- 132-134
- 136
- [138-152 Wick Tower \(former RACS New Building\)](#)
- 165-167 (former Woolwich County Court)
- 169-173
- 179 Castle Tavern

Thomas Street

- 3-5
- Earl of Chatham PH

Wellington Street

- 2-4
- 6-10
- 11
- 12-14
- 17-19

Woolwich High Street

- 108-113 (consec)
- 120
- 121-123 (consec)
- 146

Woolwich New Road

- Church of St Peter Community Centre
- 2-2B
- 3
- [51-53 Woolwich Tram Shed](#)
- 61
- 63
- 71
- 89
- 91 Anglesea Arms PH
- 97 (former Gun Tavern)
- 99-101

Listed Buildings

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

Grade II*

Greenlaw Street

- [Church of St Mary Magdalene](#)

Powis Street

- [174-186 \(Former Granada Cinema\)](#)

Wellington Street

- [Woolwich Town Hall](#)

Grade II

Beresford Square

- [Main Entrance to Royal Arsenal \(Royal Arsenal Gatehouse\)](#)

Calderwood Street

- Former Woolwich Methodist Church (Gurdwara Sahib)
- University of Greenwich Woolwich Campus: original building, Gymnasium and corner entrance range, railings
- Woolwich Old Town Hall
- Former Magistrates Court
- Former Public Library

General Gordon Place

- [Woolwich Equitable House](#)

Greenlaw Street

- Thomas Cribb Monument in St Mary's Gardens

Green's End

- 18 & 19

John Wilson Street

- [New Wine Church \(former Odeon Cinema\)](#)

Market Street

- Former Police Station
- 24-28

Powis Street

- [125-153 \(Former RACS Headquarters Building\)](#)

Woolwich New Road:

- Roman Catholic Church of St Peter
- Presbytery to St Peter's Roman Catholic Church

Proposed Local Heritage Assets

The following buildings are proposed for local heritage listing (see Section 6.5 for further details).

Mortgramit Square

- Furlongs Motoring Complex

Powis Street

- 160-162 (Furlongs Motoring Complex)
- 170-172 Powis Street

Thomas Street

- 1

Detractors

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

Wellington Street

- 18-36

Green's End

- Maritime House

Outside the boundary

The following buildings are outside the boundary of the conservation area but have a detrimental impact on its setting due to their height, scale, design and siting:

Calderwood Street

- The Vista Building

Grand Depot Road

- Tesco

Woolwich Church Street

- Mast Quay

Woolwich High Street

- Waterfront Leisure Centre

2.2 Character Zones

This section provides an analysis of the character of the individual components of the Conservation Area. Each zone, and key building within it, is evaluated in terms of historic significance, architectural significance and townscape character. This is in line with the London Plan 2021 which requires boroughs to define an area's character including an assessment of the significance of its heritage assets and their contribution to local character (D1.A). This analysis is presented in bullet point form for ease of reference.

Zone 1: Historic Core

St Mary's Gardens & Church Hill

- Comprises Georgian parish church of St Mary Magdalene and surrounding former churchyard, now St Mary's Gardens
- **Historic Significance:**
 - Ancient origins as site of Woolwich's pre-Conquest and medieval churches
 - Important historic relationship with the river Thames
 - Significant site selected for 3 successive parish churches due to its prominent position on a hill above the river
 - Transformed from burial ground into public gardens in 1893-5; majority of monuments and tombs removed during re-landscaping in 1960s
 - Important surviving monument: Grade II listed stone lion commemorating Tom Cribb (1781-1848), world champion bare-knuckle boxer 1809-21
- **Architectural Significance & Townscape Character:**
 - Principal public green space and important 'green lung'; and sole wooded area and historic landscape element within the conservation area
 - Distinctive topography due to elevation over the Thames



St Mary's Church & Gardens



Tom Cribb Monument and view of the Thames

- Provides an important visual connection with the river
- Provides an attractive landscape setting for St Mary's Church and critical to appreciating its significance
- Formal and informal landscaping includes winding paths, mature shrubbery and a lime walk leading to the church
- Characterised by a variety of ornamental trees including silver birch, maple, lime, London plane, Indian bean, willow
- Self-contained, secluded ambience, despite proximity of A roads
- **Key Building: Church of St Mary Magdalene**
 - Of great historical importance to the conservation area
 - Grade II* stock brick Georgian church with Portland stone dressings (architect unknown)
 - Built 1732-9 to replace the Norman parish church to the north, demolished in 1740 as it was structurally unsound
 - Elevated position over the river and above the rest of Woolwich central to its character
 - Visibility from the river is a fundamental aspect of its setting and crucial to appreciating its significance
 - High townscape value as the focal point of St Mary's Gardens

Zone 2: Commercial

- Includes 8 nationally listed buildings and 55 local heritage assets
- Buildings illustrate the evolution of Woolwich as a successful commercial centre for the wider district
- Groups of buildings of modest scale and architectural merit interspersed with exceptional landmark buildings and later 20C infill
- Includes group of early 18C shops, groups of ornamental Victorian frontages from 1890s rebuilding, and notable examples of early 20C buildings including two great cinemas of 1930s and two of London's most significant monuments to co-operativism



- The former Granada and Odeon cinemas, the new Royal Arsenal Cooperative Society (RACS) department store and the Woolwich Equitable Building are striking designs which stand out by virtue of their monumental scale and stark modernity.

Beresford Square

- Key to reinforcing Woolwich's identity as a historic market town
- **Historic Significance:**
 - Originally the centre of Woolwich life and Woolwich's economic, social and political fabric
 - Served multiple functions: setting for a 'very lively and ordinary' market, stage for many zealous religious and political debates and interface between military and civilian Woolwich
 - Home to Woolwich's historic 400-year-old market since 1888 (officially); market granted its royal charter in 1618
 - Important gathering place, meeting and rallying point for politicians and campaigners including Labour MP Will Crooks, whose memorial service was held here in 1921
 - Associated with General William Beresford, appointed Master-General of the Ordnance by Wellington
- **Architectural Significance & Townscape Character:**
 - Significant part of Woolwich's public realm; forms important setting for Grade II Listed Beresford Gate and critical to appreciating its significance
 - Open character and well-preserved surrounding townscape, with consistent building heights of 2 to 3 storeys
 - Square enclosed by Heritage Assets on most sides: Beresford Gate & 18-19 Greens End (Grade II) and nos. 5, 13-14, 15-19 (Local Heritage Assets)
 - Peripheral buildings, including upper storey of Beresford



Beresford Square



Southern entrance to the Square

- Gate, represent development of Woolwich as a market town; official establishment of the market in 1888 prompted much ambitious rebuilding around the Square
- Irregular shape result of 19C clearances; not laid-out as a formalised 'square'
- Historic street furniture: three 19C granite animal troughs
- **Key Building: Beresford Gate (Royal Arsenal Gatehouse)**
 - Grade II Listed historic gate and principal entrance to the Royal Arsenal
 - Named after and commissioned by General Beresford
 - Credentials set into panels on south elevation: monograms of King George IV and Gen. Beresford, Arsenal coat of arms and date of '1829'; artillery on parapet display Royal Cipher
 - Built in several phases: 1828-9 (lower storey) 1859 (bell tower and offices); 1891 (first floor offices in red brick); spear-headed gates date from 1936 when foot entrances widened
 - Regency and Victorian hybrid and an architectural curiosity; draws significance from historic alterations which reflect its changing functions
 - Functioned as the main entrance for Royal Arsenal workers and symbolises the relationship between the Arsenal and the town centre
 - Loss of Arsenal wall and road widening has severed it from its context; pedestrian crossing has helped to improve connectivity between the Arsenal and the Gatehouse

General Gordon Square

- Principal public open space and central focus of the Town Centre
- **Historic Significance:**
 - Woolwich's notorious 'Smokehole', due to soot from the



open railway cutting of 1847-9, covered over in 1927-8 and named General Gordon Place by public petition.

