

# Enfield Lock Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Approved February 2015



Reviewed and updated February 2014

prepared by

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*Historic environment policy and practice*

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## SUMMARY OF 2013 REVIEW

The Enfield Lock Conservation Area character appraisal was originally adopted and published in 2006. It was reviewed and updated during February and March 2013 by the Drury McPherson Partnership. The appraisal now contains updated and corrected text and new photographs taken in early 2013. The original maps have been amended. The appraisal should be read in conjunction with the revised Enfield Lock Conservation Area Management Proposals (in part 2 of this document), which contain management recommendations that flow from the revised appraisal.

Little has changed in the northern and southernmost parts of the Conservation Area – the former is mainly recently-restored older buildings of the Royal Small Arms Factory and extensive new construction, and the latter open fields and watercourses. Where these two areas meet, near the Lock, Lee House has fortunately been restored and converted to flats, so that its condition and future is no longer an issue,

The former Rifles former public house, a larger and more prominent building, is currently derelict and its extensive car parks, surrounded by hoardings, are a major obstacle to views and a serious blot on the landscape (a consented redevelopment scheme is expected (November 2013) to be implemented shortly). The River Lea to the east of The Rifles site is congested with fallen trees and branches, which spoil the views of the river and collect litter, but the varied riverside walks with their abundant wildlife remain some of the most attractive features of the Conservation Area. A minor boundary extension, recommended in the original Conservation Area Management Proposals, has been carried out.

# Enfield Lock Conservation Area Character Appraisal

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Conservation areas

1.1.1 Conservation areas are areas of ‘special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’<sup>1</sup> and were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967. Designation imposes a duty on the Council, in exercising its planning powers, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area<sup>2</sup>. In fulfilling this duty, the Council does not seek to stop all development, but to manage change in a sensitive way, to ensure that those qualities which warranted designation are sustained and reinforced rather than eroded.

1.1.2 Conservation area designation introduces a general control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and the lopping or felling of trees above a certain size. However, it does not control all forms of development. Some changes to family houses (known as “permitted development”) do not normally require planning permission. These include minor alterations such as the replacement of windows and doors, or the alteration of boundary walls. Where such changes would erode the character and appearance of the area, the Council can introduce special controls, known as Article 4(2) directions. The result is that planning permission is required for such works.

### 1.2 The purpose of a conservation area appraisal

1.2.1 A conservation area character appraisal aims to define the qualities that make an area special. This involves understanding the history and development of the place and analysing its current appearance and character - including describing significant features in the landscape and identifying important buildings and spaces. It also involves recording, where appropriate, intangible qualities such as the sights, sounds and smells that contribute to making the area distinctive, as well as its historic associations with people and events.

1.2.2 An appraisal is not a complete audit of every building or feature, but rather aims to give an overall flavour of the area. It provides a benchmark of understanding against which the effects of proposals for change can be assessed, and the future of the area managed. It also identifies problems that detract from the character of the area and potential threats to this character.

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<sup>1</sup> Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990 s.69

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, Section 72

- 1.2.3 This appraisal of the Enfield Lock Conservation Area (hereafter referred to as the Conservation Area) supports Enfield Council's commitment in its Local Plan (Core Strategy ) and its duty under section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to prepare proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas and to consult the public about the proposals. The assessment in the appraisal of the contribution made by unlisted buildings and other elements to the character of the Conservation Area is based on the criteria suggested in English Heritage's guidance *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (2011), reproduced at the end of this document.

### **1.3 Conservation in Enfield**

- 1.3.1 Since the 1870s, Enfield has developed from a modest market town surrounded by open country and small villages to a pattern of suburbs on the edge of London. This transformation was triggered by the advent of suburban railways and took place in a piecemeal manner, with former villages being developed into local shopping centres and industries being developed along the Lea Valley. Conservation areas in Enfield reflect this pattern of development, including old town and village centres, rural areas centred on the remains of former country estates, examples of the best suburban estates and distinctive industrial sites. Some of the smaller designated areas are concentrated on particular groups of buildings of local importance.
- 1.3.2 The Enfield Lock Conservation Area was designated in 1976, and at that time comprised the lock, the lock-keeper's cottage, the waterways depot and adjoining Prince of Wales Field, and some of the cottages in Government Row. It was extended in 1979 to include all the cottages in Government Row south of Smeaton Road, the Royal Small Arms Hotel (now The Rifles) and Mill House. Nos 4-14 and 18-28 Government Row are included in the statutory list, and nos 29-32 are locally listed, as are Lock Cottage and Lock House. The surviving factory buildings of circa 1854 on the eastern bank of the River Lea (not within the Conservation Area, but very visible from it) are listed, but the later survivals to the south - including the former Pattern Shop - are not. Nos. 4 -14 and 18-28 Government Row are the subject of Article 4(2) directions. Nos. 71-76 Government Row are listed, but are outside the Conservation Area; they survive as the northernmost end of Government Row, separated from the rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century listed terraces by new development.

### **1.4 Planning policy framework**

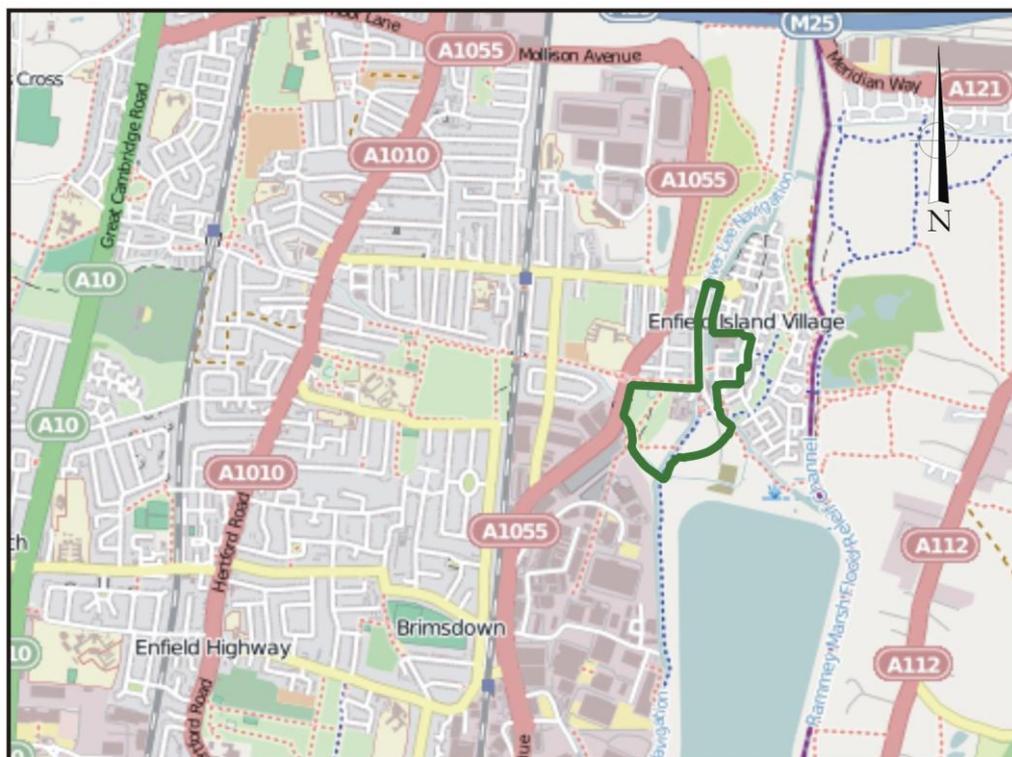
- 1.4.1 The legal basis for conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. National policy guidance is provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in March 2012, which *inter alia* requires local planning authorities to set out a positive

strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. The Enfield Plan sets out a basic framework of conservation policies (Core Strategy: *Core Policy 31*; Draft Development Management DPD: *Draft DMD 44*) for all areas. This conservation area character appraisal will be used to support the conservation policies that form part of the Core Strategy.

