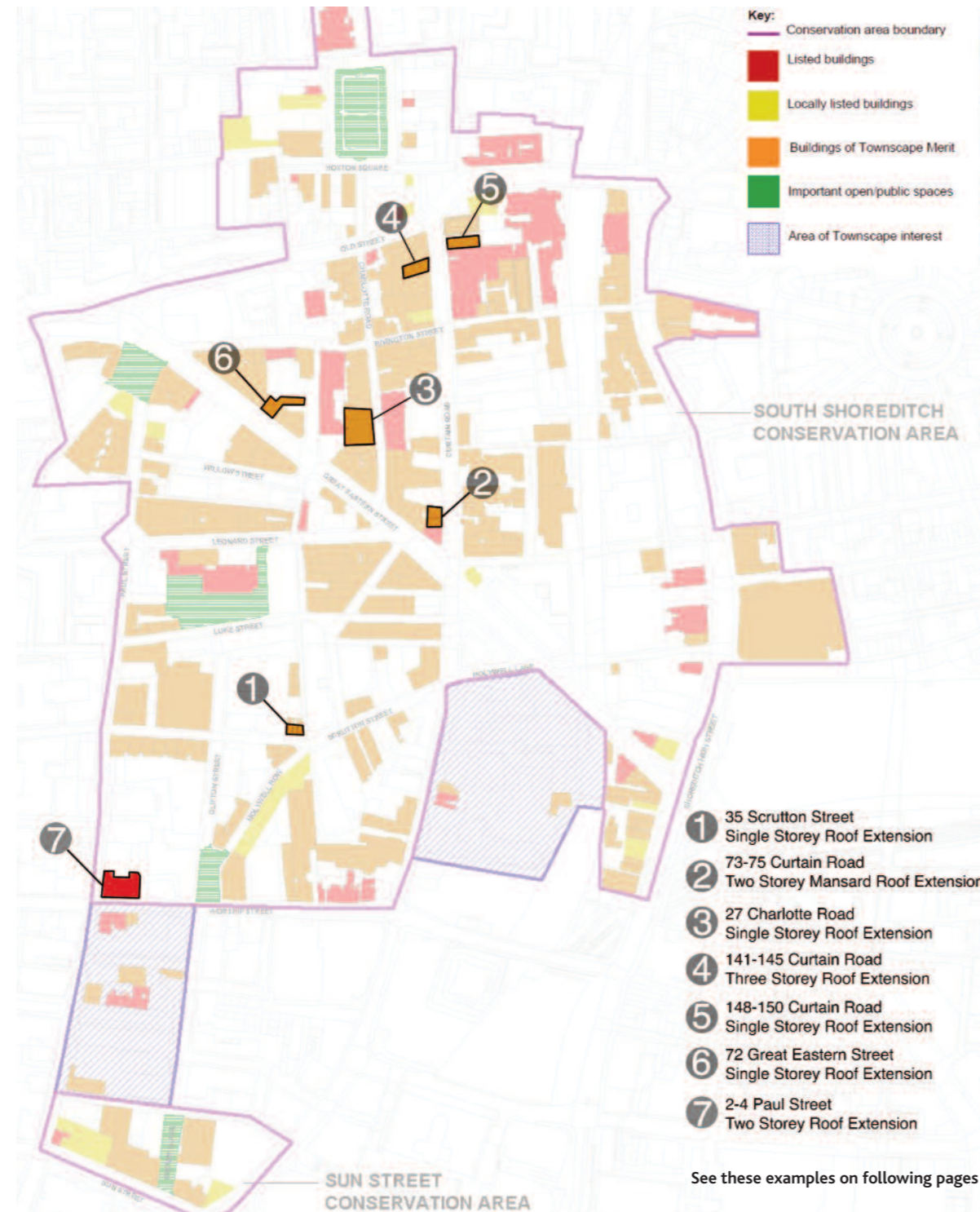


# Shoreditch is getting taller

Georgina Holden explores history and change in the Shoreditch area

South Shoreditch was the centre of the London furniture trade in the Victorian period. The opening of the Regents Canal in 1820 made timber transportation cheaper and easier. South Shoreditch and Hoxton were near enough to trade with the City yet far enough from it to keep lower rents. By 1861 about 30 per cent of all London furniture makers worked in the East

