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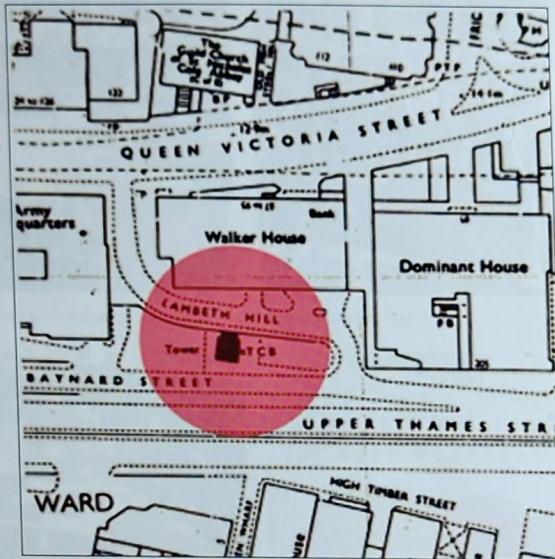
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# St. Marys, Somerset - Lambeth Hill

## 1.0 Introduction



### Introduction

This report has been prepared on behalf of St Mary Somerset Ltd and their proposals to rescue The Tower of St Mary Somerset - a building at risk - and convert it into a single dwelling house with ancillary office. We have seen Boyarsky Murphy Architects latest plans (Feb 2005) for this Tower that have evolved following several meetings with the City Corporation and English Heritage over the last 12 months. RPS Plc has been involved with the pre-application discussions with the Corporation and English Heritage.

This report, now represents in one document the historical context of the site and provides an analysis of the current character of the site and the acceptability of the proposals from a conservation perspective.

It will also briefly address the policy context to the proposals, as provided within the City of London UDP (adopted 2002).

### Site and Surroundings

The tower of St Mary Somerset is located on a strip of land bounded by Lambeth Hill to the north and Castle Baynard Street to the south.

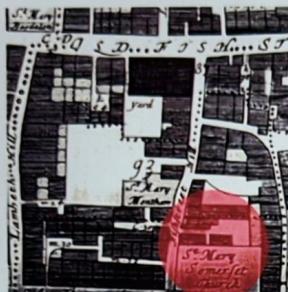
The site lies within a predominantly commercial district of the City of London. There are three large office blocks on three sides of the tower; Dominant House, Walker House and the Salvation Army Headquarters. There is a small memorial garden to the east of the church tower.

The tower is all that remains of the former church of St Mary Somerset, which was demolished circa 1870.

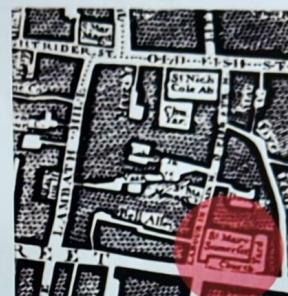
The tower is currently vacant and has been so since circa 1975, when it was used by Bernard Miles, the former director of the Mermaid Theatre.

The tower is a Grade I listed building and was listed in 1950. The site does not lie within a Conservation Area. There are no other listed buildings within the immediate vicinity of the site, the nearest being the St Nicholas Cole Abbey Church on the opposite side of Queen Victoria Street from the site.

## 2.0 Historical Development of the Site and Surroundings



1676 10 years post the great fire



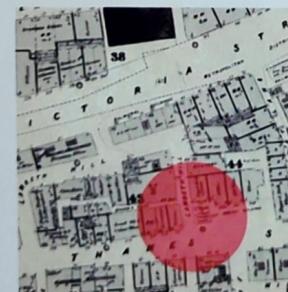
a-z georgian london, 1746



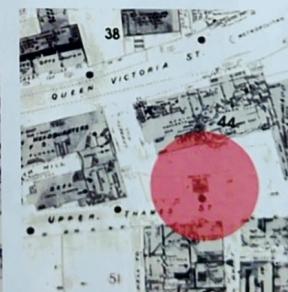
a-z regency london, 1813



os facsimile, 1873



Goad's insurance map, 1886



Goad's insurance map, 1970

### Historical Development of the Site and Surroundings

#### Surrounding Area

The area surrounding St Mary Somerset has changed substantially since the 12th century when the church was originally built.

In the 1670s, prior to the Great Fire, the church was surrounded by fairly densely packed buildings. It was located at the junction of Old Fish Street Hill and Upper Thames Street. This pattern of development continued after the Great Fire up until 1871 when Queen Victoria Street opened and cut through much of the old street pattern and buildings.

Goad's Insurance map of 1886 shows that Old Fish Street has been adapted and renamed as Lambeth Hill, and new buildings have been constructed along the southern and northern sides of Queen Victoria Street. This plan also shows that at this time the church building had been demolished to make way for more buildings and only the tower remained.