- Relatively recently formed amenity space, the result of clearance of a shopping precinct during the 1980s
- Opened as a town square in 1984 by BBC *Blue Peter*'s Simon Groom and dog Goldie! Northern and western sides pedestrianized 2009-10; re-landscaped 2010-11

- **Architectural Significance & Townscape Character:**

- Though non-historic, of key importance to character and appearance of conservation area and its centre of gravity
- Forms open setting for Grade II Listed Equitable House and Woolwich Tramshed; makes an important contribution to their significance and has increased the ability to appreciate it
- Surrounded by Heritage Assets: Equitable House (Grade II), 3-5 Thomas St, 1-7 Powis Street, Woolwich Tramshed etc.
- Surrounding commercial townscape is fine grain, modest in scale and has a readable coherence
- Though Tesco & Maritime House do not maintain the Square's fine grain urbanism, being set back they are visually peripheral and do not detract from the primacy of Equitable House
- Well-designed, high-quality landscaping responds to the natural gradient down towards the river
- Now a vibrant and much-valued public space and key arrival point in the Conservation Area

- **Key Building: Equitable House**

- Grade II Listed former headquarters of *Woolwich Equitable Building Society* ('the Woolwich') by Grace & Farmer 1935
- Monumental landmark building dominating General Gordon Square with its 'matronly' presence; forms a strong anchor



View of 1-5 Thomas Street



Equitable House

- Substantial, steel-framed Portland stone edifice designed in avant-garde *Baroque Moderne* style, expressing modernity through its elegant Deco detailing
- Grand scale, lavish use of luxury materials and latest labour-saving devices reflected its historic importance as the HQ of one of the UK's largest building societies and a major achievement of local cooperativism
- Creation of the Square and transformation into a pedestrianised open space has greatly enhanced its setting and the ability to appreciate its significance and architectural primacy
- Houses various commercial units, including Equitable pub in the former double-height public banking hall since 2014

Powis Street, Hare Street & Green's End

- Woolwich's commercial core & key route from the riverfront
- Characterful Victorian architecture punctuated by distinctive early 20C buildings
- Vibrant and diverse retail zone with a high level of activity
- **Historic Significance:**
 - Associated with Greenwich brewers William & Thomas Powis who laid out Powis Street in 1783 to connect St Mary's Church with Green's End; and Richard Hare of Woolwich's Dog Yard brewery
 - Powis and Hare Street form 19C connection between the original riverside settlement of Woolwich (& early 18C High Street) & early 18C hamlet at Green's End
 - Comprehensively remodelled during the 1890s by prominent local architect Henry Hudson Church (1827-1914) in eclectic, historicist style
 - Powis Street described as the 'Ramblas' of Woolwich (Survey of London Vol. 48, 2012)



Equitable House: southeastern entrance, detail



Powis Street: the 'Ramblas' of Woolwich

- By late 19C established as a major Victorian high street and commercial centre for wider district
- Birthplace of Co-operativism: Woolwich Equitable, one of the UK's first permanent and most successful building societies, founded 1847 on Powis Street
- Birthplace of Co-operativism: Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society (RACS), became the UK's second largest co-operative society, founded 1868, established Powis St 1873
- **Architectural Significance & Townscape Character:**
 - 19C buildings illustrate development from modest high street into a fashionable Victorian shopping parade
 - Grand designs and ornate detailing of 1890s remodelling reflect growing prosperity of the town centre
 - Surviving buildings of 1860s represent earlier commercial building type and adaptation to compete with expansion of the 1890s
 - High quality ornamental façades retaining much architectural enrichment on the upper storeys
 - Includes London's greatest monuments to the cooperative movement: two large and impressive former RACS department stores on Powis Street; group value with 132-6
 - Two iconic cinemas of the 1930s with a combined capacity of 5000 (former Granada & Odeon on John Wilson St) form a gateway from the north
 - Includes former largest and most complete motoring complex in southeast London in the 1930s (Furlongs, see pp. 17, 38-39)
 - Includes exceptional examples of 20C modernism by eminent exponents: cinema architects Coles, Masey & Uren, theatre designer Komisarjevsky, Marks & Spencer architect Robert Lutyens and post-war architect Hector O'Hamilton



Powis Street: buildings of the 1860s (centre) and 1890s (right)



66-86 Powis Street: Kent House (1890)



18-28 Hare Street (former Woolworths, 1930)



44-48 Powis Street: Electric House (1935-6)



John Wilson Street: Odeon Cinema (1937)



Mortgramit Square: Furlongs Motoring Complex (1938-9)

- Distinctive, coherent townscape of continuous building frontages with few gaps, consistent building heights of three storeys, strong building lines and tight grain
- Post-war infill buildings replicate shopfront widths and building heights and reinforce historic rhythm and scale
- Rows of mature trees on Powis Street soften the urban environment and create a distinctive leafy character
- Powis and Hare Street form strong, linear features which define the conservation area
- Originally paved with wooden setts; several 19C wood-block footway covers survive along Powis Street
- **Key Buildings: former Royal Arsenal Cooperative Society (RACS) Stores, 125-153 & 138-152 Powis St**
 - RACS was the largest co-operative society in London and became one of the foremost co-operatives in Britain
 - Foundation and activity of the RACS central to Woolwich's commercial development
 - Two large RACS commercial premises define the west end of Powis St: Central Stores of 1902-26 by F Bethell and New Department Store of 1938 by SW Ackroyd
 - The sleek, streamlined Art Deco Department Store is a strong counterpoint to the richly embellished Renaissance-style Central Stores opposite
 - Edwardian opulence of the Central Stores with its elaborate terracotta enrichment contrasts with the striking avant-garde New Department Store with its continuous cantilevered canopy, a new continental feature in Woolwich
 - Monumental building scale reflects Woolwich's growth in economic prosperity and social mobility in the early 20C
 - Both stores reflect the high social importance of the RACS and represent its motto "Each for all and all for each"



Powis Street: RACS Central Stores (1902-26)



Powis Street: RACS New Department Store (1938)

- Edwardian copper-domed clock tower and Art Deco tiled tower opposite are prominent local landmarks and provide strong vertical elements on Powis Street
- High townscape value; together they make a significant contribution to the character of the conservation area
- **Key Building: former Granada Cinema (now CFT Cathedral) 174-186 Powis St**
 - Grade II*, built 1936-7 to designs by Cecil Masey and Reginald Uren FRIBA, eminent theatre and cinema architects
 - One of Britain's most important and magnificent cinema interiors, designed by Theodore Komisarjevsky, virtuoso 20C Russian theatrical director and designer
 - Ingeniously designed by Uren on an awkwardly shaped plot with a long, curved façade, to address the streamlined Odeon opposite
 - Advertising tower with its full-height glazing (now infilled) forms an important vertical feature in the streetscape
- **Key Building: former Odeon Cinema (now New Wine Church), John Wilson Street**
 - Grade II, built 1936-7 to designs of George Coles, notable architect and designer of Art Deco cinemas
 - One of the UK's best surviving examples of the "Odeon" style
 - Eye-catching futuristic structure on a monumental scale, inspired by contemporary automobile design
 - Sleek modernism and bold horizontality accentuated by window-less design and smooth, cream-coloured faience finish, articulated by vertical 'fins'
 - Despite creation of the A205 dual carriageway, these two buildings give the west end of the Conservation Area a strong identity



Former Granada Cinema (1936-7)



Former Odeon Cinema (1936-7)

Mortgramit Square

- **Historic Significance:**
 - 18C route connecting Powis Street to Hare Street
 - Eastern section known as 'Dog Yard' & site of Dog Yard brewery established by John Hare in 1730s
 - One of few-surviving backyards & thoroughfares that characterised late 18C and early 19C Woolwich
 - Laid out as a three-sided 'square' in the early 19C; redeveloped by Furlongs in 1938-9 as an ambitious motoring complex, the largest in southeast London
- **Architectural Significance & Townscape Character:**
 - Lane with double dogleg paved with historic granite setts
 - Rare-surviving part of Woolwich's historic public realm & of high townscape value
 - Eastern end delineated by fine faience flank elevation of Rose's Free House and granite kerbstones
 - Furlongs defines the western part of the lane due to its scale, bulk and rounded corners, a rare example in Greenwich of 1930s Streamline Moderne design for the automotive industry
 - Includes quaint Council-built electricity sub-station of 1932 and narrow historic alley leading past Plaisted's Wine House

Wellington Street (eastern end: Nos. 2-14 & 7-19)

- **Historic Significance:**
 - Laid out 1811-12 to improve links between the military developments at the Royal Arsenal & Woolwich Common
 - Developed as a commercial street in the early 19C; three late-Georgian shop-houses survive from this phase
 - Remodelled by H. H. Church in the 1890s



Mortgramit Square (from left): Rose's, sub-station & Furlongs



Former Furlongs Garage and Workshop

- **Architectural Significance & Townscape Character:**

- Characterised by 3-storey Victorian buildings with ornate facades and high-quality detailing
- Nos. 11 & 17-19 are important survivors of pre-Victorian Woolwich and their modest scale is part of their significance

Woolwich High Street (nos. 108-132 consec)

- **Historic Significance:**

- Ancient road and principal riverside route dating back to Roman times
- Woolwich's original 18C high street and location of historic Woolwich prior to the 19C town ran along riverfront
- Includes group of early 18C shop-houses, the oldest buildings in the town centre
- Home of Tom Cribb (1781-1848) world champion bare-knuckle boxer after his retirement (No. 111)

- **Architectural Significance & Townscape Character:**

- Early 18C shop-houses (at 108-114 and 116-123 consec) convey strong impression of the 18C riverside town
- Characterised by modest scale buildings of 2 to 3 storeys, with staggered eaves heights and traditional roof forms
- Important survivor of fine-grain townscape and dense street patterns that once epitomised Woolwich riverside
- Though unassuming, buildings contribute much to the historic character of Woolwich

Woolwich New Road

- Coherent groups of heritage assets forming the gateway to the conservation area and the town centre
- Buildings collectively and individually add much character to the conservation area