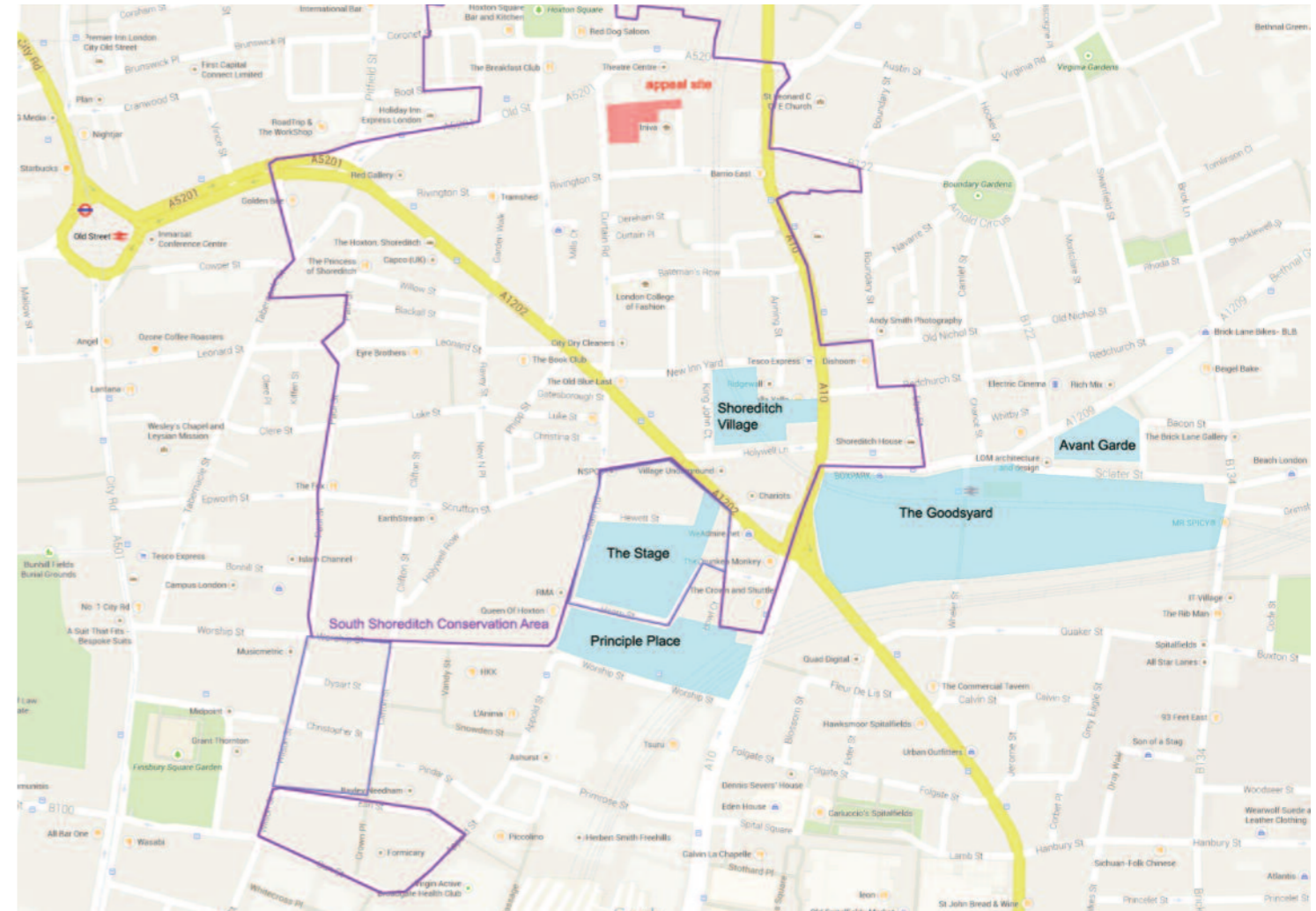


View down Curtain Road looking south with appeal site to left. This paper was prepared as part of a current planning appeal by BWCP relating to their scheme which includes a 'flying roof' above the listed Curtain House in Curtain Road, Shoreditch.



Georgina Holden is principal of Divine Ideas and an associate of BWCP architects

See these examples on following pages



End, Curtain Road, Old Street and Great Eastern Street laid out in 1872 - 6, were centres of the trade.

The recent history of Shoreditch is rife with change. As Andrew Harris of UCL notes in his published research on the area, widespread deindustrialisation of inner London occurred during the 1980s. Shoreditch was a site of light industry from the 19th century. But deindustrialisation created a surplus of disused Victorian warehouses and other industrial spaces that attracted visual artists, fashion designers and other creative specialists with cheap rents.

In the 1990s, Shoreditch and neighbouring Hoxton were the backdrop for the explosion of a new breed of savvy art graduates. The likes of Gary Hume, Sarah Lucas and Fiona Rae moved into the warehouses and workshops off Shoreditch High Street, Great Eastern Street and Old Street, creating an artistic community and movement that came to define the British art scene.

But the current plans for Shoreditch contain an echo of the area's deeper past. According to Harris, before Shoreditch became a site of Victorian industry, it was a suburb for wealthy bankers and diplomats who worked in the City in the 16th century. "[Shoreditch] was an upmarket suburb for people to live close by the City of London. In some respects, it's returning to its pre-industrial role," he says.