## 2 APPRAISAL OF SPECIAL INTEREST

### 2.1 Location and setting

2.1.1 The Enfield Lock Conservation Area (*see Map 1*) is situated in the valley of the River Lea, approximately 3 miles (5km) to the north-east of Enfield town centre. It is a few hundred metres to the east of Enfield Lock station on the railway line between Liverpool Street and Cambridge. The Conservation Area includes the Lea Navigation, its lock, the terraces of houses (called Government Row) between the River Lea and the Lea Navigation, the Canal & River Trust (formerly British Waterways) depot and offices to the west of the River Lea, and the adjoining meadows as far as the dismantled railway line. The Lea Valley Walk, a 50 mile long-distance footpath from Luton in Bedfordshire to the east end of London, follows the Lea Navigation, and is crossed east-west by the London Loop long-distance path, which follows Turkey Brook within Enfield Borough.



*Enfield Lock Conservation Area Character Appraisal: location map*

 *Conservation Area boundary*

*Figure 1: Location Map*

2.1.2 The topography is flat and dominated by the River Lea and Lea Navigation and the reservoirs to the south. As in the rest of this part of the Borough, the surface geology of the area is valley brick earth.

## 2.2 Historical development

2.2.1 The area was part of the manorial lands of Norris Farm, in the area later to become Ordnance Road. The manor itself was demolished in 1786. Although there had been a settlement at Enfield Lock since medieval times and probably long before, the marshy areas around the River Lea underwent very little development until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; the flat swampy land of the Lea Valley held only a string of hamlets<sup>3</sup> - Ponders End, Enfield Highway, Enfield Wash and Turkey Street. Industry was centred on fulling and corn mills using water power. A cut from the Lea called the Mill River had been built to supply medieval mills<sup>4</sup>; it is mentioned in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century when a lock was constructed between Wild and Mill Marshes. An Act of 1571 made the Lea navigable to Ware in Hertfordshire, and work was completed by 1576. Two mills were owned by the powerful Wroth family from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>5</sup>. One was at Ponders End (now Wright's Mill); the other was near Enfield Lock and gave its name to Mill Marsh. In 1653, Ordnance officers negotiated with the Wroths to use their mill for making gunpowder.

### *The Lea navigation*

2.2.2 The 'old' river was superseded by improvements to the Mill River under an Act of 1767. Until the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the engineer John Smeaton surveyed the River Lea with a view to improving its navigational capabilities, the Lea served many conflicting interests<sup>6</sup>, principally those of barge operators, millers fulling cloth or grinding corn, and the New River Company, which extracted clean water supplies for London.

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<sup>3</sup> Pevsner & Cherry, *London 4: North*, p434

<sup>4</sup> Victoria County History Vol 5, *Middlesex*: p207/8

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*, p236

<sup>6</sup> Pam, D: *A History of Enfield* Vol 1, p314

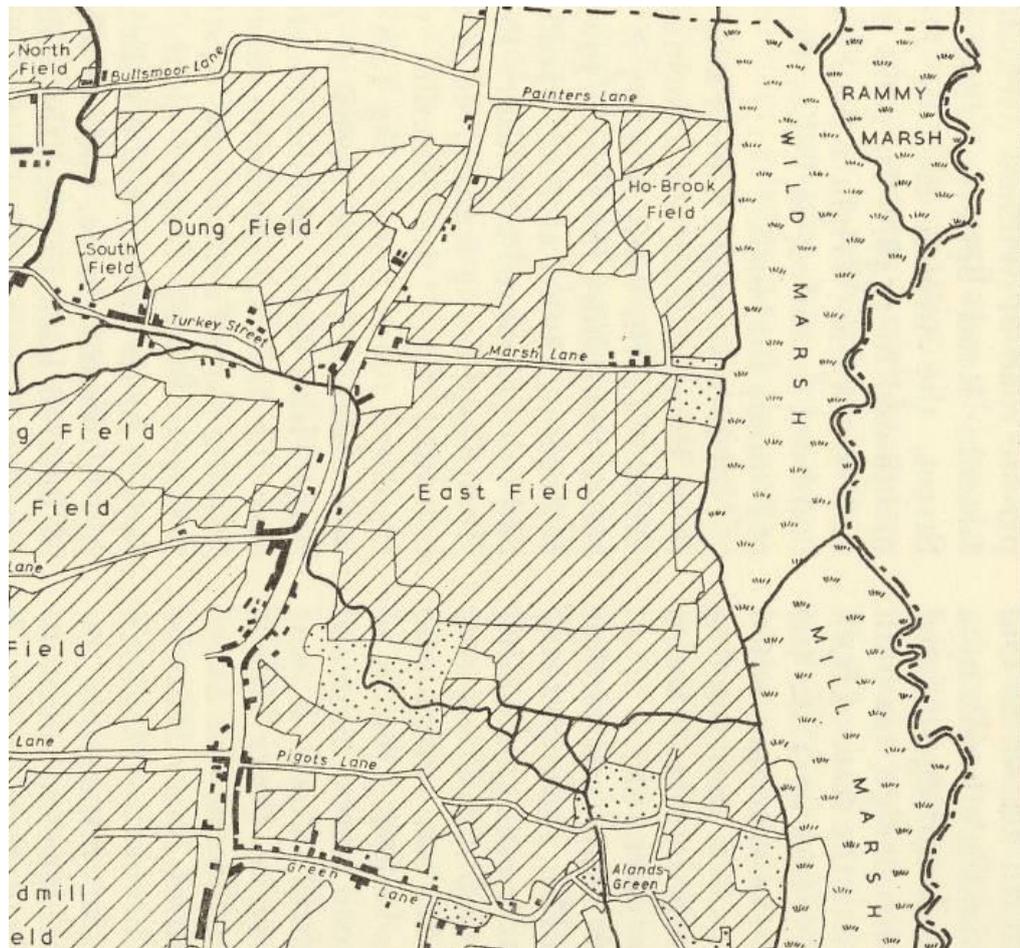


Figure 2: The eastern marshes area in 1750, from *A History of Enfield, Vol 1(Pam)*

2.2.3 Smeaton proposed improvements over the 30 mile length of the navigable Lea from Hertford to avoid the problems with inadequate draught for barges; new ‘cuts’ were to be made where the river depth was inadequate and locks constructed to ensure navigable width and depth at all times. The 1767 Act enabled the work to proceed. The construction of the Lea Navigation, with new locks at Ponders End and Enfield Lock, was an important stimulus to trade in the area. Enfield Lock was built on the site of the old mill river lock, and a surveyor’s house was built in 1792 on the site of what later became the British Waterways depot.

