

# Lee Green Area of Special Local Character

This document provides a short description of the Lee Green Area of Special Local Character (ASLC), and a statement of significance. It should be used to inform planning applications within the ASLC.

## Description of the area

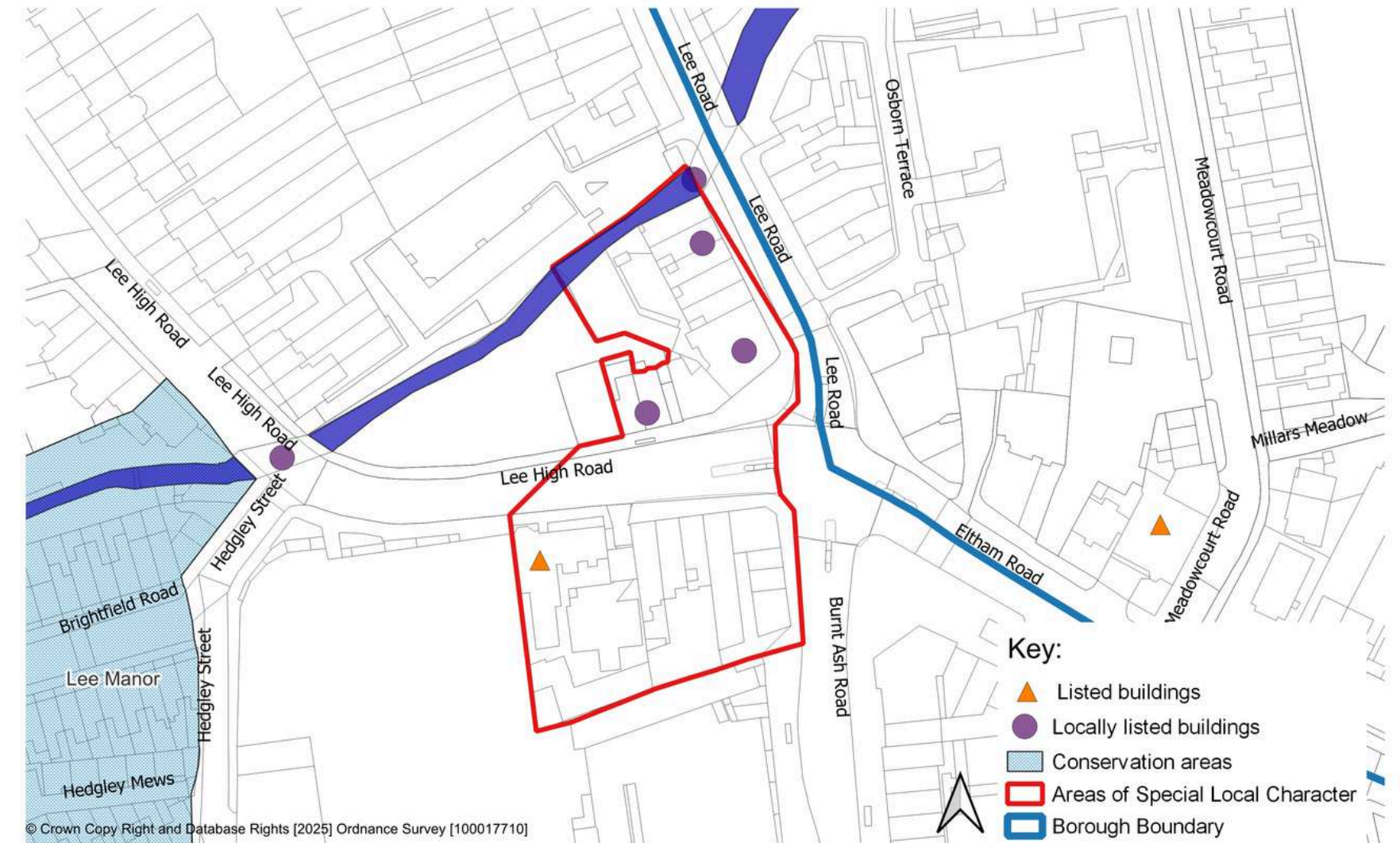
Lee Green lies at the eastern edge of the borough. It is focussed on the crossing of four roads: Lee Road, Eltham Road, Burnt Ash Road and Lee High Road. Only the western half of the junction is within the Area of Special Local Character: the north east corner falls outside the borough boundary (in Greenwich) and the south east corner lost its historic buildings to post war development and so is not included. Low rise buildings edge the junction on the south-west side dating to the 19-20th centuries which include prominent civic and public buildings alongside Victorian cottages and retail terraces.