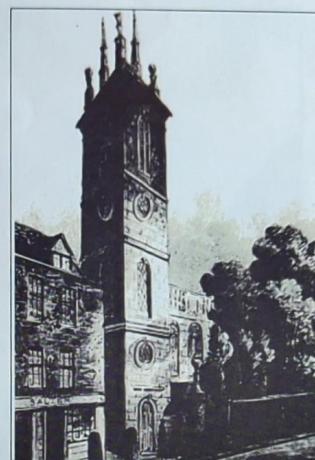
In the 1950s post war bomb clearance and the widening of Upper Thames Street have left the church tower in an isolated state, with a small garden. By 1970, larger buildings including the Salvation Army Headquarters, were emerging around the church tower.

The present day site is flanked on three sides by large office buildings. The tower is now located on an isolated road junction between Lambeth Hill and Castle Baynard Street, which runs parallel of Upper Thames Street. There is a small memorial garden to the east of the church tower.

## 2.0 Historical Development of the Site and Surroundings



1812 engraving, J.Coney, south elevation of church and tower



1815 watercolour, William Pearson (1798-1813)

The original church of St Mary Somerset was built circa 1150. There are various interpretations of how it was given its name, one being that it derived its name from Ralph de Summery, another that it may derive from Summer's Hithe meaning a small port or haven.

The original church was repaired in 1624 and was subsequently destroyed by the Great Fire of 1666.

The Parish was reportedly one of the poorest in the borough and it was not until 1685 that the project to rebuild the church was initiated, when the parishioners visited Christopher Wren. Measurements for the new church were taken in 1686 and the building was completed circa 1695.

The church was designed by Christopher Wren, with the obelisks on the parapet of the tower thought to be designed by Nicholas Hawksmore, Wren's pupil. The ground plan for the church was reputedly drawn by William Kempster, a mason. Other craftsman thought to be involved in the project were Christopher Kempster, mason; John Evans, bricklayer; James Grove, carpenter; William Cleere, joiner; Charles Hobson, joiner; Matthew Roberts, plumber; Thomas Hodgkins, smith; Henry Doodgood, plasterer; Matthew Jarman, glazier; Edward Bird, painter; Bartholomew Scott, labourer and carter, and James Hurst, labourer.

Various repairs were carried out to the church and tower during the 18th and 19th centuries and an order was passed in 1866 which provided for the demolition and sale of St Mary Somerset.

In 1868-1871, the church building was the first church to be demolished under the Union of Benefices Act. The tower was saved by an act of parliament after Ewan Christian, an architect, intervened. It is thought the tower was kept because of the unusual obelisks on the parapets, which are thought to have been design by Hawksmore.



1828 sketch, Thomas Hosmer Shepherd (1793-1864), east elevation of tower from Thames St