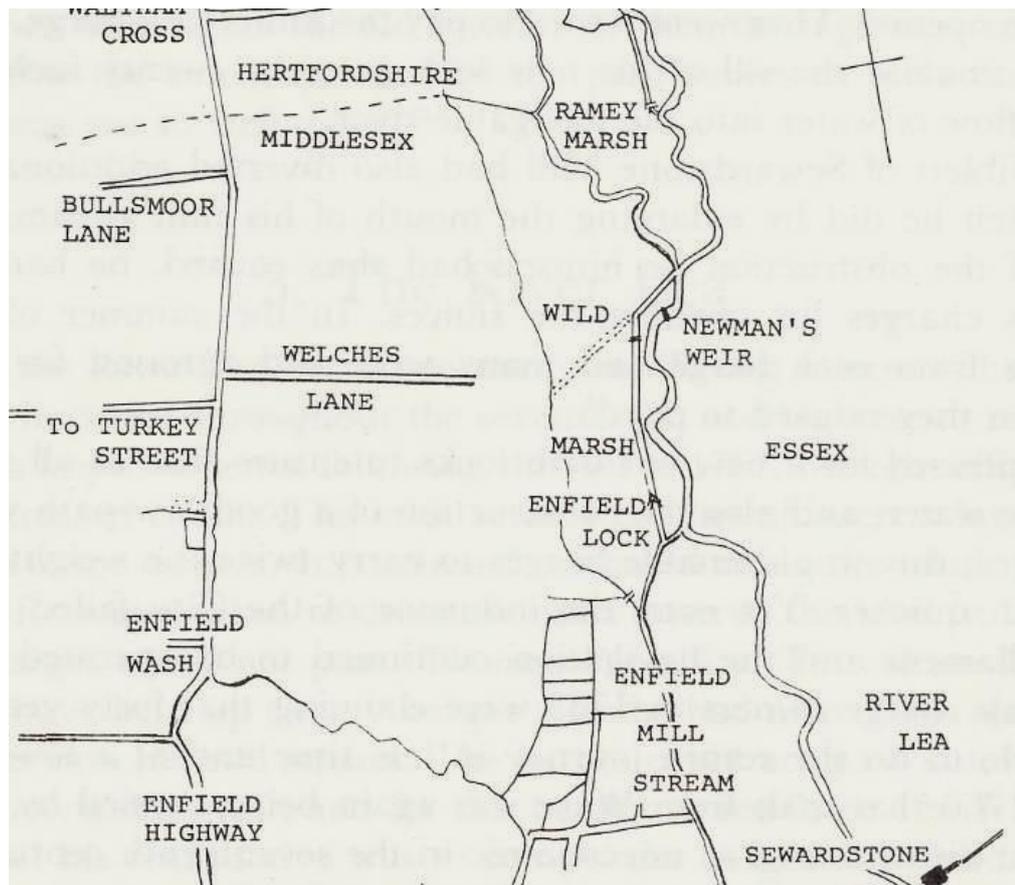


Figure 3: The River Lea in 1753, from *A History of Enfield, Vol 1(Pam)*

- 2.2.4 An engineers' yard was established south west of the lock by 1866 and appears on the 1897 map in the ownership of the Lea Conservancy. Some of the buildings on the site may have been part of the 'Engineer's Yard' which appears on the 1866 OS map and pre-dates the setting up of the Lea Conservancy Board in 1869 to take over control of the river from the former trustees. It was taken over in turn by the Metropolitan Water Board in 1904. In 1922, major reconstruction of the locks on the Lea Navigation took place to increase their capacity. With the nationalisation of the canals in 1948, control of the Lea Navigation passed to the British Transport Commission, then later to the British Waterways Board and subsequently in July 2012 the new Canal & Rivers Trust.
- 2.2.5 By the mid 1960s, the area around the lock had become dilapidated and overgrown, partly as a result of the running-down of production at the Royal Small Arms Factory<sup>7</sup>. The Royal Small Arms Tavern was boarded up and the surrounding area suffered from extensive fly-tipping. A long period of decline continued (despite the designation of the Conservation Area in 1976) until 1982, when the area was eventually rehabilitated by direct volunteer action from the Enfield Village Clean-Up Campaign. This encouraged the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority to plant trees and landscape the towpath, and Enfield Council to erect barriers to prevent fly-

<sup>7</sup> Fighting for the Future (Enfield Preservation Society) p152ff

tipping. A derelict warehouse on the west bank of the Lea was demolished and low-cost housing agreed and this, with the sale of 23 cottages in Government Row, turned the area from a run-down industrial zone into a residential neighbourhood, to be greatly expanded in 2001 by the construction of 'Island Village', once the Royal Small Arms Factory finally closed and the former factory buildings could be converted to other uses.

*The Royal Small Arms Factory (operational 1812 – 1988)*

2.2.6 Because of their role in the development of the area in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the surviving buildings of the former Royal Small Arms Factory (RSAF) are an important element of the character of the Conservation Area.<sup>8</sup>

2.2.7 The RSAF was the principal source of rifles for the British Army throughout the 19th century. An arms factory first opened at Enfield Lock in 1804, and the assembling of muskets there started soon afterwards. Land was bought by the Board of Ordnance in 1812<sup>9</sup>, the factory opened in 1816, and the finishing branch was transferred from Lewisham in 1816. The engineer John Rennie advised the construction of a navigable leat with its own millhead and tailrace between the two waterways, to provide improved waterpower and transport. By 1822, in addition to the mill, there were workshops, forges, proof-houses and stores. Workers' housing - Government Row - was built along the river; there were sixty houses by 1841. A school was opened in 1846 and a chapel in 1857, and there was also a government -owned tavern, the Royal Small Arms Hotel, and two other nearby taverns, the Ordnance Arms and the Greyhound; the relative isolation of the site on Enfield's eastern marshes and its need for security made self-sufficiency in housing, services and the provision of alcohol a great advantage. The Greyhound and its adjoining terrace (outside the Conservation Area) were built by 1866, and the date suggests an association with the factory, even though not built and owned by the government.

2.2.8 The factory remained modest until the 1850s, when the Crimean War demanded increased production. American rifles had been exhibited and admired at the Great Exhibition, and a machine shop based on American mass-production principles and with American-made machinery was installed in 1854-6. The workforce was increased to over 1,000 and, by 1860, an average of nearly 1800 rifles a week was being produced. A railway to connect to the nearby main line, and a canal from the Lea with a terminal basin next to the machine shop, improved the efficiency of transport links.

