

# Ancient And Modern: The City of London [B2]

Per saperne di più su questo luogo iconico di Londra, abbiamo parlato con Matthew Slocombe della Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, il quale ci ha illustrato la storia di questo luogo affascinante.



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Londoners tend to define themselves as either south Londoners or north Londoners, depending on which side of the River Thames they live on. The City, by contrast, is the financial heart of the capital, and **defies** even north or south status. A **cutting-edge** place of business and banking, the City is unique in the coexistence of ancient and new. To find out more, Speak Up met with Matthew Slocombe, director of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, a conservation body founded in 1877 by the poet and artist William Morris. As Slocombe explains, the historic UK organisation has been fundamental in protecting some of London's most beautiful buildings from **damage** and demolition. He began by giving an example. **Matthew Slocombe (English accent):** When we came there in about 1980, the whole area on the **fringe** of the City was in really quite a **derelict** state. So our own building was severely **dilapidated**, like many other Georgian houses in the area at the time. Nowadays the area we're in, called Spitalfields on the eastern **fringes**, is very prosperous and a very desirable place to live or work.

## THE BRIDGES OF LONDON

One of Slocombe's favourite constructions in the City of London was built where a Roman wooden bridge once crossed the Thames. **Matthew Slocombe:** London Bridge is fascinating to me as a building historian because it's actually the point where the Romans crossed the Thames when they first arrived and [set up](#) London as one of their capital cities in the early years of the last millennium. The city has many [passageways](#) and [alleys](#) and small [lanes](#). And these are all because actually it's still a Medieval city as well at heart. And many of these roads are unchanged since their Medieval origin.

## HORIZONTAL TO VERTICAL

From the year 2000, a skyscraper-building boom transformed London. Slocombe talks about some of the challenges of combining new buildings with old. **Matthew Slocombe:** We've got lots of small-scale old buildings, which are lovely to [spot](#) as you walk along the street, but right up against them are the big landmarks, buildings like the shiny [stainless steel](#) Lloyds building. Another more recent ones, and the most famous probably, are the Gherkin by Norman Foster and then the [Shard](#) just south of the river, which is now London's tallest building. These are famous landmarks already, but there is a tension that exists here. Some of these structures are really well designed, others are not. So there are quite a lot of tall buildings [popping up](#) that really aren't of the same quality. London has always been a low-level city, very horizontal, not known like New York or other places for its tall buildings, but now controls have been relaxed, they're [springing up](#) all over the place, and it is fundamentally changing the character of the place. Makes the small-scale old buildings look rather [dwarfed](#) and small in comparison.

## THE CITY'S FUTURE

Many people are pessimistic about the future of London. However, Slocombe is optimistic and thinks the City will be transformed for the better. **Matthew Slocombe:** In the past very, very few people have lived in the City itself.

There are one or two desirable areas like the Barbican Centre, a post-war [development](#) that has been a very attractive and [appealing](#) place to live, but not much else. And I think that will [shift](#) now. So many more people are working from home part- or full-time and look at the City quite differently. So I think a trend for the future is probably more people moving back into the very centre to live right in the heart of London. And I think that'll be a good thing. I think it'll bring an [all year-round](#) life to the City that it's sometimes lacked.

## **LORD MAYOR**

The current mayor of the City of London is William Russell. Among other tasks, his job is to serve as international ambassador for the UK's financial and professional services sector. The Mayor of London is Sadiq Khan. He is responsible for the strategic governance of Greater London including policing, transport, civil defence and economic [development](#).

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# Glossary

- **alleys** = vicoli
- **defies** = sfidare
- **derelict** = derelitto
- **dilapidated** = fatiscente
- **passageways** = passaggi
- **shift** = cambiare
- **set up** = stabilirsi
- **stainless steel** = acciaio inossidabile
- **Shard** = scheggia
- **springing up** = sorgere
- **popping up** = affiorare
- **development** = complesso urbano
- **cutting-edge** = all'avanguardia
- **damage** = danno
- **lanes** = strade strette
- **spot** = identificare
- **fringe** = margini, periferia
- **dwarfed** = rimpicciolire
- **appealing** = attraente
- **all year-round** = tutto l'anno