## 1. Architecture

Lee Green ASLC is an eclectic group of buildings dating from the mid 19th to the early 20th centuries. There are 5 key buildings/groups:

- Former police station (418 Lee High Road) designed by the Chief Architect of the Metropolitan Police John Dixon-Butler in 1904 in an ebullient and highly decorative style. Grade II listed.
- The Old Tigers Head (351 Lee High Rd) a well preserved public house dating to 1896, which replaced an earlier version dating to the mid C18th. It has decorative plasterwork frieze below the cornice, elaborate fenestration to the first floor set behind a cast-iron decorative balustrade

## Boundary Map



and early 20th century lanterns on all three corners. Locally listed.

- 343 - 349 Lee High Road (north side) is a four storey terrace with shopfronts at ground floor. Nos. 347 and 349 are combined and retain their original ground floor elevation. A carriage entrance lies between nos. 345 and 347 giving access to the rear of the site and the bay above this was historically topped with a dome. Rounded Dutch gables with oculus windows enliven the roofscape. Locally listed.
- 120 - 128 Lee Road is a symmetrical and richly detailed terrace built in the English Domestic Revival style in the 1890s. Each of the 5 units has a shopfront at street level with green tiled pilasters and a door to an upstairs flat. The upper floor front elevations are elaborate with repeating patterns of timber sliding sash windows with multi paned upper sashes, two projecting bays with stone detailing, and at roof level curved gables topped by pediments and a central 5 sided dormer window. Six tall chimneys enliven the roofscape and oriel windows project at either end at attic level. Locally listed.
- The south western corner on Lee High Road (south side) comprises a group of modest buildings: no. 422, formerly the Prince Arthur public house until 2005, has a symmetrical elevation with central section projecting through the eaves line to terminate in a concavely curved parapet with an Art Deco motif. 424-428 are a group of three diminutive 2 storey cottages dating to the 1860s, all but obscured behind projecting shopfronts. 430-432 and 8 Burnt Ash Road were built as Burnt Ash Parade in the interwar period, and characteristic brickwork and steel windows can still be seen at no. 8 – the second floor level and cladding was added to the rest of the group in the early 21st century. Despite these alterations, this building is important in marking the edge of the junction.



Clockwise from top left: 349 Lee High Road and the Old Tiger's Head, 120-128 Lee Road, Old Tiger's Head and 120-128 Lee Road, Former Police Station at 418 Lee High Road (Grade II listed)

## 2. Historical, social, cultural, archaeological interest

Lee was mentioned in the Domesday book of 1086 and described as a small cultivated area within extensive woodland. The earliest map available (John Rocque, 1746) shows a cluster of houses on three sides of a triangular village green, with open fields remaining on the north-west corner. A windmill is known to have stood on the east side until its demolition in 1850.

A pub named the Tiger's Head was re-located onto the site of the current Old Tiger's Head around 1750, following Lewis Earl of Rockingham (Lee's absentee Lord of the Manor) lease to Roger Roberts in 1743; the name seemingly inspired by game hunting in India. It was an important mail and coaching inn in the early 19th century, being the first stage from London where coaches to Maidstone changed horses. It had a bowling green and was the focus of sporting events in the late 18th and 19th centuries, with cricket, shooting matches, pugilism, and horse and foot-racing mentioned in newspaper reports of the period.

In 1814 Lee was one of 864 places to present a petition to Parliament against the transatlantic trade in enslaved people. It was signed by 40 members of the local community ranging from Revd Lock of St Margaret's Lee, local dignitaries Sir & Lady Palliser to a local baker, builder, gardener, bricklayer, and hair dresser. A notable signatory was William Philips, victualler and landlord of the [Old] Tigers Head pub at that time.