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<sup>8</sup> The RSAF site was added to the Conservation Area in 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Pevsner & Cherry, London 4: North, p 452

- 2.2.9 Another major expansion began in 1886, when the original watermill was replaced by steam-power; by 1887 there were 2,400 employees. The famous Lee-Enfield rifle, which became the standard weapon for the army, was designed in 1895 and continued in production until the 1950s. The factory expanded again after the First World War, but declined after the Second World War, with half the site being closed in 1963 and the remainder in 1987.
- 2.2.10 The 1897 OS map shows a continuous band of houses along the east bank of the River Lea as far as the Tumbling Bay at the junction of the Lea, the Lea Navigation and the leat linking the factory to the Lea and the Waltham Abbey Gunpowder Mills. OS maps after 1897 omit the RSAF buildings, apart from the housing, for security reasons.
- 2.2.11 After closure, a major new development incorporated the existing listed and some unlisted buildings into 'Enfield Island Village', converting existing buildings into residential, office and light industrial use. The listed factory buildings and three related unlisted blocks (one, the former Pattern Room, is now called Benson Court) have been retained and integrated with new development to form a series of courtyards and streets around the retained canal basin. The former canal and basin, previously filled in and built over, have been partially excavated and re-instated. The former police station and water tower have also been retained and the Royal Small Arms Hotel became The Rifles public house, but this suffered a major fire is currently boarded up and derelict. The surviving Government Row terraces have been interspersed with re-built replica terraces, so that the Lea is once again lined with small houses giving straight onto the towpath.

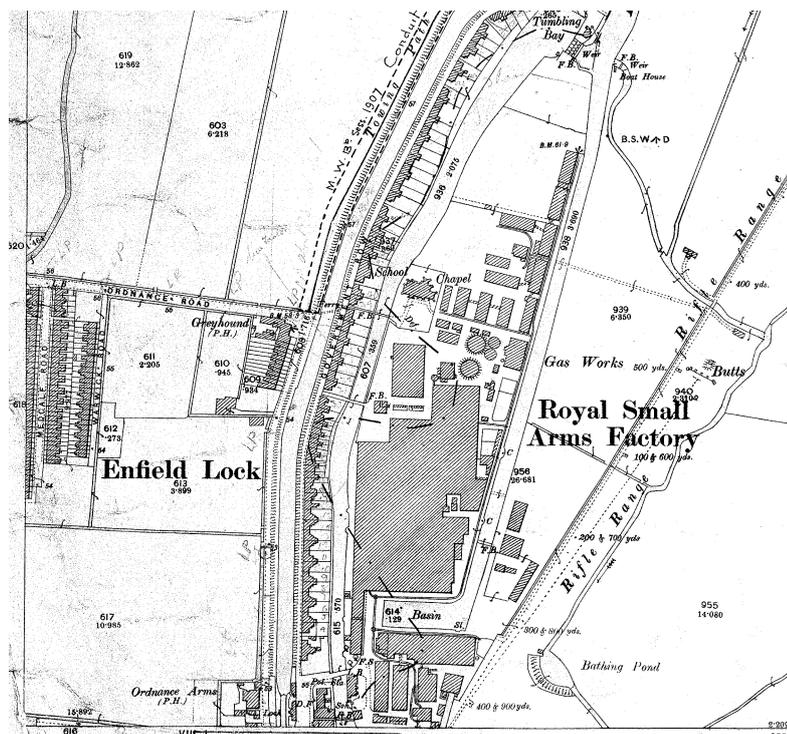


Figure 4: The extent of the Royal Small Arms Factory buildings in 1897

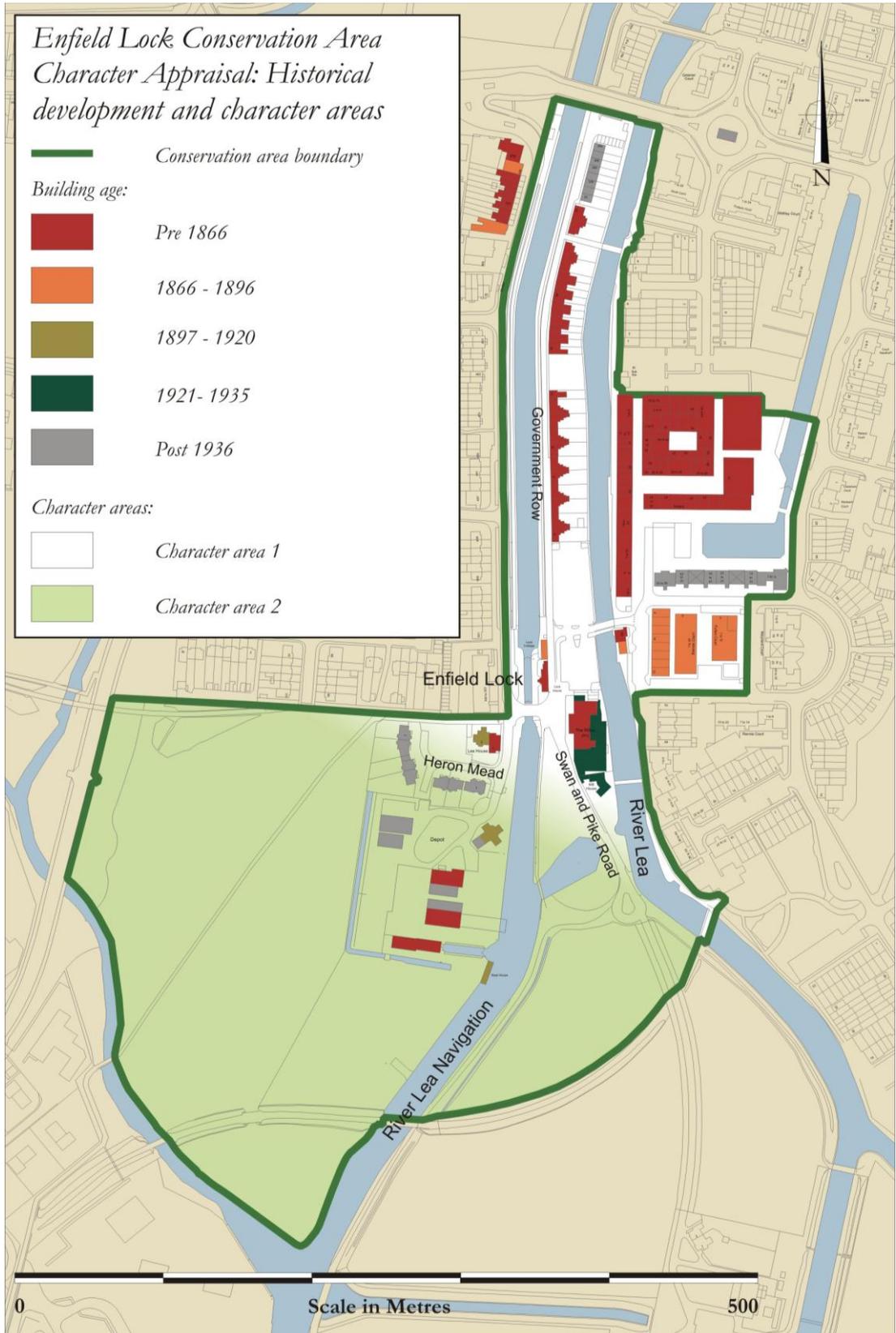


Figure 5: Historical development and character areas [Map 2]