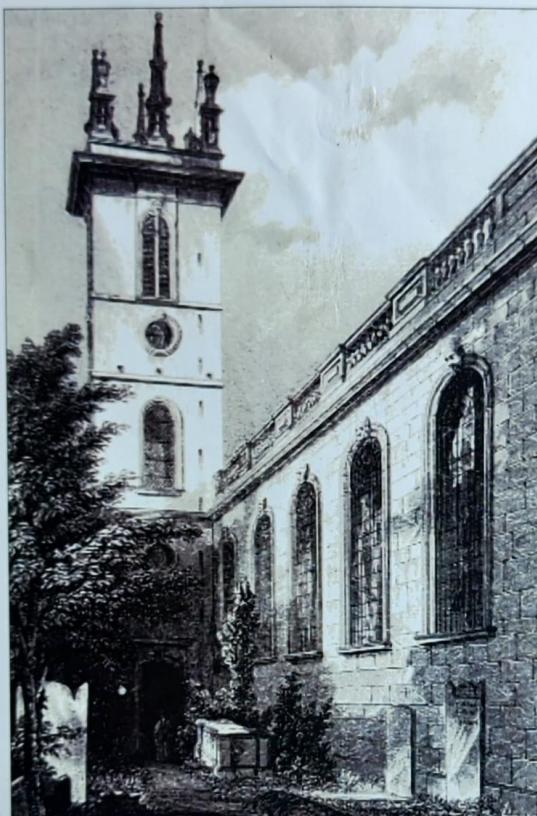


1830s engraving, JE Roberts, east elevation of tower from Thames St

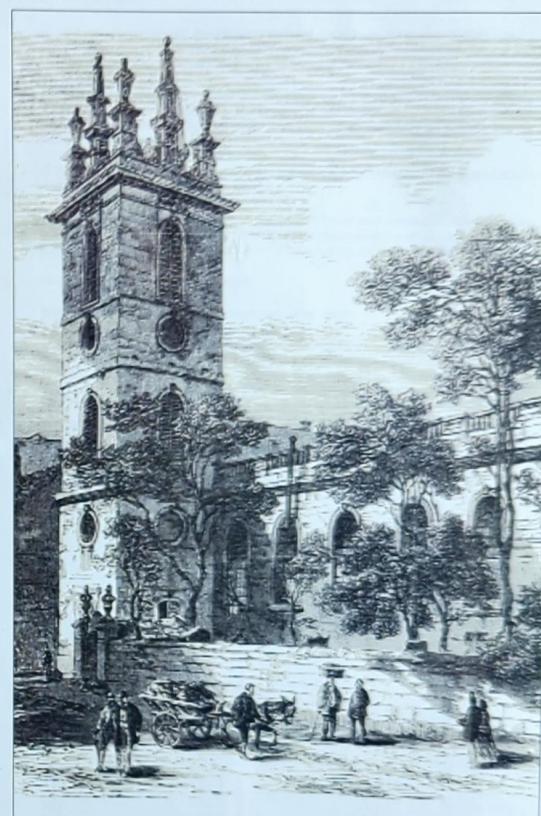
## 2.0 Historical Development of the Site and Surroundings



1838 watercolour, Robert W. Billings, south east elevation of tower and church



1838 engraving, Robert W. Billings, south east elevation of tower and church



1867 engraving, unknown artist, south east elevation of tower and church

## 2.0 Historical Development of the Site and Surroundings



1884 engraving, unknown artist, south east elevation of tower shortly after demolition of church

In 1875 the church articles, including the bell and pulpit, were handed to St Mary Hoxton and the monuments were moved to St Nicholas Cole Abbey. In 1899 the original bell from the church was recast by Mears and Stainbank for St Mary Hoxton.

The obelisks on the church parapets were removed in the 1940's following the blitz as they were weakened by the blast, and were to be reinstated later. Cobb's book London City Churches indicates that the tower had been used previously as a rest room for women during their lunch hour.

In 1955-56 the Corporation of London carried out major renovations to the church tower, including the reinstatement of the obelisks.

The memorial garden to the east of the church tower was created in the 1980's, by which time the tower was vacant. It is thought to have been used up until 1975, when it was used by Bernard Miles, the former director of the Mermaid Theatre.

### Literary Accounts of the Tower

Niven W. London City churches destroyed since 1800

"The tower, which diminishes slightly, rises to a height, including its pinnacles of 120ft, and this with the south and west fronts of the church were all faced with Portland Stone... The tower, with its garden of pinnacles adds another, and beautiful variety to the steeples with which Wren decorated this part of London. It is carefully proportioned, and the keystones are carved alternately with grotesque heads and cherubs."



south east elevation of tower, 1885

## 2.0 Historical Development of the Site and Surroundings



south east elevation C1900



south east elevation C1910



north west elevation of the tower amongst the carnage of WWII C1945



north west elevation of the tower with obelisks removed after WWII 1945-1955

## 2.0 Historical Development of the Site and Surroundings



*west elevation, 1979*



*proposal, 1998-2002, John McAslan and Partners*



*south east elevation 1992*

## 2.0 Historical Development of the Site and Surroundings



sections & details from the Wren society vol IX illustrating Wren's original ideas for church and tower

### Jeffrey, Churches of Sir Christopher Wren

"The tower, with pinnacles rising to the height of 120 feet, is faced with Portland Stone. The bell-loft windows are round-headed with keystones carved as masks. The tower is completed with an entablature and plain parapet supporting eight panelled pedestals. Those at the angles have tall vases, those in the centre of each side have tall obelisks, each with enriched bands and a ball finial."

### Godwin, Churches of London vol II:

"The tower stands on the southwest corner of the building quite independent of the body of the church, is divided into stories, by plain string courses, (or stone bonds) and is terminated by a bold cornice. At each of the four angles rises a square pedestal, supporting an urn, and between these, on every side, is a similar pedestal, which bears an ornamental obelisk, resembling at first sight the pinnacles, fringed with leaves (or crochets, as they are termed) common in "gothic" architecture. The keystones of the arches over the window openings, are sculptured to represent grotesque heads, certainly not in any degree in character with the prevailing character of the building."

### Cobb, London City Churches

"St Mary Somerset, a remarkable tower, little known or appreciated, and often dismissed by critics- Birch, Stratton and Bumpus- as more curious than beautiful.

A line of windows, alternately round-headed and circular, runs up the centre of each side (of which three stood free of the church), and these lines, as it were, shoot up above the parapets in tall obelisks set on pedestals, forming a diagonal arrangement, while at the corners, similar pedestals support elongated urns. All these are beautifully panelled and on a sunny afternoon look like carved ivory; while earlier with the morning sun full on them, they resemble cream-coloured fingers thrusting up into the blue. When seen from different angles, they present remarkably different effects."