108-114 Woolwich High Street



59-73 Woolwich New Road

- **Historic Significance:**

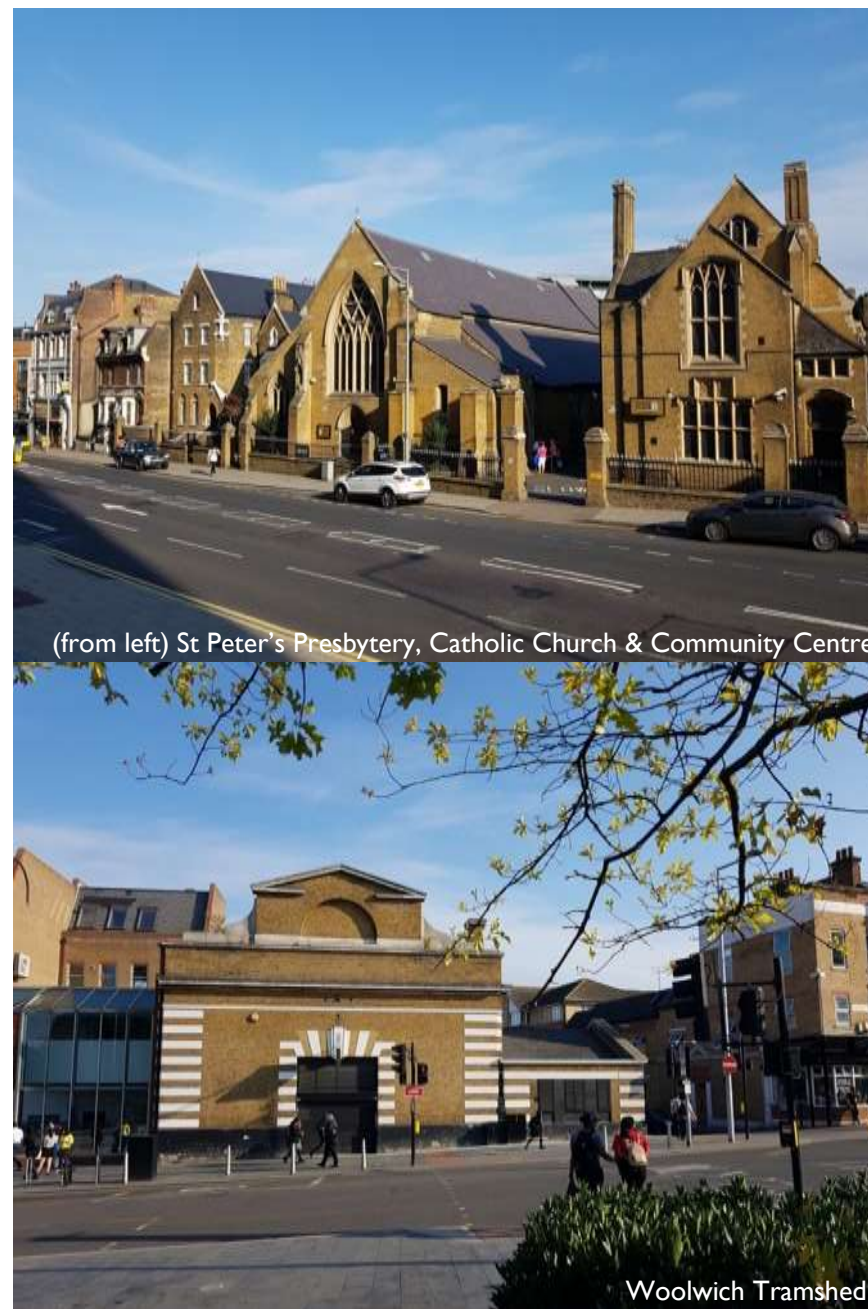
- Illustrates Woolwich's historical development from 18C-20C
- One of the oldest roads in Woolwich, and principal approach to the town from all directions
- Originated as ancient and narrow thoroughfare 'Cholic Lane'; widened and realigned at the northern end to become 'New Road' in 1765
- Contains one of last remnants of Georgian Woolwich
- Embodies Woolwich's commercial expansion during late 19C and early 20C, along with Powis Street
- The Pioneer Bookshop (no. 3) played an important role in the success of the Woolwich Labour Party between 1905-1978

- **Architectural Significance & Townscape Character:**

- Forms a coherent, fine-grain townscape
- Characterised by modest scale buildings of 2 to 3 storeys, with staggered eaves heights and varied roofscapes
- Important survival of dense, historic street patterns which abutted the Arsenal
- Comprises several characteristic frontages, including St Peter's Catholic Church cluster which presents a series of striking Gothic gables varying in height, width and design
- Includes influential Victorian architect Pugin's earliest surviving church in London (St Peter's) and one of his best small secular buildings (St Peter's Presbytery)
- Includes part of a rare surviving Georgian townhouse of the 1780s (no. 89) and a rare tramline substation (Tramshed)

- **Key Building: Woolwich Tramshed**

- Local heritage asset with high townscape value in a



prominent location opposite General Gordon Square

- Rare surviving tramline sub-station, built 1909-10 for London County Council's Tramways
- Served last London tram from Woolwich to New Cross in 1952
- Holds an important place in London's transport history as a poignant link to lost mode of transport
- Rare building type; most electricity generating stations for the tramways were demolished
- Important cultural venue during 1970-80s for theatre and folksingers; saved from demolition through community action in 1980
- Handsome Mannerist classical design disguising its bulk as a large well-ventilated shed
- Well-proportioned pedimented façade with exaggerated architectural features accentuated in white stucco
- Re-landscaping of General Gordon Square enhanced its setting and the ability to appreciate its significance

Zone 3: Civic

Calderwood St, Market St, Wellington St, Bathway, Polytechnic St

- Significant cluster of civic heritage
- Distinct, cohesive and fine surviving Victorian and Edwardian townscape
- Civic functions comprise public library, public baths, polytechnic, police station, magistrates court and two town halls (and later health centre).
- **Historic significance:**



Magistrates Court (1912)



Old Town Hall (1842)
Public Library (left; 1901)

- One of the most concentrated civic complexes in London
- Reflects Woolwich's expansion and development as an administrative centre during late 19C and early 20C
- Provision of education and bathing facilities, alongside local governance, justice and policing designed to improve physical and intellectual welfare of the population
- **Architectural significance & townscape character:**
 - Fine Victorian and Edwardian buildings in neo-classical and Baroque Revival style
 - Unified by characteristic palette of red brick and Portland stone and embellished with rich architectural detailing
 - Compact and tightly clustered precinct; townscape is densely ordered with very little space between buildings
 - Consistent building heights of 2-3 storeys and relatively fine urban grain
 - Distinctive character and sense of place derived from inter-relationships of various municipal building types and historic pattern of related land uses
 - Remarkably cohesive in terms of scale and materiality although built to designs of several architects over a 100-year period and not a planned scheme
 - Former Bath House includes a Victorian chimney which forms a distinctive vertical element of the townscape
 - Historic street signs survive on several buildings: Magistrates Court, Baths and Old Town Hall
 - Includes Victorian Library, Polytechnic and Baths built to high quality designs of notable local architect H. H. Church
 - Includes buildings by major architects of Edwardian period including Sir Alfred Brunwell Thomas (Woolwich Town Hall) and John Dixon Butler FRIBA (Police Station and Magistrates Court)



Public Baths (left; 1892-4); Police Station (1910)



Polytechnic (left; 1890-92); Polytechnic Hall (1935-6)

- Fine surviving examples of a range of municipal buildings which have undergone relatively few external alterations
- High concentration of **heritage assets**:
 - **Woolwich Town Hall** 1903-5 (Grade II*)
 - **Woolwich Campus: buildings**: 1890-92, 1916-17 (Grade II)
 - **Old Town Hall**: 1842 (Grade II)
 - **Former Magistrates Court**: 1912 (Grade II)
 - **Former Public Library**: 1901 (Grade II)
 - **Former Police Station**: 1910 (Grade II)
 - **Former Methodist Church** 1816 (Grade II)
 - **Polytechnic Hall** 1935-6 (local heritage asset)
 - **Former Polytechnic (part)** early 1900s (local heritage asset)
 - **Former Woolwich Public Baths**: 1892-94 (local heritage asset)
- **Key Building: Woolwich Town Hall**
 - Grade II* landmark building, forms a strong anchor at gateway to Civic quarter
 - Designed in florid English Edwardian Baroque style, liberally dressed with Portland stone and embellished with rich stone carving including cherubs with Edwardian hairstyles
 - Built to designs of Sir Alfred Brunwell Thomas, leading architect of Edwardian period
 - Displays fine craftsmanship of the period including rich stained-glass scheme by notable artist Geoffrey Web and exquisite bronze electroliers by J.W. Singer & Son
 - Well-preserved domed council chamber with handsome joinery, including mayoral chair composed of battleship timbers
 - Grandeur and opulence reflect the civic pride and ambition of the newly created Borough of Woolwich in 1900
 - Town Hall clock tower is a conspicuous landmark (and nesting site for peregrines)



Woolwich Town Hall (1903-5)



Entrance (detail)

2.3 Traditional Building Materials

Zone 1: Historic Core

- Walls: stock brick with Portland stone dressings and gauged red brick arches; Roofing: natural slate; Windows: leaded lights with stained glass; Doors: timber panelled

Zone 2: Commercial

- *Italianate buildings of 1860s*: buff-coloured brick with stone dressings and incised decoration or decorative ironwork
- *Eclectic Late Victorian and Edwardian buildings*: red or yellow stock brick with stone, stucco or terracotta ornamentation
- *Moderne, Art Deco, Neo-Egyptian interwar buildings*: pale-coloured faience tiles, Portland stone or dark red brick with stone dressings; red brick with terracotta ornamentation; decorative ironwork
- *Post-war buildings*: imitation stone tiles, curtain wall glazing, vitreous enamel panels, mosaic, incised concrete
- Roofing: natural slate and clay tile, some cement tiles, copper dome
- Windows: timber sashes and timber casements (some uPVC replacements); Crittall casements in steel or bronze