## 2.3 Archaeology

- 2.3.1 Like much of the Lea valley, this area has a history of intensive land use stretching back into prehistory. Archaeological evaluation on Rammey Marsh<sup>10</sup> has revealed a well-preserved collection of Bronze Age animal bones preserved in alluvial deposits, with struck flints and pottery debris; one of very few Bronze Age bone assemblages in Greater London. Later occupation is also shown at the river edge, in a series of double ditches and lines of post holes interpreted as a substantial Roman stockade. Part is identified as an Area of Archaeological Importance.
- 2.3.2 In compliance with a condition attached to the planning permission for residential development on The Rifles site, an archaeological evaluation of the site was undertaken<sup>11</sup>. Apart from some below-ground remains of a documented mid-19th century school and cottages, demolished by 1920, nothing of archaeological interest was found.

## 2.4 Identification of character areas

- 2.4.1 The Conservation Area is perceived as two character areas; in its northern section, the focus is on the Lea Navigation, the lock and its associated buildings, the houses that line its east bank, and the former Royal Small Arms Factory buildings behind. The latter's substantial profiles form an important part of this area's character. This is in contrast to the second character area, south of the lock, where a softer landscape of trees and meadows provides the setting for the structures associated with the river and its navigation branch. This includes the area bounded by the Lea Navigation and Swan & Pike Road; Swan & Pike Pool; the British Waterways depot, and the meadows between the Small River Lea and the Lea Navigation bounded by the dismantled railway line.

## 2.5 Character Area A



<sup>10</sup> Information in 'Enfield Lock Conservation Area' leaflet by Enfield Preservation Society, undated

<sup>11</sup> Britannia Archaeology Ltd. *The Rifles Public House, Swan and Pike Road, Enfield Lock, London* (Oct 2013)

*Figure 6: Enfield Lock and Lock Cottage*

*Spatial analysis*

- 2.5.1 The principal approach to the Conservation Area is from Smeaton Road, the new road which now links Island Village to the older Ordnance Road between Enfield Lock and Hertford Road. From Ordnance Road, the retained water tower on the island is a prominent landmark dark against the sky, emphasised by its isolation on a traffic island. The road bridge gives a good view of the River Lea and the Navigation in both directions, and is therefore a good vantage point looking south over the first character area. Following the western boundary of the Conservation Area southwards from Smeaton Road along South Ordnance Road, the canalised Lea Navigation is prominent in the view with its raised bank. The regular terraces of Government Row overlook the vista to the lock, and the combination of this formal urban townscape with the Navigation and its grassy bank, trees, fishermen, swans and reflections in the still water gives a momentary impression of an 18<sup>th</sup> century Dutch landscape painting.
- 2.5.2 Where Government Row ends, the extensive former car park for The Rifles, between the River Lea and the Lea Navigation, is now closed and surrounded by hoardings. Although unattractive in itself, previously the car park did open up a contrasting wider view across to the taller RSAF buildings lining the east bank of the River Lea. The lock closes the immediate view of the Lea Navigation, with the 19<sup>th</sup> century Lock House and Lock Cottage and the former police station at the entrance to the RSAF site. This bridge provides a view eastwards into the RSAF site; across James Lee Square, the heart of 'Island Village', the clock-tower of the former machine shop is a focal point.<sup>12</sup> The avenue leading into the Canal & Rivers Trust depot site (past the restored Lea House on the right) is an inviting green tunnel, with the vista closed by the cosy and rather domestic-looking red brick Lea Conservancy offices of 1907. The depot site is private, but this does not prevent appreciation of its surviving 19<sup>th</sup> century workshops which can all be seen from the eastern bank of the River Lea across the Lea Navigation. The former Rifles public house (originally the Royal Small Arms Hotel) is the southernmost building of the former RSAF site and marks the transition to a more rural part of the Conservation Area. The Rifles is currently derelict and boarded up, its roof timbers exposed by a major fire, and is a very unattractive intrusion into the southern part of the Conservation Area.
- 2.5.3 The western border of the Conservation Area, South Ordnance Road, is lined by a succession of modern terraces and a much-altered late 19<sup>th</sup> century terrace of cottages next to the Greyhound public house. These intrude on views looking north from the lock and control the impression looking west from the footpath in front of Government Row, although the raised level of the watercourse does something to moderate the impact of

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<sup>12</sup> See page 24, paragraph 6.0 for descriptions of buildings proposed for inclusion in the conservation area extension

this view. At the northern border of the Conservation Area, the Smeaton Road bridge provides attractive views north along both watercourses to the bend in the Navigation at the Tumbling Bay and weir where the River Lea, the Navigation and the canal to the former RSAF site meet. Northwards from the banks of the Lea Navigation, the last of the original Government Row cottages can be seen near the Tumbling Bay where they survive in some isolation.

- 2.5.4 The rear elevations of Government Row are highly visible, and the view from the River Lea riverside path, with the clutter of riverside back gardens and planting, the varied window sizes, and the modelling of rear extensions, is more visually varied and complex than that of the front elevations. The interest of the view across the river compensates for the relative dullness of the route along the east side of the Lea, as the now-converted drawing office buildings provide little visual interest at close quarters and railings fence off the water.

### *Character analysis*



*Figure 7: Converted listed buildings and newer development around the basin*

- 2.5.5 The area has mainly residential and office uses, with some light industrial use on the depot site. There is, however, much leisure use by locals and visitors as a result of the presence of the long-distance walking routes, and the popularity of the Lea Navigation with narrow-boat users and anglers.
- 2.5.6 This western part of this character area is dominated by the Lea Navigation and by the front elevation of Government Row. Twenty two houses (the majority of the original houses remaining within the Conservation Area) are statutorily listed and make an outstanding contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. These terraced groups were virtually continuous

at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, from the lock up to the Tumbling Bay to the north, and comprised 62 properties in all. Of these, less than half remain, some having been demolished and some re-built.

2.5.7 The terraces of listed houses retain much of their architectural detail in its original form. The larger four-room cottages are on generous plots and were for the foremen at the factory - the 'artificers' had single storey two-room cottages of which none now remains.<sup>13</sup> The terraces constituting Nos.4-28 (consecutive) are a mixture of paired 2-bay houses (Nos.18-28) and paired 3-bay houses (Nos.4-14). Despite their differing sizes, the houses are mostly very similar in appearance, in stock brick with contrasting string courses, rubbed arches, slate roofs and 12 pane sash windows. Nos 29-32 are locally listed; they are similar to the wider-fronted house-type, but the northern pair have tile hanging to their first floors. The group near the bridge, Nos. 33-35a, are rebuilt replicas which fit in well in cross-river views, but are given away by their cruder arches and sashes set flush with the wall.