### Royal Commission on Historical Monuments London, Vol 4, The City, 1929

**Architectural description -** The Tower adjoined the church at the southwest angle and is of 4 stages, but the internal and external divisions do not correspond. The ground-stage is circular on plan internally and is roofed with a flat dome springing from a cornice and having a round bell way in the middle. The east, south and west walls have each a segmental-headed doorway with moulded architrave, cherub-head keystone and a cornice; in the north wall is a similar doorway formerly opening into the church; above each doorway is a round window with a moulded architrave, and keystone carved with a head; on each side of the N window is a cherub-head bracket at the former ceiling-level of the church. The second stage has in the east, south and west walls a round headed window with a moulded architrave and keystone carved with a man's head. The third stage has in each face a round window similar to those in the ground-stage, but with a child's head on the keystone. The bell-chamber with a moulded architrave and keystone carved with a mask. The tower is finished with an entablature and plain parapet on which stand eight panelled and enriched pedestals; the pedestals at the angles support tall vases, those in the middle of the sides support lofty obelisks with enriched bands and ball-tops.

### Young, Old London Churches, 1956

"Beside the church he (Wren) set one of the most splendid of his splendid towers. It rises with windows long, round, long, round, as you go up: this is simply for effect: the stages inside do not agree. The top of the tower bursts as if it were into flame with a great crop of obelisks and blazing urns twenty feet high. If this is a sermon in stone, it is a sermon on Pentecost."

### Pevsner, Buildings of London Vol 1:

The tower: "segmented doorways and alternating circular and round-headed openings above them eight wildly baroque pinnacles, flanked with little scrolls and crowned alternately with square fluted vases and panelled obelisks. These taller obelisk-pinnacles stand not at the corners in the Gothic manner, but centrally on each face. Magically varied silhouettes result."

### Literary Accounts of the Church

#### Jeffrey, Churches of Sir Christopher Wren:

"The interior of the church was quite plain, with two columns at the west end supporting a gallery with a panelled front, in the centre of which were the royal arms, framed on canvas. The ceiling was flat, coved at the sides and groined to the windows."

#### Wren society vol X:

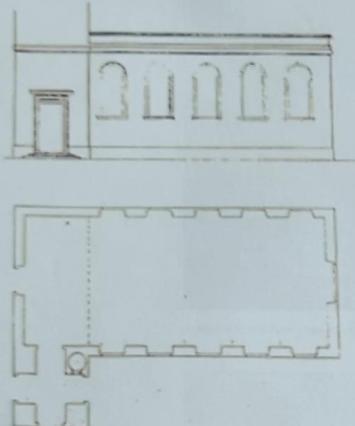
The church was composed of two aisles with a flat roof adorned with a cornice and between the windows with fretwork of cherubs etc. It was finely wainscoted with oak to about 10 ft high, and a neat wainscot gallery was at the west end, supported on four stone columns of the Tuscan Order. Two spacious inner doorcases and handsome pews all of oak, as also the pulpit, which is enriched with Cherubs and the pediment of the Corinthian order. Intercolumns (as before but the writing is gold on blue). Queens arms painted in the east window. At the west end is a neat marble font, adorned with cherubs, and the type is carved wainscot".

#### Birch, G London Churches of the XVIIth + XVIIIth centuries, 1896:

states the two windows nearest the tower, on the south elevation of the church, had been blocked sometime before the church was demolished.

#### Godwin, churches of London vol II:

### 3.0 Planning Policy Background



sketch of south elevation and plan of original church



photograph of original font

"The interior is quite plain, and has only a flat ceiling, slightly coved, or arched next to the walls, and without any pretensions to architectural character. The small windows over the alter-piece, is filled with a painted blind, and the window around it is coarsely painted to represent drapery, with Moses & Aaron on either side. A carved oak pulpit is attached to the south end of the church, and a small gallery at the west end contains an organ, which was erected through the instrumentality of the present rector"

Niven W, London City churches destroyed since 1800:

"The interior of the church was undivided, the ceiling flat in the centre and coved at the sides, the cove being broken over the window heads. Allen, in 1828, noted that the lower storey of the east wall was occupied by the altar screen, in a plain style of decoration, divided by Corinthian pilasters sustaining an entablature; in the centre of the east window, with a painted canvas blind, intended to represent the Ascension; at the sides are poorly executed full lengths of Moses & Aaron. The walls were wainscoted to 10ft high, and the interior was well fitted throughout. At the west end was a gallery supported by Tuscan columns of stone. The font was of white marble, circular and inscribed as the gift of John Toolye, 1699, who also gave the lining of the vestry, 1690. The pulpit was against, and, with its sound board, was of hexagonal form. In the west window were the arms of William and Mary."

