



<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Cabinet Member for Business, Culture and Heritage
<b>Date:</b>	5 May 2017
<b>Classification:</b>	For General Release
<b>Title:</b>	Commemorative Green Plaque for the Wiltons Restaurant, 55 Jermyn Street , SW1.
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	St. James's
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Financial Summary:</b>	The Green Plaque Scheme depends on sponsorship. Sponsorship has been secured for this plaque
<b>Report of:</b>	Strategic Director, Built Environment

## 1. Executive Summary

The *Wiltons* Restaurant was established in 1742, becoming a celebrated landmark and institution in St James's. This year this iconic restaurant will be celebrating its 275<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

## 2. Recommendations

That the nomination for a Westminster Commemorative Green Plaque for the *Wiltons* Restaurant at 55 Jermyn Street, SW1, be approved, subject to sponsorship in full.

### **3. Reasons for decision**

From its modest beginnings as a market stall, *Wiltons* has evolved to become a national treasure here in Westminster. The dining haunt of politicians, journalists, businessmen, bankers and members of the Royal Family. It is no wonder that 275 years on, this quintessentially English establishment remains an idyll of a bygone tradition of fine British dining, reminiscent and evocative of the long standing salon era of past centuries.

### **4. Policy Context**

The commemorative Green Plaques scheme complements a number of Council strategies: to improve the legibility and understanding of Westminster's heritage and social history; to provide information for Westminster's visitors; to provide imaginative and accessible educational tools to raise awareness and understanding of local areas, particularly for young people; to celebrate the richness and diversity of Westminster's former residents.

### **5. Background**

#### **5.1 The Early Years**

5.1.1 In 1742 George William Wilton opened his shell-fish mongers in Cockspur Street close to Haymarket, a market which sold hay, horses and livestock and which attracted a variety of traders selling a diversity of wares. His dripping baskets of oysters, shrimps and cockles were a great favourite with the stall keepers and after manning his Cockspur Street premises for 28 years he passed the business to his son, Francis Charles Wilton.

5.1.2 The business continued to thrive, feeding the stallholders and their customers who came from far and wide. In 1805 the business passed to Francis' nephew, William Nichol Wilton, who was established as a tea dealer and grocer at 40 Dean Street, Soho. In 1806 he married Frances Atkin, daughter of a wealthy street trader whose family were among other things, oyster purveyors.

5.1.3 William ceased trading in tea and moved his business to Cockspur Street to concentrate on *Wiltons Shellfish Mongers and Oyster Rooms*, as it became known. The emphasis now on the premises as a restaurant rather than a shop. When William died in 1824 his wife Frances moved the *Oyster Rooms* to Little King Street. When the Crown ordered the road to be widened, they moved to Great Ryder Street. Following the death of Frances, son Robert Thomas Wilton took over her business and applied for a wine and beer license for *Wiltons Oyster Rooms*. When, in the 1880's the premises was required for demolition and road widening they finally settled at 12 King Street.

5.1.4 With Robert's son, Frank Wilton, as licensee, *Wiltons* received its first Royal Warrant in 1838 as Purveyor of Oysters to Queen Victoria, followed shortly by a second warrant as Purveyor of Oysters to the Prince of Wales. In 1886, following the death of husband Frank, Anne Harriet Wilton became the new licensee. However the couple had had no children and the *Wiltons Oyster Rooms* moved out of family control when in 1889 it was bought by Edwin Winder.

5.1.5 Continuing to trade as *Wiltons Oyster Rooms*, in 1890 the business moved to larger premises at 15 Duke Street where it established a reputation among gastronomes for the excellence of its cooking before returning to King Street in 1913.

## 5.2 The Post-War Years

5.2.1 The licence had been taken over by Mrs Bessie Leal in 1930. One evening in 1942 Olaf Hambro had been eating oysters alone at the bar when a bomb landed on St. James's Church, Piccadilly, shaking up not only the restaurant fittings but manageress Mrs Leal. She remarked she could no longer take the war and was going to close *Wiltons*. "Put this place on the bill" replied Hambro and offered her £1,200 for the business which she accepted. She left for Cornwall the next morning.

5.2.2 Panicking at what he had done, that same morning, Hambro rang his great friend Bruce Ottley, who assisted with 30% of the purchase price as well as getting Jimmy Marks, the Oyster man at Bucks Club, to join them in their venture. *Wiltons* re-opened the following week with Marks, supported by his wife and son.

5.2.3 There can be no doubt that Jimmy Marks contributed in large part to making *Wiltons* the successful world famous institution it is today. He knew how to keep his customers happy and inline. He knew his clientele were English aristocrats and foreign dignitaries and, having been raised in part by their nannies, would feel more comfortable if the waitresses were dressed as such.

Requested by Jimmy to treat the customers with a brisk sense of authority these 'nannies', in time, gained a fierce reputation; one reputedly even informing a guest 'I'm not clearing these plates until you've finished your greens'.....and she didn't! It was a conscious attempt to introduce memories of the nursery into a club-like atmosphere, thus combining two great institutions in an English gentleman's life.

5.2.4 In his later years, Mr Marks would rarely stand when a guest arrived, even in the case of royalty and high-ranking politicians, and it was considered a great compliment and achievement if a customer made it to one of the top tables. He ran *Wiltons* until his death in 1976, four days short of his ninetieth birthday. For another eight years Lucille, his widow, took charge, maintaining his style but adding touches of her own.

