



CITY HERITAGE SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1995

The year was notable for the record number of applications approved by the City's Planning Committee and for the amount of space thereby committed to future building development. By the end of the year permission had been granted for some 8 million sq. ft. of development, the highest annual total since the property boom of 1988.

These moves reflect the City's anxiety to demonstrate the ready availability of building space within the square mile, to reassure developers on this point and to ensure that major developments come to the City rather than locate elsewhere.

The City Surveyor, who gave this year's City Heritage lecture in October, told us: "We need to attract the largest, richest, most powerful players from the international banking and financial services community to the City of London and the surrounding area.

"Many of London's older buildings are becoming less and less attractive for modern business operations. The difficulties faced by London's business community are exacerbated by the sheer number of listed buildings coupled with the fact that many are in locations which could inhibit further development of adjoining land."

The Chairman of the City's Policy Committee told members of the City Property Association recently: "We have worked up a joint venture approach with English Heritage so that where you have sites in conservation areas, or listed buildings, you should no longer regard those as 'mission impossible' for City development schemes.

"We now have an unofficial protocol with English Heritage. Some of the previous restrictions will be addressed and hopefully facilitate the development that we know is essential for the future of the City. As a consequence there are at least twenty sites in the City that can accommodate more than 100,000 square feet of space."

The Financial Times highlighted the issue in December 1995: "The Corporation yesterday gave consent for a 440,000 sq. ft. block in Queen Victoria Street opposite Blackfriars Station and a 300,000 sq. ft. building on Lower Thames Street close to Southwark Bridge. The Lower Thames Street development would involve demolishing a Grade II listed building. The proposed steel and glass block in Queen Victoria Street is in a conservation area."

It has also been recently reported that the owners of Paternoster Square are being urged to redesign their plans for that site on the basis that the approved neo-classical

design (commended by City Heritage) does not meet the needs of City occupiers.

The ingredients for yet another City free-for-all in building development are thus all too apparent with, this time round, an added threat to the City's listed buildings and conservation areas.

It is ironic that in 1995 the City Corporation's planning department published a splendid new publication celebrating the City's conservation areas. The Planning Chairman's foreword says of the City: "Its unique townscape and character are a result of the evolution of its role, influences and traditions over 2000 years. This has created an attractive, varied and dynamic environmental quality which despite much change and adaptation is still widely recognized and valued by those who locate and work within or visit the City."

City Heritage applauds this sentiment and is concerned that the City's latest policies could do irretrievable damage to that very environmental quality. The City Heritage Society has always been in the forefront of those wishing to see the City of London continue as one of the hubs of international commercial and financial activity. But we disagree profoundly with the Corporation's current policies which in our view could make the City of London increasingly unattractive as a place to do business.

Not just dealing floors and office blocks

The City's reputation and riches grew out of a wide diversity of activities all too many of which have disappeared or moved elsewhere — often without any good reason. What remains (for example, the shipping interests) needs to be cherished alongside the financial markets, the merchant banks and the insurers.

New activities need also to be encouraged. The disgraceful loss of Barts Hospital with which we are still threatened would in itself be a tragedy and something we have to prevent. A related reason for saving Barts is the opportunity it affords us to build on its international renown by introducing on to this site associated medical and research facilities.

There was a suggestion that the site might be used as a new home for the London School of Economics — a totally misconceived idea. But elsewhere in the City such educational uses should certainly be encouraged.

Smithfield meat market remains and there is surely scope for new ancillary food marketing in this area of the City.

The Society has long argued for greater residential use, to help utilize some of the smaller, older buildings (perhaps in conservation areas) and we are pleased that during the year there were planning applications for such conversion and for new residential buildings. Similarly there is room for hotel accommodation in the City which currently is ill-served in this respect.

These are issues which the Society will continue to address and during the year plans were being developed to arrange a seminar for wide discussion of these and related matters.