Allen, Histories & Antiquities of London

"The south front of the church has 5 arched windows, and the elevation is finished with a balustrade, the tower and the west and south fronts of the church are faced with stone. The east end is brick, and has a single window with a segmented arch in the centre. The north side is built against to the extent of the three westernmost divisions; the unengaged portion has three large windows."

Allen, Histories & Antiquities of London

"The tower is in four stories, and the three fronts which are clear of the church are alike; in the basement is an arched doorway surmounted by a cornice resting on consoles; the second has one and the third story has two circular windows, the fourth which is clear of the roof of the church, has an arched window in each face; the elevation is finished with a cornice & balustrade, surmounted by eight acroteria, four of which are at angles of the design, and the others are in the middle of each front; the former are surmounted by urns, and the later by pinnacles, notched at the angles, and ending in finials resembling the pointed style of architecture, and forming an outer finish to an Italian tower."

Repairs to the Church

Birch, G London Churches of the XVIIth + XVIIIth centuries, 1896:

"Of late years the interior has been cleansed and the roof releaded, the old lead having been stolen under the very eyes of the police, who thought, perhaps not unnaturally, that the thieves were ordinary workmen employed in repairing it."

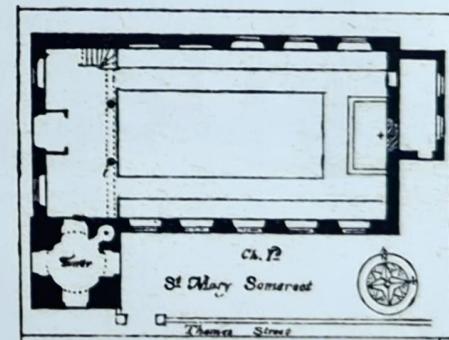
This tallies with churchwardens accounts which state that 25 pounds was "the cost of renovation of the old tower of St Mary Somerset church as per the resolution of the vestry 6th August 1885"

According to churchwardens accounts:

Minor sums were spent on repairs to the church and tower. In the 1770s £44 was spent on bills to the carpenter & mason and £50 was spent in the late nineteenth century on repairs to the tower, although there are no precise details of what these repairs might have been. In 1725 £24 was spent on new paving and stones to the church yard.

Royal Commission on Historical Monuments London, Vol 4, The City, 1929:

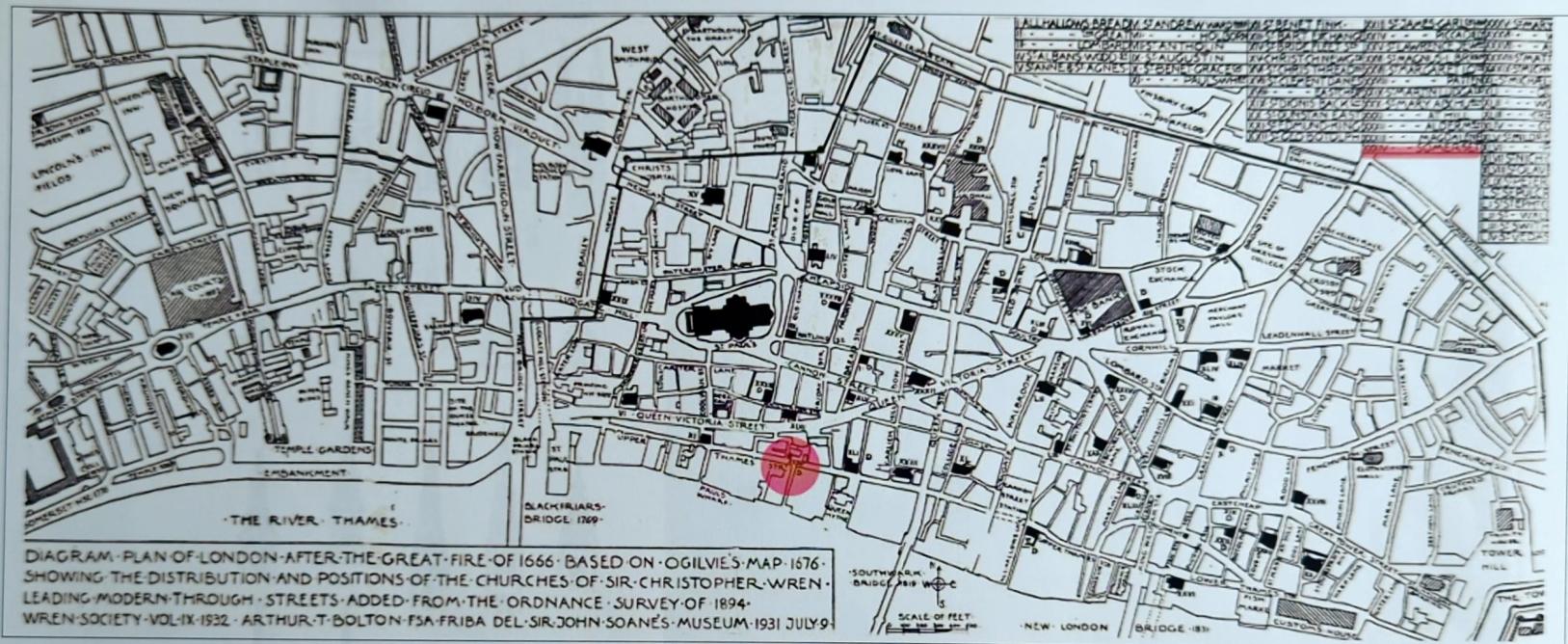
"Fittings-doors: In the south and west doorways - each of two folds and eight panels, late 17th century."