For a period of three weeks in 1815, national events were played out at Lee when cavalry and foot regiments stopped at the Green on their way to the Battle of Waterloo. Local historian FH Hart wrote in 1882 that: "*It was very imposing to see the assembled soldiers with transports of arms of war.*"

*The space in front of the Tiger's Head and the Green were very commodious for the transfer of baggage to the waggons of the farmers from the other side of London to those of the farmers in this neighbourhood which were pressed for that purpose, to convey them 15 miles further on the journey to Dover".*

The place saw tragedy in 1837 when a Robert Cocking, a watercolourist, fell to his death in a parachuting accident. He had spent years developing a parachute and on 24 July its maiden flight launched from the Royal Vauxhall Gardens. It failed to reach the desired height and when Cocking was released from the basket over Greenwich his parachute broke apart and he crash landed. Cocking was rescued by farm labourers on farmland south of Lee Green and was taken to the [Old] Tigers Head where he died soon after.



John Rocque Map of London, published 1746

The inquest was held at the pub and reported in the Times: the Coroner said that the innkeeper, Thomas Sears, was deserving of peculiar censure and deprecation due to having charged sixpence to see the badly injured body. Cocking was buried in St Margaret's Lee Old Churchyard.

The opening of railways stations (Blackheath in 1849 and Lee in 1866) stimulated development and the area emerged as a distinct town centre. The terrace at 343-349 Lee High Road was built in 1898 and incorporated a fire station, presumably accessed through the vehicular carriageway (replaced in 1906 by the London County Council station on Eltham Road to the east). A Police Station was also provided in 1904.

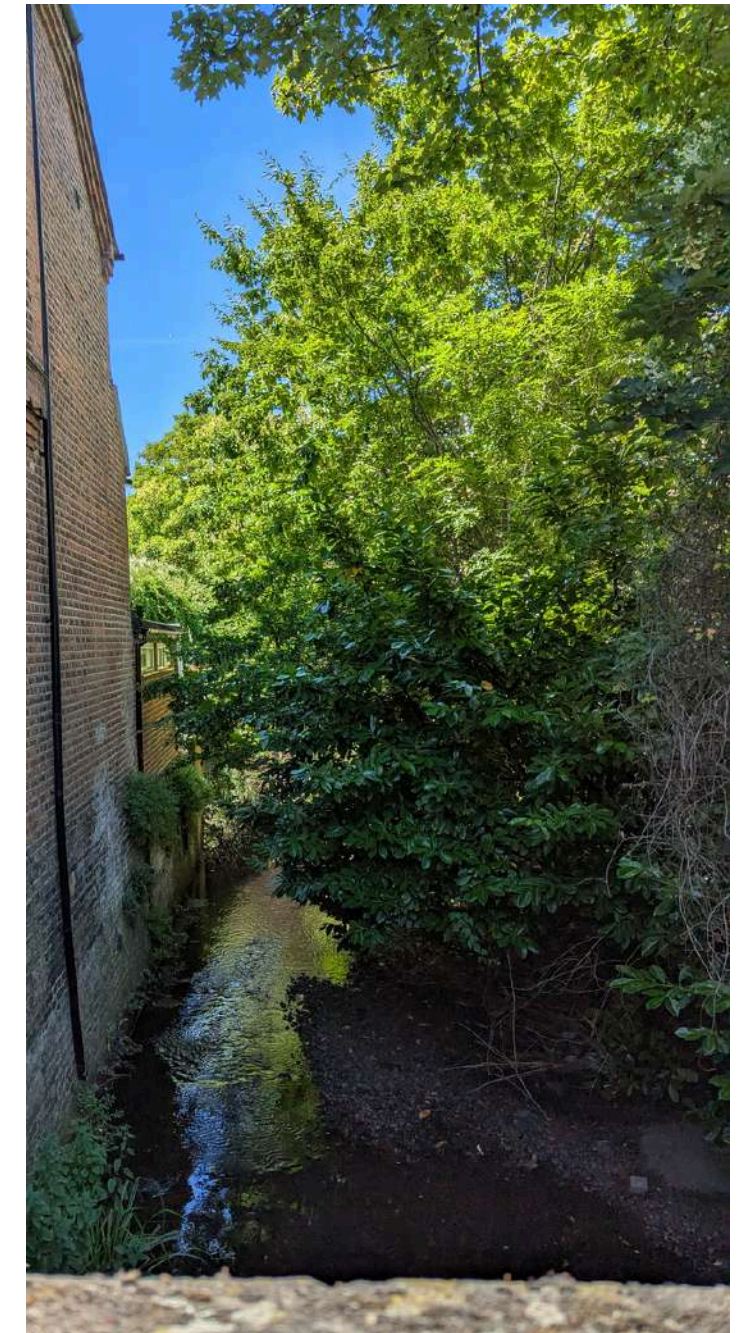
A further boost to the popularity of Lee was the coming of electric trams in the early 1900s with a new line being laid from Lewisham to Lee Green in 1907 which meant more people could afford to live in Lee and travel to work. Trams were eventually replaced by motor buses in 1952 and no physical evidence remains of this history.