City Heritage Award 1995

For the second year running the City Heritage Award for the best example of conservation and refurbishment went to the Director of Building and Services at the City Corporation, but for a building vastly different from the Mansion House, recipient of the award in 1994.

This year the Assessors gave their accolade for the first half of the major refurbishment of London Central Markets — the wholesale meat market of Smithfield.

The retention of the market on this historic site is the culmination of years of debate during which its continued existence was seriously in doubt.

In the total internal refurbishment of the market the old system of carcasses hanging on open display is replaced with temperature-controlled areas constructed in steel and glass with new facilities for the hygienic unloading, handling and loading of meat. Fully-automated lorry-delivery arrangements are incorporated. Externally the brick facade has been much improved and the portland-stone plinths, pilasters and cornices restored. The roof has been completely renovated and reclad in Spanish slates. The cast-iron gates and screens have been cleaned and repainted.

City Heritage Award 1995: The East Meat Market, Smithfield

Owner: Corporation of London
Architects: Department of Building and Services, Corporation of London and HLM Architects.
Contractor: Taylor Woodrow Management Ltd.

A highly-commended entry in 1995 was the unlikely creation within the City of London of a power station serving local needs with a combined heat and power system.

Highly-commended 1995: Power Station, 47-53 Charterhouse Street

Owner: Citigen (London) Ltd.
Architect: Guy Chatila

City Heritage Society comments on planning applications

Elyot House, 11-12 Foster Lane, St. Dunstan's House, 2-4 Carey Lane City Heritage opposes demolition of these two buildings and their replacement by a single building. We urge the retention of both as valuable elements in the character of the area. We do not consider the proposed replacement as an appropriate neighbour for Goldsmiths Hall and St. Vedast. Its height is excessive for a narrow lane, its fenestration distressing and its corner 'turret' unconvincing. We hope for a refurbishment option.

Watling House, 27-37 Cannon Street and 12-14 Watling Street With regard to the greater part of the elevations, the proposals are simple and monumental and quite pleasing. If the same pattern of bays was repeated around all three facades we would welcome the proposal. But it is not. The corner features at Watling Street/Bread Street/Cannon Street contribute nothing to the overall design and their principal features recall the look of 1960 tower-blocks. We hope further thought can be given to the corner features.

156-164 Bishopsgate Good that the fire station facade will be restored. No. 160, to be demolished, is of no great value. Nos. 156-158 are quirky Victorian Gothic — great pity to lose still more Victorian buildings.

124-128 Queen Victoria Street, 30-31 Carter Lane We welcome demolition of the existing buildings but find the proposed replacement most disappointing. The elevations are dull and routine, fenestration nondescript. Could not the architects be asked to apply a little more imagination to improving the external appearance of a major building at a key City site?

29-31 Monument Street, 33-35 Botolph Lane The different materials proposed — brick, stone and glass — are probably justified by the varying aspects of the site. The fenestration is well proportioned. The development will hopefully lead to the rehabilitation of one-tree park — currently a desolate weed patch.

1-7 Great St. Thomas Apostle, 29-30 Queen Street The best solution would be the retention of the existing Victorian buildings. However, the proposal to reproduce features from the existing facade means there will be little general loss of environmental quality along Great St. Thomas Apostle. The great tragedy would be the loss of the public house at 30 Queen Street

Walbrook House, 27-29 Walbrook This Richard Rogers proposal would replace a portland store building of the 1960's, dull but in good condition and we wonder why. There is little increase in floorspace. However, the

exuberant design with remarkable drum on the Cannon Street corner would enliven an area of large and undistinguished post-war buildings.

22 Wormwood Street City Heritage generally content with this simple Victorian-style rebuild following the Bishopsgate bomb. We would prefer sash windows on the back rather than the pivoted ones and would advocate the use of English or Flemish bond rather than stretcher for the stock bricks.