- Shopfronts: some original shopfront divisions survive in the form of red or black granite pilasters or faience-tiled pilasters surmounted by scrolled console brackets; some granite fascias

Zone 3: Civic

- Walls: predominantly red brick and Portland stone with stone dressings and carved detailing; also examples of Bath stone and glazed red brick, terracotta detailing; buildings retain historic street signs for 'Bathway', 'Market Street' and 'Polytechnic Street'
- Roofing: natural slate, copper domes;
- Windows & Doors: timber sashes and timber casements with multi-pane glazing pattern; leaded lights with stained glass; metal casements with leaded lights; timber panelled doors

Boundaries and streetscape (all zones)

- Pavements: granite kerbs survive; red tarmac within Civic zone
- Road surfaces: granite setts survive the full length of Mortgramit Square, and on sections of Polytechnic Street, Bathway & Market St; 5no. 19C wood block/iron footway covers survive along Powis St
- Boundaries: brick walling (yellow stock) with stone copings and spear-headed railings; cast iron decorative and vertical-bar railings; stone balustrading



Mortgramit Square: granite cobbles



Historic street sign on former Magistrate's Court

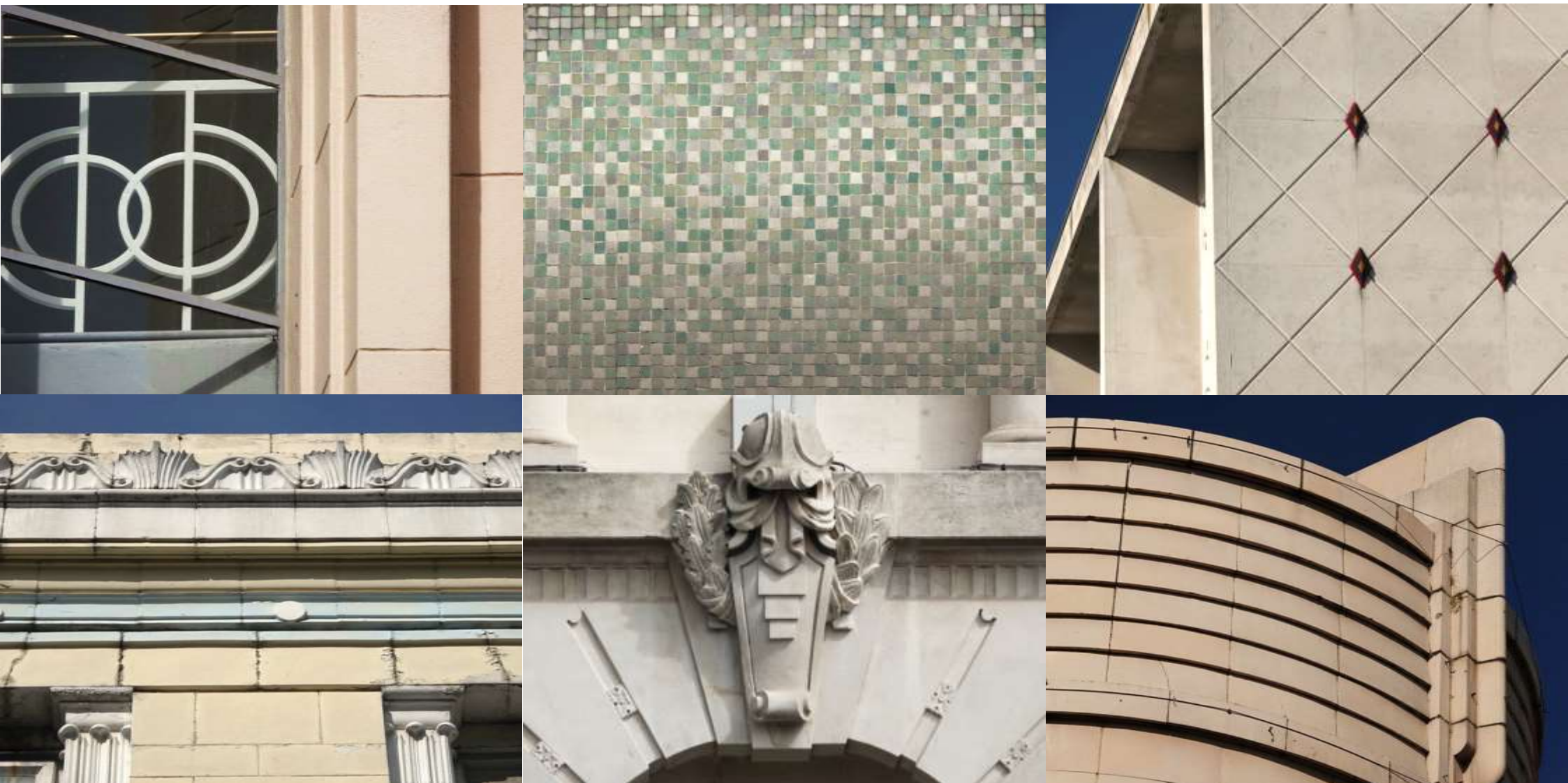


Powis St: 19C wood block-paved footway cover

Commercial Zone: Victorian and Edwardian materials and details



Commercial Zone: 20C materials and details



Civic Zone: materials and details



3.0 Setting and Key Views

The significance of the Conservation Area is not only derived from its historic components and its physical presence, but also from its setting. Setting is defined as the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. See Historic England's [Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets](#) for further information.

The London Plan 2021 states that understanding the existing context of a place and its contribution to local character is essential in determining how it may best develop in the future. The contributions made by the Conservation Area's setting are set out below.

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

Key views are identified below, and on the layered map on page 4, either as townscape or context views. Arrows indicate sightlines to key heritage assets and landmark buildings.

Future development should safeguard the prominence of the heritage assets and key buildings within these views and contribute positively to their significance and their appreciation within their surroundings.

3.1 Contributions of Setting to Significance

The **River Thames** and the **Ferry Crossing** make a crucial contribution to significance, although most visual connections of river have been lost from the Conservation Area. They represent a key historic relationship with the town and Royal Victoria Gardens north of the river provides views of the conservation area including three key landmark listed buildings.

Woolwich New Rd/Grand Depot Rd allow significance to be appreciated as they form the principal gateway into the commercial zone from the northeast and southeast along an ancient historic route. They also provide views of a dozen heritage assets including two key landmark buildings.



View T02: General Gordon Square towards Equitable House



View T03: General Gordon Square from Greens End

Surviving fine grain building groups on Woolwich New Rd and those to the east also illustrate an important historic relationship with Royal Arsenal, representing the evolution of the town centre in 18-19C, dependent on Arsenal.

The top of **Wellington St** and **John Wilson St** contribute to significance by providing another approach to the conservation area along a historic route and provides views of one of the Area's key landmark Grade II* buildings.

Ferry Approach, Woolwich High Street and **Church Street** contribute to the Area's significance by providing approaches along an ancient riverside route and by providing views of two key landmark listed buildings which form the gateway to the Conservation Area from the north

The Royal Arsenal Conservation Area to the north makes an important contribution to the Area's significance. The visual connection between Royal Arsenal and Woolwich town centre illustrates an important symbiotic historic relationship. This was the interface between military and civilian Woolwich.

The design and landscaping of the adjoining **Church Hill/Sunbury Street Estate** increases the ability to appreciate the significance of Conservation Area. This area has an important visual relationship with the historic core zone and provides a vista of a key landmark Grade II* building.

3.1 Townscape Views

Within the Conservation Area there are several key views integral to the heritage and townscape of Woolwich which contribute to the significance of the area's heritage assets and allow their significance to be appreciated.

T01 View from **Beresford Square** to the **Royal Arsenal Gatehouse** (Grade II). This view is key to understanding the relationship between the Royal Arsenal and the town centre, as it originally formed the main entrance for the Arsenal workers but now stands in isolation as the northern edge of Beresford Square. While the development of tall buildings in the Plumstead Road cluster has undermined the prominence of the Gatehouse in this view, there is still a sense of openness behind the building and it remains prominent in the foreground (see image p.10). Development in the



View T05: Powis Street towards RACS buildings and former Granada



View T07: Polytechnic Street towards former public baths

foreground or background should preserve its prominence and the openness of the space behind.