plan illustrating the relationship of tower to the main body of the church

## St. Marys, Somerset - Lambeth Hill

### 3.0 Planning Policy Background

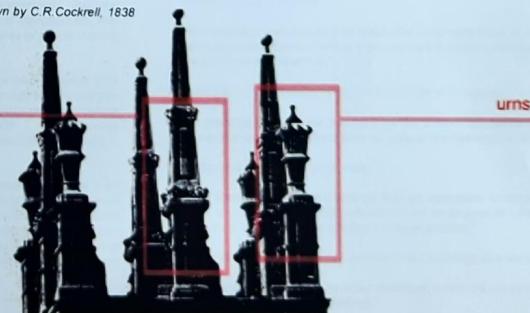


Wren's city churches

### 3.0 Planning Policy Background



pinnacles ending in finials with enriched bands and ball-tops



## 3.0 Planning Policy Background

### National Planning Policy Context for the Application

The planning submission accompanying the application, prepared by Washbourne Greenwood Development Planning, considers the broad acceptability of the proposals in land-use planning terms with reference to relevant national and Unitary Development Plan policies.

In this section of the heritage report, we consider the relevant conservation policies, both those in PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment, and supporting policies in the recently issued PPS1, on Sustainable Development, and PPG3 Housing.

#### Planning Policy Statement 1: Sustainable Development (2005)

PPS1 places a high premium on stewardship of the natural and manmade environments, and in terms of planning process emphasises the importance of pre-application discussions in connection with challenging schemes (and the conversion of church tower to a single residence is clearly one such scheme). In particular the PPS states that local planning authorities should encourage design innovation to solve novel or difficult architectural problems (at para 38) as well as schemes that benefit the environment more widely (para 18).

#### Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing

The desirability of making the most efficient use of existing land and structures is a land-use planning point taken up in the separate planning statement. PPG3 on housing specifically encourages local planning authorities to support the reuse of existing land or structures, and the conversion of properties not in residential use to housing (at para 41).

The conversion of a structure into a single dwelling - such as proposed in the current application - is not in itself a significant planning benefit in the sense that it makes no substantial contribution to the City of London's housing requirements overall. Nevertheless the proposals are certainly consonant with the general direction of policy in this area, and in our view reinforce the more relevant policy considerations on this site which are those arising from the structure's Grade I listed status. Thus the proposed use is both desirable in housing policy terms and reinforces the heritage benefits of the proposals, as will shortly be discussed.

#### Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment

It is accepted by the planning authority and English Heritage, which has been closely involved in commenting on the proposals that are the subject of this application, that the principle planning issue affecting the site is the Grade I listed status of the Wren church tower.

PPG15 contains government planning policy on the historic environment. Running through this document is a single, general principle, namely that development that affects any heritage asset has to have regard to the particular features or characteristics that contribute to the asset's special interest.

PPG15 states that in finding a viable, sustainable long-term conservation solution for a building, a balance has to be struck between the adaptations needed to secure that use and the building's special interest (paras 3.8 to 3.10). Striking that balance is particularly challenging given the high graded status of the tower (Grade I, and therefore outstanding) which requires a greater degree of care and special attention to be paid to particular features of note.

The PPG indicates that applicants for listed building consent must show why their proposals are desirable or necessary (3.4), and provide a full justification for alterations and extensions. The PPG also indicates that such works, particularly on highly graded buildings, often require specialist advice and some consideration of repair methodologies and techniques (although it is accepted that these may be developed during the construction procurement process, subsequent to achieving the necessary consents).