14-32 St. Mary Axe, 19-21 Bury Street City Heritage has been greatly concerned in recent months to see the way in which the bomb-damaged Baltic Exchange has suffered from further deterioration and demolition. There had been a clear commitment that the Exchange was to be restored. We demand in the strongest terms that this listed building should be restored. In particular the portico and exchange floor should be rebuilt as they were, using as much as possible of the original materials, with additional rebuilding in replica.

Site bounded by Russia Row, Trump Street, Lawrence Lane and Mumford Court

The proposed replacement for these boring to poor buildings of the 1950's and 1960's is itself an unremarkable design but not objectionable and an improvement on the existing. There needs to be more life in this dull part of the City.

48-54 Fetter Lane, 3-5 Plough Place How sad that this proposed office building is no better than the dull 1930's neo-Georgian design and the 1960's buildings it would replace. The only improvement would be to tidy up the rear elevations with an outlook on to a garden. The replacement is not good enough. We urge a rethink.

88 Leadenhall Street City Heritage regretted the demolition of the old Cunard House, an Edwardian classical building of value to the City townscape. Elevations of the proposed replacement are lumpy. We do not like this proposal. There should be an elevational rethink.

66-71 Fenchurch Street, 1-7 Fenchurch Place Another Richard Rogers scheme including the refurbishment of the magnificent Lloyd's Register building. We much regret the proposed loss of 68-70 Fenchurch Street — a quirky and individual piece of Edwardian baroque. If the ground floor of 68-70 was to be opened up or glazed so as to give a view of the new building across the old churchyard it would result in two benefits: at the upper levels the continuity of Fenchurch Street would be preserved; a 'surprise' view through the new building would also be achieved.

58-60 Cannon Street Good riddance to the worst kind of 1960's building. But City Heritage dislikes the idea of demolition before there is a contract for redevelopment. There are too many empty sites in the City.

St. Ethelburga's Church, Bishopsgate City Heritage is pleased to see this application to restore the church and for the diversity of uses proposed. The office development at the rear would form a pleasant precinct.

31-45 Gresham Street The existing buildings are of no particular architectural merit. The existing eight storeys become nine but the top two are recessed. Windows seem large but well proportioned. Unexciting but straightforward. Our concern is for the loss of the Haberdashers livery hall — regrettable that in a building having more than 4000m² of extra space a replacement for the livery hall is not included. Can the developers reconsider?

97-99 Gresham Street, 36-40 Coleman Street We welcome a proposal that actually reduces total floor area by nearly 2000m²! The 1925 Meakin Archer building balances the adjoining one in Gresham Street, both with corner domes and City Heritage would support retention of this facade.

1 King William Street, 24-30 St. Swithin's Lane Variations proposed represent improvements on the original scheme. The setting back of the St. Swithin's frontage from fifth floor upwards will help ensure that the narrow lane is less dominated than it would have been.

20-21 Queenhithe, 66-67 Upper Thames Street City Heritage objects to the granting of listed building consent for the demolition of this, Grade II listed building. We object to any breach of the principles protecting listed buildings; the listing was part of the overall planning for the Bull Wharf development; the existing building makes a valuable contribution to the character of the area. We urge the restoration of this interesting early 20th century building. The interior fittings, reflecting significant influences of the period, had been removed when a representative of the Society visited the building — we assume for conservation reasons. We hope they will be reinstated.

Mondial House, 90-94 Upper Thames Street The proposal shows only internal reconfiguration. This building could surely do with major external changes!

4-8 Creechurch Lane City Heritage welcomes this Victorian warehouse conversion providing residential accommodation on the four upper floors.

140 Aldersgate Street No regrets at the demolition of the 1960's building other than its history as one-time home of the London Salvage Corps (later the Chairman's office as head of the Fire Protection Association!). We commend the proposed building as one of the best of recent schemes. The semi-circular north end makes a good turning with the corner of Long Lane. While welcoming the retail space on Long Lane we urge that it be extended also to Aldersgate Street.