- T02** View from **General Gordon Square** and Woolwich New Road to **Grade II Listed Equitable House**. General Gordon Square forms the foreground to Equitable House, which acts as the north-eastern edge to the open space. This view allows uninterrupted appreciation of the listed building. Development in the foreground or background should preserve its prominence and the openness of the square in front.
- T03** View from **Greens End**, adjacent to 1-7 Powis Street and the flank elevation of Equitable House, westwards up Wellington Street. This view takes in the northern side of General Gordon Square, including the Woolwich Central site. Local heritage assets on Thomas Street and Woolwich New Road are an important aspect of this view; the key element is the tower of **Woolwich Town Hall** (Grade II*), which acts as a landmark for the Civic Quarter. The prominence of the listed building has been partially reduced by Elliston House tower in the backdrop. Development in the foreground or background should preserve its prominence.
- T04** View from the northwestern end of Powis Street, looking south-east down the street. The three historic tower elements near this end of the street define this view; the Art Deco **RACS New Building** (local heritage asset), the older **RACS Central Stores Building** (Grade II) and the **former Granada Cinema** (Grade II*). These buildings draw significance from the prominence of their complementary vertical elements. Development in the foreground or background should preserve their prominence.
- T05** View from the junction of Powis Street and Hare Street north-west towards the A205. This view is significant for the same reason as view T04. The three tower elements are key to the townscape and sense of destination on this part of Powis Street. The view is also terminated by the **former Odeon Cinema** (Grade II). These buildings draw significance from the prominence of their complementary vertical elements. Development in the foreground or background should preserve their prominence.



View C01: Church Hill/Sunbury Street towards St Mary Magdalene



View C04: Wellington St (looking north)

- T06** Historical view from **Hare Street** out to the **River Thames**. This view is currently lost, due to the position of the leisure centre building. Redevelopment of the leisure site provides an opportunity to reinstate this view which would reconnect the street - and town centre - with the river (see p. 33). Any development should allow for a clear view along Hare Street to the river and the Grade II Listed foot tunnel entrance.
- T07** View along Polytechnic Street (in both directions). The Victorian tower and gables of the former **Public Baths** define this view. These distinctive vertical elements are key to the townscape. Development in the foreground or background should preserve their prominence.

3.2 Context Views

Long and mid-range views into and out of the Conservation Area provide important perspectives of Woolwich's historic skyline and townscape and demonstrate how setting contributes to significance.

- LV2** RBG Core Strategy Policy DH(g) Local View (LV) from Shrewsbury Park towards the river Thames. The higher topography of Shrewsbury Park allows for impressive views over **Woolwich town centre** and the river. From here, the entire skyline and structure of the town can be read.
- LV8** RBG Core Strategy Policy DH(g) Local View from **St Mary's Gardens** towards Mast Pond Wharf and the **River Thames**. This location offers a panoramic view towards the historic Dockyard in the west and the Royal Arsenal waterfront in the east, as well as directly out over the river Thames.
- C01** Kinetic view from the Church Hill/Sunbury Street estate and Greenlaw Street eastwards towards the Grade II* **Church of St Mary Magdalene**. The landscaping of the housing estate has been carefully designed to frame the view of the church and emphasise its east-west liturgical axis. Future development should not block or impinge on this view or appear in the backdrop of the church and retain the prominence of its west tower against the skyline.

- C02** View from Royal Victoria Gardens south towards Woolwich directly across the river Thames. The key element is wooded **Church Hill** and the tower of Grade II* Listed **St Mary's Church**, which acts as a landmark for the Historic Core zone. It also provides views of the two listed former cinemas, the **Granada** and the **Odeon**, and of the emerging skyline along the waterfront. Future development should not block or impinge on this view or appear in the backdrop of the church.
- C03** Kinetic view moving northeast along Grand Depot Road/ Woolwich New Road towards **General Gordon Square** and the town centre. This view is an important gateway to the Conservation Area. The focal point of the view is the principal elevation of Grade II Listed **Equitable House**, which is framed on the right side of the road by a cluster of heritage assets including the Grade II listed **Pugin church** and adjoining **Presbytery**. Future development in the foreground, middle ground or background should preserve the prominence of these heritage assets and the openness of the square.
- C04** Kinetic view down Wellington Street from the junction of A205, an important threshold for the town centre. It provides a view of the Grade II* **Woolwich Town Hall**, as well as Maritime House on General Gordon Square and the Plumstead Road development cluster in the distance. The key element is the tower of **Woolwich Town Hall** (Grade II*), which acts as a landmark for the Civic Quarter. The building draws significance from the prominence of its clocktower. Future development should ensure the Town Hall retains its prominence in this view.
- C05** View from the A205, beside the Royal Artillery Barracks, towards the town centre. A key view entering the town centre from the south. In the recent past, this location provided a direct view to Grade II* **Woolwich Town Hall** clocktower, acting as a landmark for the town. However, recent development on Wellington Street now blocks this view. Future development should take the opportunity to contribute positively to the setting of the Conservation Area, and to this gateway view of the Town Centre.

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 a 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, or area of undeveloped land and includes, parks, car parks and industrial yards. The contributions of open space are mapped on the interactive layered map on page 4.

Policy OS(c) in the RBG Core Strategy identifies Woolwich as deficient in open space. Major new developments should provide open space to enhance historic character and increase the capacity to appreciate the significance of the conservation area and its heritage assets.

Open space within the conservation area and in its immediate setting

Strong Contribution

- **St Mary's Gardens** is an important historic green space which makes a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and to the setting of designated heritage asset and key landmark building **St Mary's Church**
- **General Gordon Square** is a successful public space which makes a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and to the settings of designated heritage asset and key landmark building **Equitable House** and to local heritage assets **3-5 Thomas Street** and **Woolwich Tramshed**.

- **Beresford Square** is an important historic public space which makes a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and to the settings of designated heritage asset
- and key landmark building the **Royal Arsenal Gatehouse** and to local heritage assets **5, 13-14, 15-19 Beresford Square**.

Negligible or No Contribution

- The vacant site bounded by Macbean and Beresford Street is a key site identified in the draft Site Allocations Local Plan for future development. The southern perimeter of the site falls within the Conservation Area boundary and the remainder is within the immediate setting of the **Conservation Area** and forms the setting for a number of local heritage assets on Powis and Macbean Street. Development proposals need to ensure that the special interest of the **Woolwich Conservation Area** and its heritage assets is conserved, by being sympathetic to the heritage assets' significance and appreciation within their surroundings. New development should be consistent with Local Plan policies including the draft Site Allocations.
- Love Lane open space is a well-used but temporary open space and key site identified in the draft Site Allocations Local Plan for future development as part of the Woolwich Central scheme. It is in the immediate setting of the **Conservation Area**. This site forms the southwestern edge to General Gordon Square, and the setting for designated heritage asset and key landmark building **Equitable House**, Grade II Listed **St Peter's Church & Presbytery** and local heritage assets **3-5 Thomas Street, Woolwich Tram Shed, 61, 63, 71, 89, 91, 97, 99-101 Woolwich New Road**. Development proposals need to ensure that the special interest of the **Woolwich Conservation Area** and its heritage assets is conserved, by being sympathetic to the heritage assets' significance and appreciation within their surroundings. New development should be consistent with Local Plan policies including the draft Site Allocations.

- The vacant site on Grand Depot Road to the rear of Tesco is a key site identified in the draft Site Allocations Local Plan for future development as part of the Woolwich Central scheme. This site is a key arrival point for Woolwich and a gateway to the Conservation Area and forms the setting for designated heritage assets **St Peter's Church & Presbytery** and several adjoining local heritage assets on Woolwich New Road. Development proposals need to ensure that the special interest of the **Woolwich Conservation Area** and its heritage assets is conserved, by being sympathetic to the heritage assets' significance and appreciation within their surroundings. New development should be consistent with Local Plan policies including the draft Site Allocations.
- The Ferryview Health Centre & Travelodge car parks on Powis Street are key sites identified in the draft Site Allocations Local Plan for future development. They are partly within the Conservation Area and form part of the setting of the following heritage assets and key landmark buildings: **Former Royal Arsenal Cooperative Society Headquarters Building (125-153)**, **Former RACS New Building (138-152)** and **Former Granada Cinema (174-186)** as well as local heritage assets and positive contributors **Furlongs Garage (160-162)** 170-172, and **Former County Court (165-167)**. Development on this site has the potential to reintegrate the townscape at this juncture and to contribute positively to the Area's significance. Development proposals need to ensure that the special interest of the **Woolwich Conservation Area** and of the above heritage assets is conserved, by being sympathetic to their significance and appreciation within their surroundings. New development should be consistent with Local Plan policies including the draft Site Allocations.



136 Powis Street: neglect and invasive plant growth



6-10 Wellington Street: bird nets and invasive plant growth

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 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 was 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 potential impact of development which does not preserve or enhance character or appearance is a factor contributing to risk.