2.5.8 Although new buildings have been added to the former RSAF site, those close to the older buildings complement their scale and preserve important views. The canal and its basin had been filled in while the factory was still in use, but the basin and part of the canal have now been re-instated as townscape features within the redevelopment which took place in 2001 (see Figure 7). The machine shop has been converted to a range of new uses, but retains its grand scale and essential architectural and historic interest.

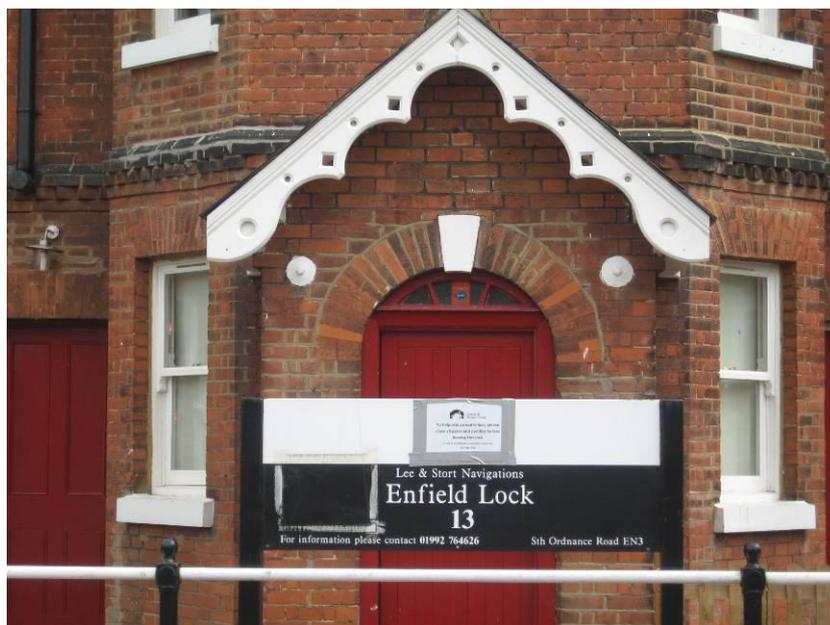


Figure 8: Lock House, 1889

<sup>13</sup> Pam, *D A History of Enfield: A Victorian Suburb*, p106

2.5.9 The lock buildings - Lock House, Lock Cottages and the lock gates and bridge (*Figure 6*) form an attractive group with the late Victorian Lock House in a contrasting red brick; the groundscape and walls of blue engineering brick have been well maintained, so that the robust industrial character of this little group survives. It is the heart and focus of the Conservation Area. Lock Cottage is very plain, in stocks with a slate pitched roof, but Lock House (*Figure 8*) is more exuberant and has a fanciful projecting central bay with prominent eaves brackets over the windows, a keyed oculus at the first floor (inscribed 'Lea Conservancy 1889'), a hipped roof with decorative gablet and a gabled porch. This is in striking contrast to the simple, but elegant, restraint of Government Row and marks the transition to the more vernacular style of the Lea Conservancy's ownership.

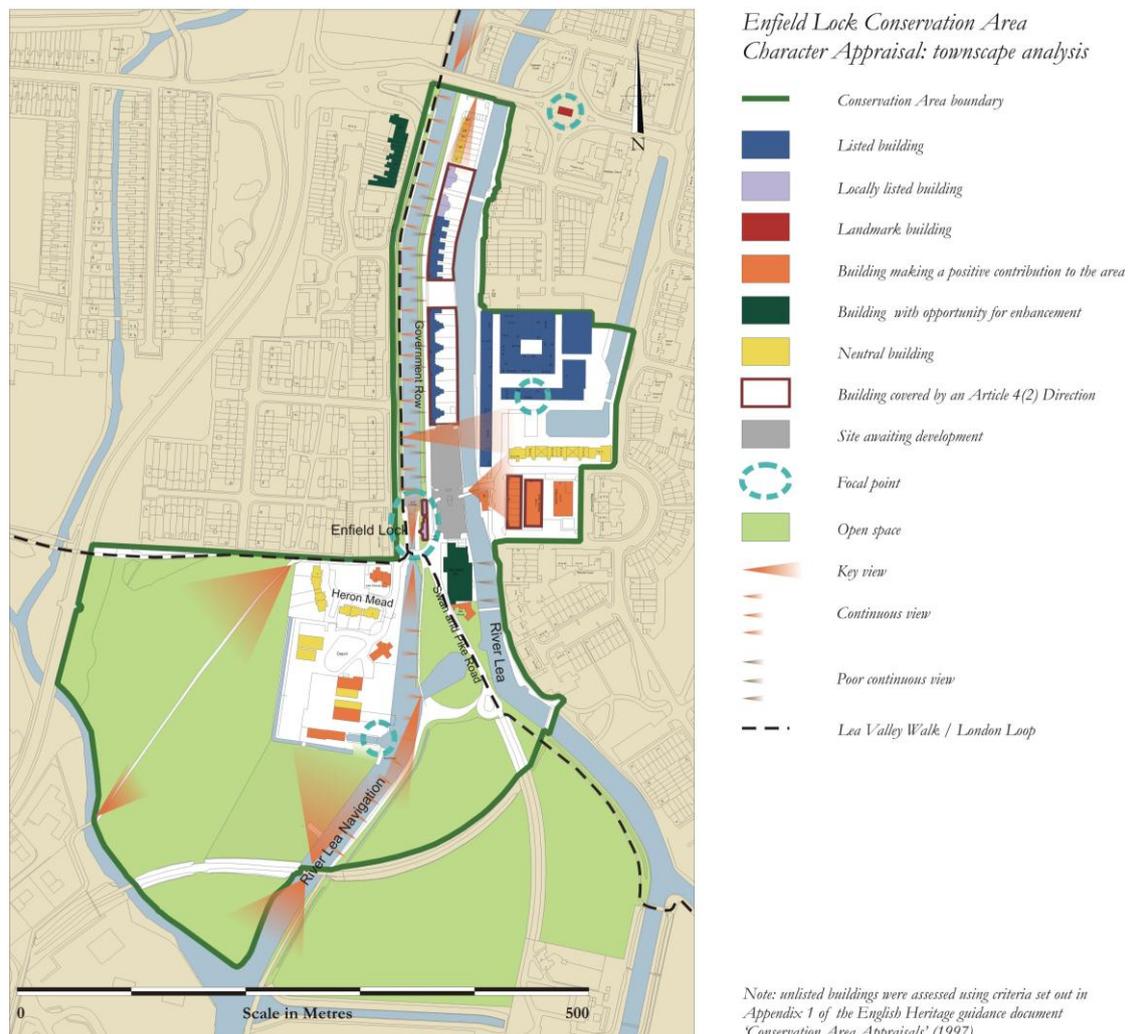


Figure 9: Townscape analysis [Map 3]

2.5.10 The Rifles public house and its extensive outbuildings are now derelict and boarded up, with a planning consent (for conversion and development to provide 23 residential units), which has yet to be implemented. At the time

of writing (November 2013), it is understood that the scheme will soon be under construction. The Rifles' car parks, continuous with the line of Government Row, are now surrounded by hoardings which intrude on the views along the Navigation footpath – but even before, it was a bland expanse bounded by motorway-style barriers at the water's edge, which formed an unattractive hole in the townscape and an inappropriate setting for the listed buildings across the River Lea. The Mill House adjoining The Rifles only has its name as connection with the past (the former site of the early watermill, superseded by the later RSAF leat and larger manufactory), as the design is a quirky 1950s brick villa.