### 3. Townscape

The arrangement of four roads meeting at the site of a former village green creates a wide open space at this crossing point, with predominantly low rise development framing the edges. The buildings on the north-west corner splay away from the road which creates an organic street edge and expanded public realm (this is also reflected by the development on the north-east and south-east corners outside the ASLC). The wide pavement outside the Old Tigers Head public house gives it a generous setting (also seen at the north east and south east corners). The buildings on the south west corner have a more urban orthogonal arrangement on the corner, with a narrower pavement. The arrangement of roads and buildings allows medium distance views towards the junction in all four directions.

### 4. Landscape

- The river Quaggy flows along the northern edge of the north western side and contributes a green glimpse to the urban environment.
- A single tree on the wide pavement outside the Old Tigers Head is the only other natural element within the ASLC. A stand of trees on the south-east corner and mature street trees on Eltham Road and Burnt Ash Road, outside the ASLC boundary, are of great importance to its setting.



Ghost sign to the side of 120 Lee Rd and the river Quaggy.

## Features of interest

- Painted advertisement on northern flank of no. 120 Lee Road.
- The Quaggy bridge balustrades, Lee Road and Lee High Road
- Boundary marker at back of pavement on north side of bridge, Lee Road.



Traditional shopfronts on Lee Road



## Summary of significance

The significance of the area lies chiefly in the architecture and layout seen from the public realm on the main streets, and the long views that this affords. The buildings vary in their scale and style, but create a harmonious group as a result of the strong continuous street edge with few gaps between buildings, and the bold and lively front elevations with much attention paid to elevational details, and features such as gables, dormers and chimneys enlivening the roofline. Well preserved historic features contribute to the historic character including timber sliding sash windows, and historic shopfronts (nos 347 and 349 Lee High Road and the Old Tigers Head); and traditionally designed shopfronts enhance the group at numbers 120-128.

The road layout channels views towards the junction, allowing appreciation of distinct individual buildings and the harmonious relationship created by their scale and organic arrangement; as well as oblique views of the elaborate frontages which closely enclose the street edges.

Whilst there are few natural elements to the ASLC, the River Quaggy and its bridge on Lee Road allows nature – both the river and the vegetation on the banks – to enter into the otherwise strongly urban environment. Outside the boundary the trees on the south east quadrant contribute positively to its setting, as does the architecture of the north east quadrant in the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

The area also has historic significance as a result of key events and activities which took place there.



Boundary marker at back of pavement on Lee Road bridge



Undated photograph of Lee Green looking towards Lee High Road and Lewisham, with 343-349 Lee High Road visible to the right. Source: Borough Photos



Undated photograph of Lee Green looking towards the New Tiger's Head, now the Blackheath Food Centre, in the Royal Borough of Greenwich

## Issues, threats and opportunities

- Improvement of the overlarge and uncoordinated fascia signage and solid roller shutters at nos 422-428 Lee High Road would visually enhance the area. Reinstating historic shopfronts where lost would also enhance the historic character of the ASLC.
- Opportunity for the reintroduction of historic windows where they have been lost.
- The re-cladding of nos 430-432 Lee High Road has created an anomalous feature in the area with uncharacteristic blank flank walls. Visually enhancing this building to create a more contextual relationship would benefit the area's appearance.
- Reduction and rationalisation of traffic signage and street lighting to reduce visual clutter.
- Re-landscaping of the paved area in front of the Old Tigers Head would enhance the setting of the locally listed building and create a more pleasant pedestrian environment.
- Setting: sites in the immediate setting of the ASLC (including the Leegate Centre, Sainsbury's and Stephen James car yard) should seek to enhance it by responding sensitively to the scale and grain of the historic context.
- Retaining trees and vegetation and the addition of new soft landscaping, would enhance the setting of the ASLC. The mature trees and lush vegetation along the Quaggy are particularly important.
- Opportunity for river enhancements and access to better connect the ASLC with the natural environment.