The principal issues within the Conservation Area are as follows:

- **Lack of quality frontages:** most shopfronts are poorly designed with oversized plastic fascias and poor-quality signage
- **Lack of maintenance and inappropriate alteration** to upper storeys, especially insensitive window replacement
- **Vacant commercial units**, especially at the west end of Powis Street
- **Vacant buildings** suffering from neglect and invasive plant growth, especially at the west end of Powis Street
- **Bird nets:** upper storeys of 2-4 and 6-10 Wellington Street are unoccupied with boarded windows, and draped in unsightly pigeon nets which compromise the appearance of these two heritage assets

The following heritage assets and key buildings are partially vacant and deteriorating at ground floor level due to empty commercial units:

Powis Street

- 138-152 Wick Tower (former RACS New Building)
- 125-153 (Former RACS Central Stores)



Powis Street: oversized poor quality fascias



Powis Street: superfluous street clutter

The following heritage assets and proposed local heritage assets are vacant and deteriorating due to disuse, neglect and invasive plant growth:

Calderwood Street

- Polytechnic Hall

Mortgramit Square

- Furlongs Garage

Powis Street

- 132-34
- 136
- 154-58 & 164-68
- 160-162 (former Furlongs Showroom)
- 170-172

Wellington Street

- 6-10

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

5.2 Public Realm

The condition of the public realm, particularly paving and road surfaces is poor, and signage and interpretation is lacking through the Conservation Area. The main issues are:

- **Poor quality public realm:** Concentration of tired and outdated red herringbone block and cement paving along Powis and Hare Street and lack of seating and planting in Beresford Square
- **Superfluous street clutter:** unnecessary road markings, unattractive and shabby street furniture and a proliferation of bollards along Powis Street create visual and physical obstructions and make this pedestrian zone uninviting



Hare Street: lost view of the river Thames



Powis Street: trees obscuring fine Grade II Listed building

- **Severance and car dominance:** Historic Core zone (St Mary's Gardens) severed from the town centre and the river by major road infrastructure, the A205 and A206; the town centre is also severed from the Thames and the Royal Arsenal by these major A-roads, which form substantial physical barriers and contribute to the town centre's sense of separation from its surroundings.
- **Lost relationship with river Thames:** direct connections between the town centre and the riverfront have been lost. The leisure centre blocks the historical route from Hare Street to the river and conceals the Grade II Listed foot tunnel entrance
- **Lack of destination and active frontage:** severely limited retail offer at the western end of Powis Street and in Beresford Square market contributes to low activity, limited footfall and vacancy
- **Lack of heritage interpretation and wayfinding signage:** discourages pedestrians and cyclists from stopping *en route* and affects the ability to appreciate the historic character of the area
- **Inappropriately sited trees:** acacia trees at western end of Powis Street sited too close to former RACS Central Stores Building (Grade II) obscuring it from view
- **Heavy bus traffic:** roads enclosing General Gordon Square dominated by heavy bus traffic due to proliferation of bus routes passing through town centre

6.0 Management Guidelines

6.1 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 where piecemeal alterations, neglect, heavy traffic and lack of an overall strategy for the public realm 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, such as bollards, signage and 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 historic 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, the London Plan 2021 and the Mayor's [Healthy Streets Approach](#).

6.2 Untapped Heritage Potential

Guidance: Woolwich has huge untapped potential for place-shaping and reinforcing the Conservation Area's distinctive character by capitalising on its unique geographical and heritage assets. The following enhancement strategies identify opportunities for the conservation Area to contribute to regeneration and place-making, in line with the London Plan 2021 (HCI.E) and respond to the issues raised in section 5.0: Condition and Issues:

- **Improve the public realm:** create a safe and inviting public realm with attractive seating and planting, which encourages pedestrians to pause and spend time in the town centre
- **Reconnect Woolwich to the river Thames:** capitalise on riverfront location by reinstating access and views to the river via Hare Street and offering amenities and leisure activities
- **Reconnect St Mary's Gardens with the town centre:** capitalise on Woolwich's only wooded green space, its elevated position, and views over the Thames to create a welcoming place for recreation and contemplation

- **Reinforce historic character and address vacancy/condition:** celebrate Woolwich's greatest asset, its heritage, through a repair and restoration strategy for shopfronts and architectural features; and through initiatives which bring empty upper floors and commercial units back into use
- **Utilise Woolwich's local distinctiveness:** as a catalyst for regeneration, to inspire well-designed new development which will deliver economic and social benefits
- **Capitalise on Woolwich's unique history and significant foot-traffic:** create heritage signage and interpretation explaining the history of buildings, streets and squares; heritage trails, walking tours etc. to encourage and enhance understanding, appreciation and engagement with the area's unique history and heritage
- **Revitalise Beresford Market and western end of Powis Street:** encourage flexible and meanwhile uses within vacant shop units and redesign existing market offer and stalls to increase appeal, activity and footfall and to support enterprise and micro/small businesses; introduce activities to reinforce character as a historic market town such as specialist market days
- **Increase accessibility and reduce traffic dominance:** redesign streets for pedestrians rather than vehicles and ensure town centre is easily accessible by foot and cycle. Design and investment at interfaces between key radial routes and highway infrastructure will encourage walking and improve connectivity
- **Address green space deficiency:** by introducing green corridors and pocket parks
- **Rationalise bus network and stopping arrangements:** to help reduce barriers to pedestrian movement around General Gordon Square and improve connectivity of the town centre
- **Develop Community ideas:** draw on the strong creative and artistic community in the town centre to develop ideas and community-led projects

6.3 Demolition and Redevelopment

Guidance: The unique heritage of Woolwich must be a key driver for shaping new development and protection and enhancement of its historic core and fine grain urbanism is a principal objective. 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 contribution that setting makes to its significance. 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. New development has the potential to deliver beneficial change but needs to be sensitively sited and designed. The Conservation Area was placed on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register in 2019 partly due to a high level of development pressure and a character vulnerable to change, and therefore presents opportunities to contribute to regeneration and place-making. To provide support for enhancing the historic high street and town centre the Royal Borough secured High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) funding in late 2019.

Understanding the character and context of the Conservation Area is an essential step in establishing capacity for growth and securing well-designed places. This document should be used therefore to inform the effective integration of Woolwich's heritage in regenerative change. Woolwich's character and local distinctiveness should be a catalyst for regeneration to inspire well-designed and contextual new development, in line with London Plan 2021 Policies D1: London's form, character and capacity for growth, SD1: Opportunity Areas and HCI Heritage Conservation and Growth. 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) paragraph 130.

Royal Greenwich will seek the retention of those heritage assets 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.

Within the Conservation Area, total or substantial demolition of a building over 115m³ 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 character. Scale and massing of new buildings must also ensure the prominence of the principal landmark buildings in the area – Equitable House, Woolwich Town Hall, etc, is maintained, preserving or enhancing their setting and key views into and within the conservation area. Proposals should 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.

New buildings should relate to the parapet height of historic buildings on either side to provide a coherent frontage and ensure consistent scale and street enclosure without damaging prevailing character and scale of the streets. New development at street frontage should correspond to the typical scale of existing buildings and the fine grain urbanism of the Conservation Area.

There are opportunities to improve the character of the Conservation Area through the demolition and redevelopment of detractor buildings and sites, identified on the interactive map on page 4.

Applications within designated Areas of High Archaeological Potential (AHAPs) must be accompanied by an archaeological assessment. It is possible that preservation in-situ may be anticipated, so it is appropriate that archaeology is considered at pre-application, pre-determination planning stage. The archaeological resource is fragile and non-renewable.

6.4 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 the open space assessment in this appraisal. Development within the setting of the Conservation Area should take opportunities to reinforce its local distinctiveness and special character. Redevelopment should also look to enhance or better reveal the Area's significance, in line with NPPF policy 16, paragraphs 190 and 206

The draft Site Allocations Local Plan identifies several key sites appropriate for delivery of a significant amount of development within the immediate setting of the Conservation Area. New development within the setting has the potential to deliver beneficial change and therefore needs to contribute positively to the Conservation Area's significance or to enhance the ability to appreciate that significance. Opportunities for change and intensification should be informed by an understanding of and complement the Area's distinctive character and heritage assets, in line with London Plan 2021 Policies D1: London's form, character and capacity for growth, SD1: Opportunity Areas and SD6: Town Centres. Understanding existing character and context is essential in determining how Woolwich Town Centre may best develop in the future.

Any new development proposals will need to demonstrate that they meet the high standards of design required and that proposed height and scale is appropriate for the context of the site, having regard to the prevailing scale of development of 3 to 4 storeys within the Conservation Area. Tall buildings must demonstrate they meet the exceptional tests set out in national, local and regional policy, and should refer to Historic England *Advice Note No 4: Tall Buildings*, which gives specific advice on tall buildings and the historic environment. New development should be consistent with Local Plan policies including draft Site Allocations.

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 Conservation Area and its setting and views identified above in line with the requirements of the NPPF. Applicants should also refer to Historic England's best practice guidance on the *Setting of Heritage Assets* (2nd edition 2017) which advocates a staged methodological approach for assessing impacts on setting of heritage assets.

6.5 Additions to the Local Heritage List

The following buildings and structures identified as positive contributors and recommended for local heritage listing in the [Woolwich Town Centre Heritage Study](#) (2018) meet the selection criteria for Local Heritage Listing and will be added to Royal Greenwich's Local Heritage List.