### New developments in the Shoreditch area

Shoreditch is getting taller. Its brownfield sites are set for an unprecedented construction boom in the coming years. We

looked at planning documents from Hackney and Tower Hamlets Councils covering five sites off Shoreditch High Street: Principal Place (permission granted subject to legal conditions), The Stage (ditto), Avant Garde (completed), Shoreditch Village (permission granted subject to legal conditions) and the former Bishopsgate Goods Yard now known as The Goodsyards (planning permission yet to be granted).

Taken together, the sites account for up to 3,051 new residential units across 5.5m sq ft of newly developed residential, retail and office space. The schemes will transform the Shoreditch skyline. Below are examples of building development which impact upon the character of the conservation area.

**The Stage**, as its name alludes, will be built over the foundations of one of London's earliest theatres, where Romeo and Juliet was probably first staged. Investigations by archaeologists from Museum of London Archaeology, on the site by Ploughs Yard on Curtain Road, have unearthed remains of The Curtain Theatre. The theatre was home to William Shakespeare's company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, before they settled at the Globe.

**The Principle Place scheme** includes a 50-storey tower with 243 apartments, and a 15-storey office complex. The site is adjacent to the Broadgate Tower, on the junction of Worship Street and Shoreditch High Street. At 161 metres, the Norman Foster-designed residential tower would be the same height as

ABOVE: Map showing neighbouring development and conservation area

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RIGHT:  
The Stage: 40 storey tower  
by Pringle Brandon Drew  
view from corner of  
Curtain Road and Great  
Eastern Street



Council for a 150,000 sq ft public realm and mixed-use project at the heart of London's creative quarter. This introduces a nine storey building into the local conservation area.

**The former Bishopsgate goodsyard.** The proposed development on this site is the largest of the lot. This site sits within Hackney and Tower Hamlets. The scheme, as currently envisaged, will add 3.7 million sq ft of residential, retail and office space including up to 2,000 new homes. It is a major development with 10 blocks ranging from 9 storey to 46 storey's high.



This development will be highly visible from Curtain Road, altering the skyline and backdrop. The planning applications were submitted last autumn.

**Extract from Hackney Council Bishopsgate Goods Yard planning guidance:**

"The management approach towards South Shoreditch Conservation Area is to maintain a consistent scale and height of buildings within the Conservation Area boundary, and to support in principle taller developments beyond its boundaries



RIGHT:  
Principle Place: 50 storey  
residential and office  
tower by Brookfield and  
Concord Pacific

its existing neighbour.

FAR RIGHT:  
Avant Garde: 25 storey  
residential tower by  
Telford Homes. Design by  
Stock Woolstencroft

**Avant Garde** was nominated for Building Design Carbuncle Cup 2013, which 'celebrates' bad architecture. The comments by Ellis Woodman "building whose scale makes a mockery of the street on which they are built" then goes on to say "The 25-storey Avant Garde is a particularly frenetic affair, glorying in half a dozen different facade treatments, none of which camouflage a fundamentally lumpy proposition. If Avant Garde is a sign of what is to come, one of the capital's liveliest neighbourhoods looks certain to be extinguished — the only consolation being that, once a forest of towers has sprung up around it, the building should be rather easier to ignore."

**Shoreditch Village** proposals look to make use of a site that is currently used as a car park and is bisected by a London Overground viaduct. Ellis Miller has won planning permission, listed building and conservation area consent from Hackney

LEFT and below:  
Shoreditch Village: Up  
to nine storeys by Ellis  
Miller Architects



within the City fringe to accommodate the development pressures. The dramatic change in scale between the typical 4-6 storey Shoreditch High Street buildings and the taller buildings in the city, is a distinctive characteristic of South Shoreditch Conservation Area, and further emphasises the vertical character of the area."

These examples are provided so that analysis can be made as to the impact the permitted proposals will have on a Conservation Area that is undergoing change. Whilst the majority of the schemes sit outside the designated area they are highly visible and will alter the skyline considerably. These recent planning approvals and overall framework plans for the area have given insufficient consideration to the preservation and enhancement of the conservation Area and the listed buildings in and around the appeal site.

As stated in the Shoreditch Conservation Area Appraisal January 2009: "The most visually distinctive spatial features of the SSCA is the change between the edge of the City and the southern fringe of South Shoreditch. The 'wall' of the City Fringe office developments appears almost like a giant wave about to break over the southern half of South Shoreditch," it goes on further to add " From the mid-point of the SSCA (for instance when standing in Shoreditch High Street, Curtain Road or Paul Street at their midway points) the sheer drama and massive scale of the City is evident and further emphasises the vertical character of the entire area."