#### *Summary – key characteristics*

2.5.11 The key characteristics of this part of the Conservation Area can be summarised as follows:

- The Lea Navigation provides long views to the lock.
- The listed and locally listed terraced houses of Government Row, which retain their original form and features, create a good quality townscape that is highly visible as a continuous vista from the east bank of the Lea Navigation.
- There were good long views of the listed buildings on the RSAF site from the towpath across the car parks by the lock before the car park was closed and fenced off, and the re-developed site within the Conservation Area retains most of the elements of the external character of the buildings – their scale, simplicity, and good quality materials and detailing.
- The lock and its buildings form a group that retains the robust industrial and vernacular quality of its buildings, machinery and ground surfaces.

#### *Problems and pressures*

2.5.12 Several issues threaten to compromise these key characteristics and reduce the attractiveness and special interest of the area.

- i) The views eastwards across the Lea Navigation are marred by a succession of modern housing developments along South Ordnance Road, whose mix of materials and low standard of design are a poor contrast to the high quality of Government Row.
- ii) The near views from Smeaton Road bridge and from the paths on both sides of the Lea Navigation are reduced in effect by the poor quality alterations to the terrace adjoining The Greyhound public house, which dates from the 1860s/1870s.
- iii) Car parking in front of Government Row diminishes the character of the townscape.
- iv) The car park to The Rifles is a blank and arid space, now surrounded by temporary hoarding, with poor quality detailing and barriers to the water's edge.

- v) The derelict condition of The Rifles detracts seriously from many views within the conservation area, including the view to its rear elevation across the River Lea.



Figure 10: (left) The Rifles former PH, now derelict; (right) The Rifles former car park

## 2.6 Character Area B



Figure 11: Boats at the Lea Navigation boat yards.

### *Spatial analysis*

- 2.6.1 This part of the Conservation Area is a gateway to the marsh and meadows which border the north west edge of King George's Reservoir, and has a more open and rural character. The Conservation Area boundary flares out from the lock to embrace a wider landscape, although the immediate prospect to the south east is into the private depot site through an avenue alongside the Lea Navigation. The former offices of the Lea Conservancy close the vista. Lee House, which overlooks the gateway, has recently been repaired and converted to residential use. Beyond the entrance avenue, the

site is spacious, with the retained mid 19th century storage and workshop buildings attracting attention.

- 2.6.2 South from the lock bridge along Swan and Pike Road and then across via Swan and Pike Pool to the River Lea towpath, there are fine views along the Lea Navigation's tree and bush-lined banks to Swan and Pike Wood and towards open fields and trees, although the pumping station on the northern edge of the King George V reservoir looms on the horizon, and pylons take giant careless strides across the landscape. This section offers contrasting experiences of long views close to smaller more intimate wooded prospects around the pool. The towpath opposite the depot site is one of the most lively locations in an often rather deserted conservation area, with views back to the lock edged by mature horse chestnut trees and across to the 19th century Lea Conservancy workshops and little Enfield Dock boat repair business, and plenty of narrow-boats and walkers enlivening the scene.
- 2.6.3 The towpath continues south with views of the overgrown opposite bank where a slipway formerly existed, but has now been filled in. The boundary of the Conservation Area is at the dismantled railway bridge; following the path over the bridge gives views back up to the lock, and the path then carries on inside the boundary along the former railway embankment and becomes deeply enclosed in vegetation. North of the embankment, a path strikes out to the north-east across an open field, and ends at the housing development west of South Ordnance Road. From this path, the depot site is in strong contrast, enclosed within a steel mesh fence; the field has an uneasy relationship with its setting, neither urban nor rural, a transitional space with an uncertain destination and dominated by the base of an electricity pylon. The Turkey Brook and Mollison Avenue (the A1055), after its crossing of the brook, form the western side of this part of the Conservation Area.; both are lined and largely concealed by trees and undergrowth.

#### *Character analysis*

The depot site and its approach from the lock contains a collection of buildings of architectural and historic interest, none of which is included in the statutory or local list, but which make an important contribution to the Conservation Area. The site is private, but most of the buildings can also be seen from the tow path. Lee House, a substantial house originally of 1840-50 and with a rear block added late in the century, is probably associated with the accelerated growth of the RSAF, or the establishment of the waterway engineers' yard (pre-dating the Lea Conservancy) on the site of the current British Waterways depot in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Now restored, it makes a positive contribution to the area in its very visible position, even though it is now surrounded on two sides by modern houses built in its former garden. It is in brick – although the earlier block is now painted and part rendered – with rubbed arches, and deep eaves to a

shallow slated roof. Its porch was removed at the time of the adjoining housing development, apparently to facilitate access to the site.



*Figure 12: Lee House, now restored*

2.6.4 The former Lea Conservancy office of 1907 is a small informal red brick building with hipped roofs in a cruciform shape. The site opens up to a complex containing some mid 19<sup>th</sup> century stock brick single-storey warehouses or workshops, which have been sensitively modified and extended in the 20<sup>th</sup> century; the older buildings, particularly the block nearest the offices, have very good brick detailing and retain their character, and the whole forms a cohesive group. Behind these central buildings, a boat repair workshop and its dry dock give onto the water's edge and, although small-scale, form an important reminder of the earlier working sites along the river. Narrow boats and other pleasure craft are moored along the banks and create a lively rural scene in contrast to the housing and light industrial areas further north.



*Figure 13: Boat repair workshops*

2.6.5 The remainder of the Conservation Area is open, crossed by the towpath and a footpath across the fields to the west of the depot, where the line of the former railway embankment can be traced.