170-172 Powis Street

- **Description:** former doctor's house and surgery of 1898-9 by architect H.H. Church. Built by the Ogilby Estate for occupation by the family of Dr James Tees, physician, surgeon and medical officer for East Woolwich. Surgery and dispensing room to the east. Red brick with stone dressings. Central doorway with balconied French doors above. Bay window rising through two floors to left of entrance, topped with a shaped parapet. Windows have fine gauged brickwork surrounds. Double datestone recording original foundation of Powis Street in 1798 and the rebuilding by H.H. Church a century later. Recommended for local listing in *Woolwich Town Centre Heritage Study* (2018).
- **Architectural significance:** unusual example of purpose-built doctor's house and surgery and of domestic architecture in a commercial context, which sets it apart from the rest of Powis Street and indicates its particular social and residential function. By an architect of local significance
- **Historical significance:** illustrates particular aspects of the area's social and economic history through its design and function, especially since its unusual double datestone records the creation and modernisation of Woolwich's commercial centre by its 19C architect
- **Townscape significance:** positively contributes to the setting of adjoining listed buildings and to the locality by providing local distinctiveness and interest

Furlongs Motoring Complex: 160-162 Powis Street/Mortgramit Square

- **Description:** Purpose built Moderne style car showroom, garage, workshops, and (later) filling station dating from 1938-9. Described



170-172 Powis Street



170-172 Powis Street : double datestone

in the Survey of London Woolwich Volume as “a complete motoring complex of the mid-twentieth century that was said to be the largest in south-east London at the time”. Consists of a red brick four-storey ramped garage linked to a smaller red brick four-storey workshop building by a high-level bridge over Mortgramit Square, a historic cobbled lane and service yard area behind Powis Street, and a free-standing chimney. The garage is connected internally to a former car showroom at 160-162 Powis Street, where cars were displayed behind the recessed shopfront, which still survives. Given its presence on the Powis Street, this part of the complex was clad in beige faience tiling in 1930s Art Deco style. The 1950s High Street frontage includes a forecourt filling station, carwash and shops, still in use. Prominent original 1960s signage still survives. The multi-storey garage also served as a car park for the neighbouring Granada Cinema, built a year earlier. Recommended for local listing in *Woolwich Town Centre Heritage Study* (2018).

- **Architectural significance:** as a large, purpose-built motoring complex from the early days of the private motor vehicle during the 1930s, it exemplifies an unusual and rare-surviving building type in the locality; its modernist industrial design is representative of the 1930s and is an important surviving monument to the newly burgeoning car industry and to Furlongs, a historic Woolwich-based firm since 1812. The 3 buildings on the site retain original fabric and features which signify the building’s original function. The garage in particular retains a series of curved ramps with original curved steel Crittall windows and a north-facing saw-tooth roof which maximised natural light to the top floor workshop enabling vehicular inspections. The building is ingeniously designed and orientated at an angle, so that its four-storey bulk is not prominent when seen from Powis Street.
- **Historical significance:** Furlongs Motoring Complex illustrates particular aspects of the area’s industrial, technological and social history; its large scale, modernist industrial design and multi-purpose function reflects the advance of automobile technology in the 1930s and the motor car’s increasing popularity given that car-ownership was no longer the preserve of the wealthy; the



Furlongs, aerial view



Furlongs, Mortgramit Square: ramped garage & bridge to workshop

provision of car sales, repair and servicing as well as parking for cinemagoers also reflects the growing social mobility of the local populace

- **Townscape significance:** forms a group with a clear historic relationship, positively contributes to the setting of adjoining listed building (former Granada Cinema, Grade II*) and to the locality by providing local distinctiveness and interest.
- The site's special interest lies in the former showroom on Powis Street, the garage and workshop on Mortgramit Square and the 'Furlongs' signage which survives. This does not include the former filling station on Woolwich High Street.

I Thomas Street

- **Description:** forms part of a group with nos. 3-5, which are locally listed. Group dates from 1760-1; No. 1 extended to the side in 1839 and to the rear at the end of 19C. Group has a classical 'Italianate' appearance with unified façade of stucco incised as ashlar with door pediments and window architraves, cornice and parapet. These were substantial houses with large gardens. Plate glass shopfront to No. 1 dates from late 20C. *Woolwich Town Centre Heritage Study* (2018) points out omission of No. 1 from listing entry for Nos. 3-5 and also their incorrect date and description. It is recommended that No. 1 is added to the listing for 3-5 and listing entry is updated with correct date and description for all 3 properties.
- **Architectural significance:** built before 1850
- **Historical significance:** group associated with two eminent English landscape painters of the 18C and 19C: Paul Sandby (1731-1809) and George B. Campion (1795-1870)
- **Townscape significance:** forms part of a group with a clearly unified design and historical relationship; positively contributes to the locality by providing local distinctiveness and interest.



Furlongs, Powis Street: former car showroom



Furlongs, Mortgramit Square: signage

6.6 Repair, Maintenance and Alterations

Guidance: landowners and 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. The Royal Borough encourages those with an interest in properties 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 non-historic render, paint or pebbledash without damage to the underlying surface
- Removal of uPVC or aluminium windows and replacement with well-designed timber alternatives in keeping with buildings and area's character
- Replacement of poorly designed shopfronts and unsympathetic signage with more appropriate designs using traditional materials
- 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](#).



Appendix I

Sources

- Listing descriptions 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 on the Council's website 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](#).
- The [Woolwich Town Centre Heritage Study](#) (2018) is available on the Council's website.

Appendix 2

Historical Development

Iron Age & Roman Woolwich

Woolwich has been occupied since at least the Iron Age, when between 300 and 100BC a defended settlement or *Oppidum* occupied the stretch of riverbank just to the east of the Royal Arsenal, taking advantage of the natural riverside gravel. Remains of this significant settlement, protected by a substantial earthwork bank and ditch, were uncovered in excavations during the 1980s and 2013-14.



*The North Prospect of Woolwich, in the county of Kent. Engraving by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck (1739; detail).
A rare view of the medieval and Georgian parish churches which only existed together for 2-3 years.*

Woolwich was used by the Romans as a port and a crossing point for the river. **Woolwich Church Street** and **Woolwich High Street** have their origins as a riverside road during this time.

Saxon & Medieval Woolwich

The town expanded along the river during the early medieval period. The suffix 'wich' or 'wic' is Saxon for 'fortified settlement', and the most likely origin of Woolwich's name is 'fortified Wool town'. The first parish church, located to the north of the present St Mary's, had pre-Conquest origins, but was rebuilt in stone during the Norman period. The ferry crossing to the north bank of the Thames was formalised with a franchise from the king in

the 14C. Little survives of the buildings of medieval Woolwich; the former manor house 'Woolwich Hall' stood at the intersection of the High Street and Hare Street.

The 17th Century

The riverside became increasingly industrial during the 17C, with two factories producing ordinary glass, plate and crown glass. Church Street was diverted in the early 17C to run alongside the river and allow access to the new entrance to the Royal Dockyard. The road now passed by the north side of the parish church, undercutting Church Hill, which rapidly became undermined, causing the church and burials to become unstable.

The 18th Century

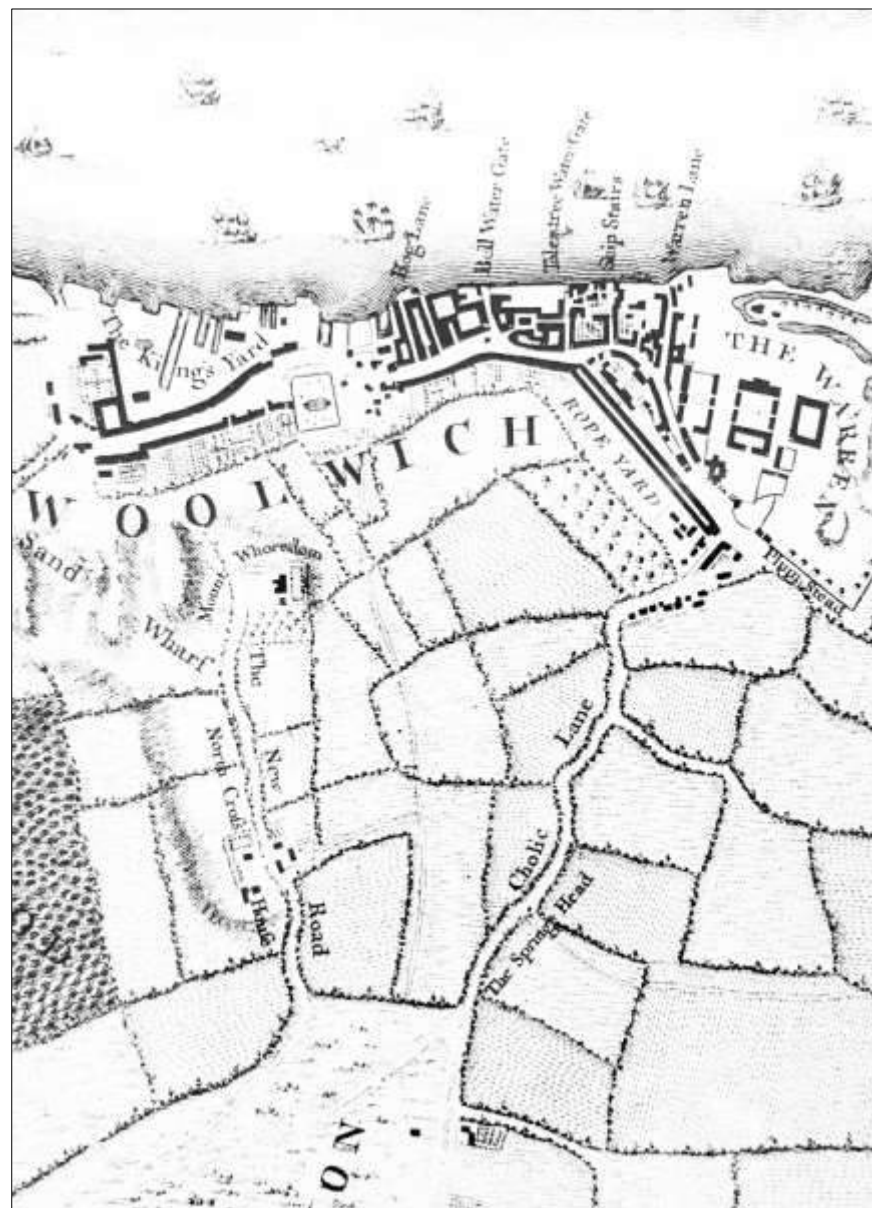
At the beginning of the 18C, despite the sizeable Royal Dockyard and Warren developments to west and east, Woolwich town was still a small linear settlement, with modest houses arranged along the narrow **High Street** and a network of small lanes between the High Street and the river. To the south of the High Street the town remained undeveloped until the middle of the century, and the space was given over to small market gardens and subsistence plots. Two houses on the High Street survive today from the early 18C (before 1737) – 111 and 112 – though much altered.