The Appraisal further states there are many views and vistas of quality that contribute to the character of the Conservation Area throughout the SSCA, but the most significant ones are:

North along Curtain Road from Great Eastern Street closing with Old Street – again for its characteristic streetscape

South along Curtain Road from Hewitt Street towards the City Fringe – this is a very impressive vista as it highlights very clearly the northwards expansion of the City and is an ever-present reminder of the fragile boundary between the old and the new

Whilst there is a recognised boundary between the old and new we feel the cumulative approvals will vastly alter the conservation area. We move on from these external pressures to review developments within the Conservation Area in more detail.



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LEFT:  
A 3D sketch view of the  
Goodsyard development  
area, identifying building  
plots and showing  
approximate number of  
floors above retail at  
ground level that are  
proposed for the site's  
various tower blocks. by  
Hammerson PLC and  
Ballymore



ABOVE:  
Examples cited in order as described in the text

We have selected some of the most recent rooftop permissions that have been granted within the Conservation Area. These represent a variety of listed buildings, buildings of townscape merit and also show solutions to rooftop developments which are quite varied in style and scale.

35-39 Scrutton Street EC2A 4HU  
Description: Single storey roof extension  
Architect: Chris Dyson architects LLP  
South Shoreditch Conservation Area  
Building of Townscape Merit  
Planning application ref 2014/2795 granted

73-75 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3BS  
Description: 2 storey mansard roof extension for maisonettes fourth and 5th floor level  
Architect: Willingale Associates  
South Shoreditch Conservation Area  
Building of Townscape Merit adjoining Listed Building  
Planning application ref 2012/3645 granted

4-27 Charlotte Road EC2A 3PB  
Description: 5th floor roof extension

Architect: Clements and Porter Architects  
South Shoreditch Conservation Area  
Building of Townscape Merit opposite Listed Building  
Planning application ref 2013/3364 granted

141-145 Curtain Road EC2A 3QJ  
Description: 3 Storey roof extension  
Architect: Duggan Morris Architects Ltd  
South Shoreditch Conservation Area  
Building of Townscape Merit opposite Listed Building  
Planning application ref 2011/0341 granted

148 – 150 Curtain Road EC2A 3AT  
Description: 4th floor B1 roof extension  
Architect: Douglas and King Architects  
South Shoreditch Conservation Area  
Adjacent to Listed Building  
Planning application ref 2011/0992 granted

72 Great Eastern Street, London EC2A 3JL  
Description: 5th floor single residential unit roof extension  
Architect: Bowthorpe James LTD  
South Shoreditch Conservation Area

BELOW:  
Aerial view showing proposed developments



Building of Townscape Merit  
Planning application ref 2014/2701 granted

2-4 Paul Street [no image available]  
Description: Erection of 3rd & 4th floor extension for office use  
Applicant: Pearson Assoc.  
South Shoreditch Conservation Area  
Grade II Listed  
Planning application ref 2001/0672 granted

2-4 Paul Street, Grade II – former furniture showroom in the Italianate style, circa 1860; faced with stucco, of three storeys and occupying the corner of Paul Street and Worship Street. This is a listed building and one of the four listed building entries within the central Shoreditch character zone. This rooftop permission 31/03/2003 was a renewal of an earlier

**Hackney SSSPD 3.8 – Roof extensions and structures on roofs**

In general terms, the Council will discourage a roof extension if it is considered to:  
harm the architectural integrity, proportions or uniformity of a building or significant group of buildings;  
harm a significant or sensitive view;  
reduce the visual interest generated by a varied skyline, or where the building has features that were designed to be silhouetted against the sky; or result in the loss of historic roof forms.  
Extensions and additions may be considered acceptable where:  
the scale of the proposed addition is appropriate to the scale of the existing property, or is unobtrusive;  
the proposed addition is of a high standard of contemporary design where appropriate;  
and steps have been taken to prevent the build-up of visual clutter apparent from the street at high level.  
Permission will not be granted for other roof-top structures where these intrude into significant or sensitive public views, harm the character of a building or an area, or adversely affect the amenity of adjoining properties. [London Plan (2004) policies: 4B.10, 4B.11, 4B.12] [Hackney UDP (1995) policies: ST2, EQ6]

planning permission.  
**Conclusion**  
Rooftop extensions have become part of the character of Shoreditch as shown in the aerial view above, so that even recent buildings incorporate upper floors in the manner of rooftop extensions. ■



ABOVE:  
Rooftop developments within the conservation area

LEFT:  
View up Great Eastern Street showing the variety of rooftop developments as a constant theme within the Conservation Area

BELOW:  
BWCP's appeal proposal for a 'flying roof' over Curtain House with street view inset