160-162 Queen Victoria Street The proposal is for a huge and monolithic structure, its continuous facade confronting

some of the worst of the post-war City schemes, with still further worsening of the street scene and an increase in the canyon effect. Since the proposed frontage is now built right up to Queen Victoria Street this will have a detrimental effect on views of St. Paul's from the Embankment. We would prefer to retain the existing Queen Victoria Street frontage, particularly keeping the garden in the forecourt which provides welcome relief to this dreary street scene, and redevelop with sensitivity the St. Andrews Hill and Ireland Yard frontages.

17-18 Took's Court, 14 Cursitor Street An ingenious warehouse conversion to provide flats and wine bar which we warmly commend.

109-118 Old Broad Street The existing late 19th century buildings are of no great distinction but are a satisfactory part of the street frontage and the retained elevation is attractive. The provision of a pedestrian route through the site to Austin Friars is admirable.

48-50 Cannon Street The existing building stands awkwardly between 44-46 Cannon Street and 27-28 Queen Street — two of the finest 18th century houses left in the City. Here is a splendid opportunity for a window-in-brick-wall approach rather than that which is proposed which is just another ordinary glazed wall. The architect should be asked to think again.

33 Holborn The reduction in height now proposed is welcome. The nine-storey building will fill the site but with a conspicuous atrium on the Holborn Circus corner. Bland, but better than the existing. One hopes for competent detailing of the glass wall. Retail outlets welcome.

The City Churches

We are pleased that the threats hanging over some of the City's 39 churches stemming from the report of the Templeman Commission, seem to have receded. The Society has supported the setting up of 'The friends of the City Churches' which works to secure their future.

A survey into the City Churches commissioned by the Diocese of London, City Corporation and English Heritage found the churches in remarkably good condition and recommends the establishment of a Historic Churches Trust, one of the objects of which would be to help promote their greater use.

The City's shops

The Society has continued to have a close working relationship with the City of London Retail Traders Association. Our Chairman, addressing a social dinner of the Association during the year, spoke of the danger of the City losing its bustle and activity and becoming dull. He referred in particular to the empty Paternoster Square and

said it was disgraceful that such a large and central part of the City could remain so long a desolate wasteland. He also called for a reversal of the process by which shops were closing or remaining empty and asked for greater encouragement to be given to retailers.

Events 1995

The Annual Dinner of the Society took place in January at the refurbished St. Bride Institute when the guest speaker was Mr. Ashley Barker.

In May members crossed the Thames by boat from Tower Pier for a most enjoyable visit to some of the sights of Southwark, including the Globe Theatre Museum.

Desmond Fitzpatrick conducted us on another of his instructive and entertaining walks in June — this one in the central 'banking area' of the City, finishing the evening in one of Leadenhall Market's pubs for supper.

In July we had a private evening visit to the splendid Victorian building which houses Lloyd's Register of Shipping in Leadenhall Street where we were entertained by the Chairman of Lloyd's Register.

We travelled to Hampstead Heath on a rainy September evening for a most interesting visit to the newly-restored pergola created by Lord Leverhulme for his house on the edge of the Heath, now part of the City Corporation's possessions. After the tour we enjoyed a splendid dinner at the Golders Hill Park restaurant.

And finally, in October, we had the City Heritage Lecture, presented this year by Mr. E.T. Hartill, the City Surveyor, in the agreeable surroundings of the City Conference Centre.

The Executive Committee 1995/6

C. Douglas Woodward CBE	Chairman
N. Searle	Vice Chairman
G. Rees	Hon. Treasurer and Secretary to the City Heritage Award
D. Tettmar	Hon. Secretary
Ann Woodward	Membership Secretary
Stella Currie	Social Events
R.T.D. Wilmot	
D. Fitzpatrick	
A. Hemy	
J. Thomas	
Planning Applications:	Anthony Noakes and Desmond Fitzpatrick

Conservation Area Advisory Committee: Messrs. Searle, Thomas and Fitzpatrick are members of CAAC and provide a valuable link with that Committee on our behalf.