Woolwich Market, which had been given its charter in 1618, was formally laid out in this location as a market square in 1720, known as Market Hill.

The dilapidated Norman church, structurally compromised by the undermining road to its north and increasingly precarious, was demolished and rebuilt on a safer site further south in the 1730s. The church of **St Mary Magdalene** still stands on Church Hill today.

To the southeast, away from the village of Woolwich, the hamlet of **Green's End** developed in the 18C at the junction of Plumstead Lane and Cholic Lane. Strategically located to serve all traffic east and south of the growing sites of the Warren and Woolwich Royal Dockyard, the Newcross Turnpike Trust amended the junction at Green's End in 1765, replacing the northernmost end of Cholic Lane with a new road, slightly further east, to better facilitate, and profit from, traffic approaching the town from the south. This became known as **Woolwich New Road**.

In 1782, two Greenwich brewers, William and Thomas Powis, took a 22-year lease of part of the Bowater Estate which encompassed the area south of Woolwich. In 1783 they laid out **Powis street** (then an undeveloped dirt road) to connect St Mary's Church with Green's End. In 1799 the brothers signed a 99-year lease, commemorated in the datestone surviving at 170-172 Powis Street. Building then began in earnest, resulting in the precinct that became Woolwich's commercial centre (Powis Street, **Beresford Square**, **Hare Street**).



John Rocque's map of London 1741-45

The 19th Century

In 1812, the army demolished most of the cottages at **Green's End**, forming an open training ground in front of the Royal Arsenal's main gate. In 1828, the entrance gate was demolished and rebuilt to the north of the open space on the orders of the newly appointed Master-General: William Carr, Viscount Beresford. Street hawkers and costermongers gathered informally at **Beresford Square**, attracted by the thousands of men passing through it to the Royal Arsenal and the ring of pubs at the gates. Their presence was formalised as the official location of Woolwich market in 1888, when pitches were laid within the square. This led to an intense burst of construction activity in the late 19C, with development around the edges of the square. Much of this survives today.

Powis Street, linking Woolwich with the increasingly busy area around the Royal Arsenal's main gate, which had rapidly developed from 1799 onwards with houses and shops, was grandly remodelled in the 1890s. Compared with the cramped and winding High Street it was broad and straight, making

it attractive as a shopping street and promenade. The western end at Woolwich's old village core became quieter and less developed. The principal shops were sited along the eastern end of Powis Street and on **Hare Street**.

Wellington Street was laid out by the Board of Ordnance in 1811 to 1812 to improve road links between the military developments at the Royal Arsenal and Woolwich Common. It became a busy commercial street but was always secondary to Powis Street. The area developed in the 1890s to form the core of what was to become Woolwich's civic hub. The polytechnic, a pioneering institution, was founded in 1891, and a large public bath complex was built immediately opposite it in 1892-4.

Much of the work in the Royal Dockyard and Royal Arsenal had no long-term job security and the old or the injured were in danger of starvation. To support those in need and fuelled by the confidence of the rare skills of many of the workers, co-operative organisations grew up. The co-operative



Ordnance Survey map 1897 edition



Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society (RACS) motto on 136 Powis Street

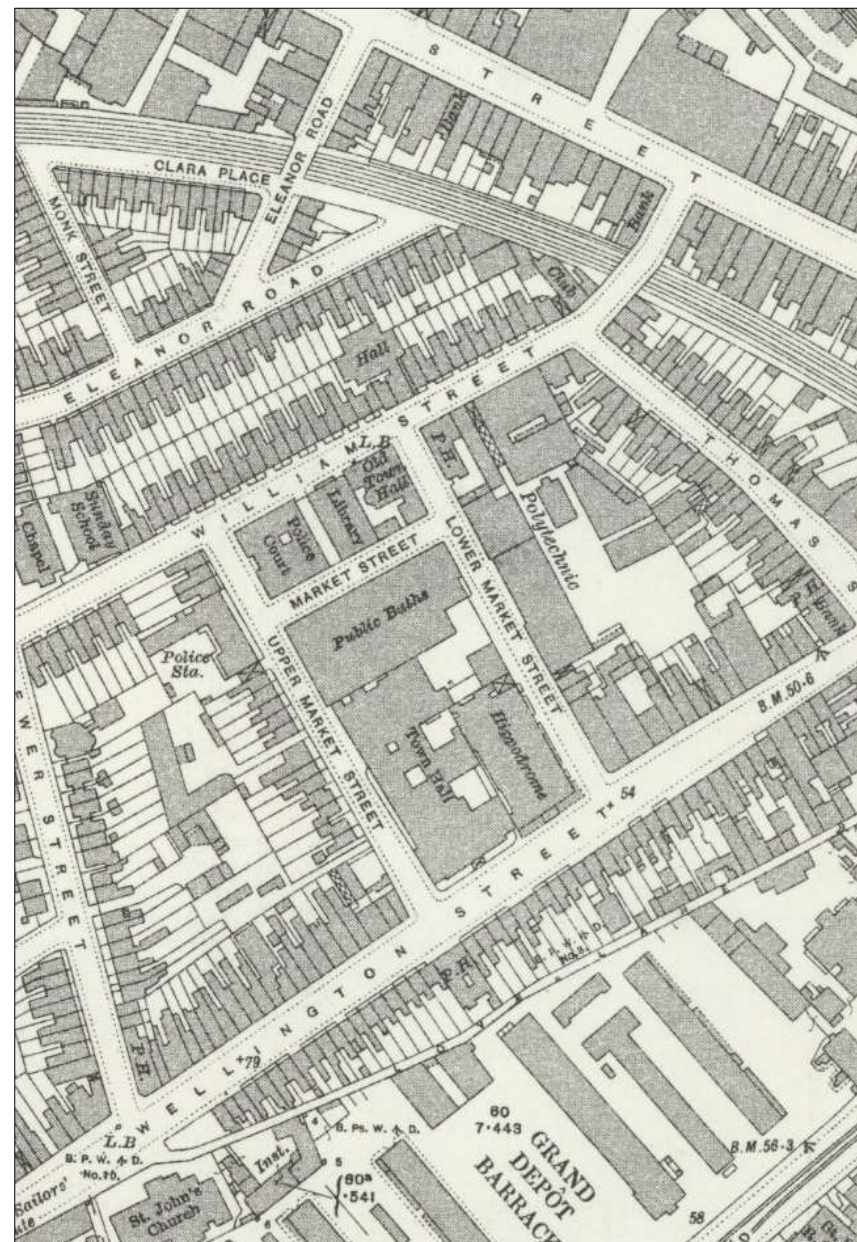
movements of Woolwich had their roots in labour movements stretching back as early as the 17C, and by the 1860s co-operative trading had existed in Woolwich for almost 100 years. In 1868 the Royal Arsenal Supply Association was set up by two arsenal engineering workers. This acquired the name of the **Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society (RACS)** after 1869. By the 1880s the RACS had a substantial amount of property in Powis street, and by 1889, a time of dire economic problems, it had become the largest co-operative society in London.

The 20th Century

In the early years of the 20C, Woolwich was a thriving town centre, independent and ambitious. During this period the local authority embarked on some of its most ambitious civic buildings, including the magnificent town hall, the library, and extensive additions to the polytechnic in the 1930s. The RACS was also booming and constructed first their red brick and terracotta **Central Stores** on the south side of Powis Street in 1903, and then their striking modern **RACS department store** facing it on the north in 1939-40. The **Woolwich Equitable Society's headquarters** was built in 1934-5. Two extraordinary **cinemas**, facing each other across what is now the south circular, were built in 1937.

Slum clearances and road widening begun in the 19C continued in the early 20C. The narrow western end of the High Street was widened in 1913, and the West end of Powis Street was widened in 1934-5.

Ambitious road widening schemes and infrastructure were implemented in the 1960s, effectively severing Woolwich town centre from the river and its historic core. Parson's Hill was widened and straightened to create John Wilson Street (the South Circular) and the roundabout at its northern end. The new ferry approach was built in 1966. In 1970 Church Street was widened, and the viewing platform in the churchyard rebuilt, behind a substantial retaining wall. In 1984, the formerly narrow Plumstead Road was realigned to the north and extensively widened, severing Beresford Gate from the Royal Arsenal site and demolishing the wall of the site and installing a new barrier; a dual carriageway, between the town and its riverfront site.



Ordnance Survey map 1916 edition