5.2.5 In 1964 the restaurant moved to Bury Street, leasing a previous Lyons Corner House which was redecorated by Asdam Pollock and Mrs Jocelyn Hambro and in 1984 it moved to its present site in Jermyn Street which had previously been operating as a “house of ill-repute”.

### **5.3 A Few Famous Customers**

5.3.1 Winston Churchill enjoyed caviar and oysters but was not too prompt in paying bills, letting them go unpaid for eighteen months until tackled by Mr Marks.

5.3.2 The young Princess Elizabeth and her fiancé (later Prince Philip) would meet at *Wiltons*, unreported, with the discretion appropriate for royal courtships and a conveniently sited back-door exit.

5.3.3 When the premises was in Bury Street, close to Sir Michael Heseltine’s Haymarket Publications offices, staff would use it to entertain clients. “It was just like our works canteen,” he recalls.

5.3.4 Journalist and author Max Hastings, after a gruelling 6 weeks covering the 1972 Indo-Pakistan war and suffering jet lag, knocked over a bottle of Chablis and fell asleep over his lobster.

### **5.4 Accolades**

5.4.1 *Wiltons* has no fewer than 6 royal warrants dating back to 1838, awarded in recognition of the quality of seafood served to the royal family.

5.4.2 Awarded Best Traditional British Restaurant and Best Seafood Restaurant by Zagat 2013.

5.4.3 *Wiltons* dexterous team of oyster openers have won numerous awards, which includes the World, British and European Oyster Opening Championships.

5.4.4 *Wiltons* has been included in *Condé Nast Traveller’s* Gold List 2017: The Best Restaurants in the World.

5.4.5 Praised by magazines Time Out, Harden’s and The Good Food Guide, The Tatler said of the restaurant “if we could only ever eat at one London restaurant again, it would be *Wiltons*”.

### **5.5 Wiltons Today**

5.5.1 *Wiltons* remains the epitome of traditional fine English dining in both décor and food. The many original decorative features and discreet atmosphere feed the established sense of exclusivity and distinctive Old World appeal. Retaining many intriguing decorative features from its early years, the restaurant's gentle evolution

has in no way compromised the sense of individuality and calm. The restaurant's secluded Pullmans, individual tables, attractive sporting and contemporary works of art promote a unique atmosphere, while in the Oyster Bar the 2014 refurbishment has created a fresher, lighter more spacious environment. To cap it all the menu is extensive, and aside from the finest native oysters, dishes are perfectly cooked and presented.

**6. Financial Implications**

The cost of the plaque, its installation and Green Plaque Scheme administration costs will be borne by the sponsors, Hambro. There is no cost to Westminster City Council.

**7. Legal Implications**

The property is not listed, therefore a Listed Building Consent application is not required.

**8. Consultation**

The owners of 55 Jermyn Street are Great Portland Estate and they support the nomination. Ward Members have been consulted and no objections have been raised.

**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers please contact: Kim Patterson**

**Telephone: 020 7641 3297**

**E mail: [kpatterson@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:kpatterson@westminster.gov.uk)**

**Report Author: Chris Stanton**

**Telephone: 020 8763 2044**

**Email: [seebee.stanton@virgin.net](mailto:seebee.stanton@virgin.net)**

## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1**

Location plan of 55 Jermyn Street, SW1 at 1:1250 scale

### **Appendix 2**

Photo Montage showing proposed location of the Wiltons Restaurant plaque at 55 Jermyn Street.

### **Appendix 3**

Wording and layout of the Wiltons Restaurant Plaque

For completion by the **Cabinet Member** for Business, Culture and Heritage

**Declaration of Interest**

I have <no interest to declare / to declare an interest> in respect of this report

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: **Councillor Robert Davis MBE DL**

State nature of interest if any .....

.....  
*(N.B: If you have an interest you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter)*

For the reasons set out above, I agree the recommendation(s) in the report entitled

**Commemorative Green Plaque for the Wilton’s Restaurant, 55 Jermyn Street, SW1.**

Signed .....

Cabinet Member for Business, Culture and Heritage

Date .....

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and this pro-forma is returned to the Secretariat for processing.

Additional comment: .....  
.....  
.....

If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Strategic Director Finance and Performance and, if there are resources implications, the Strategic Director of Resources (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law.

Note to Cabinet Member: Your decision will now be published and copied to the Members of the relevant Policy & Scrutiny Committee. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed from publication to allow the Policy and Scrutiny Committee to decide whether it wishes to call the matter in.

## Other Implications

### 1. Resources Implications

1.1 There are no resources implications arising from this report

### 2. Business Plan Implications

2.1 There are no Business Plan implications arising from this report

### 3. Risk Management Implications

3.1 There are no risk management implications arising from this report

### 4. Health and Wellbeing Impact Assessment including Health and Safety Implications

4.1 There are no health and safety and wellbeing issues arising from this report

### 5. Crime and Disorder Implications

5.1 There are no crime and disorder issues arising from this report

### 6. Impact on the Environment

6.1 There are no environmental issues arising from this report

### 7. Equalities Implications

7.1 There are no equality issues arising from this report

### 8. Staffing Implications

8.1 There are no staffing issues arising from this report

### 9. Human Rights Implications

9.1 There are no issues relating to responsibilities under the Human Rights Act 1998 arising from this report

### 10. Energy Measure Implications

10.1 There are no energy measure issues arising from this report



## **11. Communications Implications**

11.1 Should this report be approved and an unveiling ceremony arranged the Council's press section will be informed

Note to report authors: If there are particularly significant implications in any of the above categories these should be moved to the main body of the report.