The PPG discusses suitable approaches to extensions, the design of which require careful consideration quite apart from justification as already indicated. Broadly the PPG encourages environmental improvements to the settings of listed buildings, or other such works as generally improve the setting (such as lighting, not specifically mentioned in the PPG but encouraged by both the City of London and English Heritage in appropriate situations, subject to detailed design).

#### Archaeology

National planning policy on archaeology is contained in PPG16, which describes how the archaeological potential of sites and methods for handling remains by preservation in situ or recording. This matter is handled in the cover note to the application prepared by WGDP, and also later in this report.

#### City of London Unitary Development Plan (2002)

For the purposes of determining the present application, the statutory development plan is the City of London's Unitary Development Plan (adopted 2002) Part I and Part II policies.

The UDP policies are consistent, as required, with national planning policy. The particular policy considerations that are relevant to the present application are, in our opinion, the City's commitment to preserving its listed buildings. A supporting policy in this instance is the authority's objective to increase the amount of residential accommodation within its plan area.

It is accepted that Wren's churches and isolated surviving towers form a particularly important class of monuments within the Square Mile, not least because they belong to the wider family that includes St. Paul's Cathedral which is the subject of particular planning policies (note that the present proposals do not relate to these policies).

Thus, arguably, the City has a particular commitment as a planning authority to ensuring the preservation of all structures associated with Wren and his school.

Policy STRAT 3A of the City of London UDP states:

"To maintain a suitable level of housing provision and discourage the loss of residential land and units to other uses, in accordance with Strategic Guidance."

Paragraph 3.9 goes on to state:

"The Corporation considers that a residential population is of benefit to the City, both functionally and in the contribution it makes to local vitality and diversity..."

Policy HOUS 1 states:

"To encourage the provision of residential accommodation in suitable locations and to resist such development where it would result in poor residential amenities or prejudice the City's commercial role."

Policy ENV 16 relates to listed buildings and states:

"To grant consent for the alteration of the exterior or interior of a listed building only where this would not detract from its special architectural or historic interest."

Paragraph 10.54 goes on to state:

"The adaptation of listed buildings may be necessary to ensure their continued well-being and usefulness. Such alterations will be acceptable where they are compatible with the preservation of a building's special interest."

Policy ENV17 relates to new uses for listed buildings and states:

"To encourage new uses for listed buildings, which are not detrimental to the character or special interest of the buildings."

## 3.0 Planning Policy Background

### Archaeology

Chapter 11 of the City's UDP contains its policies on scheduled monuments and areas of archaeological interest (effectively most of the City which has not been disturbed by deep basements).

Policy ARC1 requires the assessment of a development site's archaeological interest and potential, and Policies ARC2 and ARC 3 set out requirements for responding to this potential, including the preservation of remains *in situ* or their recording/publication.

There has been correspondence over the proposals with the City's Archaeological Officer, and it has been agreed that in this instance the application does not need to be accompanied by a desk-based evaluation. This judgment is based on an archaeological watching brief report (MoLAS 2003) carried out when a drainage trench was laid to the north of the tower, in the area which it is proposed to disturb to provide foundations for the proposed extension. The church was excavated and published previously by Professor Grimes in 1962.

As a result of this existing information the City Archaeologist has advised that no desk-based assessment is required or pre-determination trenching. She is content that the site's archaeological potential be handled by means of a standard condition relating to a suitable archaeological method statement. This agreement and the related correspondence is referred to in the supporting planning document.

### Justification for Acceptability of Proposed Residential use

The church tower has no lawful current use, as the ecclesiastical use is considered to have been 'abandoned' following the demolition of the remainder of the church circa 1870. Since the demolition of the church, the tower appears to have been in various uses, however it has been vacant since circa 1975.

There is no legal definition of 'abandonment', but it is generally accepted that a use has been 'abandoned' if there has been a deliberate intention to cease the use. The use of the building as a church was deliberately ceased when the remainder of the building was demolished. The more recent uses of the building, which are not clearly known, ceased in 1975 and it has remained vacant for some time.

Since the site has no lawful use, a viable use needs to be found in accordance with the principles in PPG15, which recognises that the best way to secure the upkeep of historic buildings is often to find an active use for them.

PPG15 also states that new uses should usually be the optimum viable use that is compatible with the fabric, interior and setting of the historic building. The proposed residential and office use facilitates the best use of a very confined building, utilising all levels whilst retaining the historic fabric of the building.

The City of London UDP supports the introduction of residential uses, where satisfactory amenity can be achieved. Whilst the site is within a predominantly commercial area, Government guidance recognises that residential and employment uses can co-exist side by side and advocates the creation of mixed use environments. The introduction of residential uses into the City of London is helping to make a more vibrant and diverse community. The employment uses surrounding the site are offices (with the exception of Globe View on the opposite side of Lower Thames Street) and therefore are not by nature disturbing uses such as industrial operations. It is therefore considered that satisfactory amenity can be achieved. Moreover, the use of the building for residential purposes will not prejudice the employment base of the City.