*Summary – key characteristics*

2.6.6 The key characteristics of this part of the Conservation Area can be summarised as follows:

- The character area has a lively combination of infrastructure associated with the lock and Lea Navigation, and attractive semi-rural views across fields and waterways and into Swan and Pike Wood.
- The Canal & Rivers Trust (formerly British Waterways and before that Lea Conservancy) depot site contains a number of 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial buildings of robust character, which have been retained and successfully combined with newer buildings of sympathetic design, as well as the former Lea Conservancy office which provides an important focus on entry to the site.
- The west bank of the Lea Navigation contains some surviving riverside industry, which acts as a link with the industrial history of the area.
- Swan & Pike Pool, the lock approach along the towpath and Swan & Pike Road combine to form an area of attractive contrasts, with smaller enclosed spaces having views out across the meadows.
- There are good vantage points for viewing the two waterways at the lock and from the disused railway bridge.
- The Conservation Area provides an important focus on the Lea Valley Walk and the London Loop, which intersect at this location. The area around the lock and pool is managed as a leisure site and provides opportunities to enjoy the history and wildlife of the area for visitors and residents.

*Problems and pressures*

2.6.7 Problems and pressures currently affecting this part of the Conservation Area can be summarised as follows:

- The Rifles, an empty and burnt-out former public house, is an eyesore occupying an important position in the Conservation Area, where the views south and west open up across fields and the southern reaches of the two rivers. .
- The River Lea is congested with fallen trees and branches opposite the former Rifles site, collecting litter and obstructing views (*Figure 15*).
- Street furniture at the north end of Swan and Pike Road opposite The Rifles public house intrudes into and detracts from views of the Lea Navigation.
- Riverside infrastructure – a slipway and a boathouse – has already disappeared and care is needed to ensure the dry dock and workshop are retained, in order to maintain the industrial character of the riverside and provision of adequate boat repair facilities.

The depot fence (steel mesh) is out of keeping with the semi-rural character of the Conservation Area. Security is no doubt of great importance, but a better solution could be negotiated.



Figure 14: Scrub growth, litter and inappropriate street furniture

## 2.7 The public realm

2.7.1 There are many attractive walks within the Conservation Area along the two waterways, and the long-distance paths are well used by walkers and cyclists. The public areas within the former Royal Small Arms Factory site are bleaker, other than around the restored canal basin which acts as a visual focus for the complex. Currently some of the routes and views are disfigured by the former Rifles car parks' hoardings, and there is scrub growth and litter alongside the riverside footpath (Figures 15 and 16).

## 3 SUMMARY OF SPECIAL INTEREST OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

3.1.1 The key factors that give the Enfield Lock Conservation Area its special interest can be summarised as follows:

- *The area has considerable significance in Enfield for its major contribution to the industrial history and former prosperity of the area, both through the 18<sup>th</sup> century construction of the Lea Navigation and through the scale and success of the RSAF. The lock infrastructure and houses, and the waterways depot buildings, represent the waterways heritage; Government Row and the former factory buildings represent the RSAF. Together, they survive as a record of a settlement that grew to have a distinctive character in some isolation from the rest of the Borough.*
- *The area has a distinctive combination of urban housing and industrial buildings in its northern part, contrasting with open land and paths in its southern part, linked by the waterways.*

- *The industrial architecture and canal infrastructure, which generally has a robust quality and has been well maintained.*
- *The area is a focus of interest on two long distance footpaths*

## 4 SUMMARY OF ISSUES

4.1.1 There are several issues facing the Conservation Area at present:

- *There are several unlisted buildings of historic and architectural interest within the existing Conservation Area, which should be added to the local list. These are the Victorian workshops and Lea Navigation office within the depot site, and Lee House.*
- *The poor quality alterations to the houses adjoining the Greyhound public house - which date from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century - affect views from the road bridge and across the Lea Navigation. Facing and in contrast to Government Row, they are a vivid demonstration of the unfortunate effects of permitted development rights on houses unprotected by listing or an Article 4(2) direction.*
- *Most of the Conservation Area is well-maintained, so that the derelict state of The Rifles is an unfortunate contrast.*
- *The retention of the dock on the west bank of the Lea Navigation is important to the character of the southern part of the Conservation Area. A slipway and boathouse, still shown on the map in 2005, had disappeared by that date. River-related uses should be retained in this location.*
- *The former Rifles car park is an unattractive bleak space with poor detailing and surfaces, now surrounded by hoardings (at the time of writing, it is understood that a consented redevelopment scheme is about to be implemented).*
- *There is an unsympathetic uPVC window on the rear elevation of Lock Cottage, which is covered by an Article 4(2) direction, for which no application appears to have been made.*
- *Street furniture and surfaces are often of poor quality and inappropriate to a Conservation Area - for example, street furniture at the north end of Swan and Pike Road, and blacktop with white lines at Government Row. The security barrier at Government Row is an unnecessarily crude method of limiting access.*
- *Car parking outside the houses in Government Row, rather than in the private car park, detracts from the appearance of the terraces, both in the street itself and from across the Lea Navigation. The lack of a footway and the narrow width of the street encourage parking very close to the houses.*

## 5 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND CONTACT DETAILS

### 5.1 Bibliography

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 Pevsner, N. & Cherry, B. *The Buildings of England, London 4: North,* (Penguin, London 1998)  
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Reference is also made to the following legislation and national and local policy guidance:

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990  
 Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment Department of the Environment, Department of National Heritage 1994  
 Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning and the Historic Environment Department of the Environment, Department of National Heritage 1990  
 Enfield Unitary Development Plan 1994  
 English Heritage guidance *Conservation area appraisals* (1997): revised text version reissued as *Guidance on conservation area appraisals* (September 2005)

## 5.2 Contact details:

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## 6 APPENDICES

### 6.1 Listed buildings

Machine Shop and attached range to west at Royal Ordnance Factory	Grade II
Railings to east of west range of offices attached to Machine Shop, Royal Ordnance Factory	Grade II
Nos. 4-14 (consecutive) Government Row	Grade II GV
Nos. 18-28 (consecutive) Government Row	Grade II GV
Lock Cottage, Government Row	Local list
Lock House, Government Row	Local list
Nos 30-32 (consecutive) Government Row	Local list

### 6.2 Criteria for assessing unlisted elements

(From English Heritage's guidance *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (2011))

'Check list to identify elements in a conservation area which may contribute to the special interest.

A positive response to one or more of the following may indicate that a particular element within a conservation area makes a positive contribution provided that its historic form and values have not been eroded.

- Is it the work of a particular architect or designer of regional or local note?
- Does it have landmark quality?
- Does it reflect a substantial number of other elements in the conservation area in age, style, materials, form or other characteristics?
- Does it relate to adjacent designated heritage assets in age, materials or in any other historically significant way?
- Does it contribute positively to the setting of adjacent designated heritage assets?
- Does it contribute to the quality of recognisable spaces including exteriors or open spaces with a complex of public buildings?
- Is it associated with a designed landscape eg a significant wall, terracing or a garden building?
- Does it individually, or as part of a group, illustrate the development of the settlement in which it stands?
- Does it have significant historic association with features such as the historic road layout, burgage plots, a town park or a landscape feature?
- Does it have historic associations with local people or past events?
- Does it reflect the traditional functional character or former uses in the area?
- Does its use contribute to the character or appearance of the area?

*Appraisal review undertaken by Jenny Pearce; maps prepared by Richard Peats*