Accordingly, it is considered that the proposal to convert the church tower to residential use is completely in accordance with both Government guidance and the policies within the UDP.

## 4.0 Conclusions

### 4.0 Scheme Assessment and Justification

#### General Description of Proposals and Scheme Benefits

The proposals are for the conversion of the former bell tower into a single dwelling, as set out in the application description of development. As part of the necessary building works the tower will be repaired and cleaned in places. Openings will be given a more considered and appropriate treatment, and the applicant has agreed to the lighting of the tall, unusually shaped finials that crown the tower.

Giving such a structure a new purpose - be it residential or office - necessarily entails a range of changes, insertions for services, systems to combat fire, access improvements, and so on.

It is considered that the scale and configuration of the tower, as well as its location, effectively rules out any other use. Residential is highly desirable, in heritage terms, because it avoids the need for full access and minimises servicing requirements. Single residential use also maintains the structure overall as an entity, and the particular scheme by bringing into use every available part of the tower makes it more likely that the building as a whole will be maintained and kept sound and secure.

The consequent requirements for this new use are:

- Changes to the treatment of existing opening;
- Need for alternative means of escape;
- Need for efficient and relatively easy vertical circulation by means of new stairs and a lift (given the considerable height of the tower);
- The insertion of new floors and creation of new spaces;
- The insertion of building services;\*
- A new interface with the public realm (bin stores, for example);
- Measures to protect the amenity of the residents, taking into account the largely commercial character of the surroundings (see following paragraph) and the noise of traffic along Lower Thames Street.

There is a particular UDP policy issue with the provision of residential accommodation in this location, noted in policy HOUS1. This states that whilst new residential accommodation is desirable, its location should not prejudice the City's commercial role.

Whilst the tower is located in a predominantly commercial area, it is not immediately proximate to these uses. It is further insulated from surrounding businesses by the small park that forms the structure's immediate setting, an attractively laid out space. This garden, equally, provides a buffer for the future occupants of the tower.

We consider, notwithstanding the above points, that any potential conflict with HOUS1 needs to be set against the Unitary Development Plan's policies on preserving listed buildings and PPG15's emphasis on the need to find the best optimum viable use for a listed building that is consistent with its special interest. In sum, we consider that more weight needs to be accorded to heritage planning policies to find such a use, in consideration of the considerable architectural and historical interest of the tower, reflected in its high grade, resulting not least from its association with Sir Christopher Wren.

#### Note on Archaeology

This is discussed in section 3.0 above and in the cover note accompanying the application. As stated the City archaeologist is content for the archaeological potential of the site to be handled by means of a standard condition on the grant of planning permission, requiring an archaeological method statement to be implemented during the construction procurement phase of the project.

#### Methodology for Bringing Forward the Current Proposals

The proposals have been developed on the basis of a detailed analysis of the buildings fabric and condition (both architectural and structural - see statement prepared by consulting engineers Alan Baxter & Associates).

The team have also carried out an exhaustive investigation into the documentary history of the tower, to understand its place in Wren's oeuvre and the changes to it over time.

Officers from the City Corporation and English Heritage have been briefed on the results of these investigations through the design process, at a series of detailed pre-application meetings held over the autumn/winter of 2004-05. The current proposals reflect comments from these professional officers, resulting in a scheme that is fully detailed.

#### Special Architectural and Historic Interest of the Tower

PPG15 states that an understanding of special interest is essential to judging the effects of development proposals affecting a listed building.

Here, in the case of a tower, that special interest can be said to consist of the crown of the building, with its tall pinnacles, unusual amongst Wren's City Churches, and in its overall proportions and materials. The proportions and treatments of openings within the uniform stonework is also an aspect of the structure's special interest.

Internally, apart from surviving historic fabric, there are a limited number of special features. These include a domical vault to the ground floor and surviving structural timber in the upper areas of the tower, as well an area of apparently original oak boarding at level seven. The robustly detailed timber door in the east elevation also appears to be an authentic late seventeenth-century design.

The first-floor structure would appear to be later, and there is good evidence that the roof was reconstructed in the late nineteenth century. The timber joinery in the lower parts of the tower would not appear to be original. Many of the stone bell stage louvers are, however.

In townscape terms the Tower adds to the visual interest of an otherwise bland part of the City, dominated by the machinery of the road. It contributes to several local and longer views, and from certain areas to the south - notably the public viewing points in Tate Modern - can be seen against the backdrop of St. Paul's.

The distinctive silhouette enlivens more local views.

#### Scheme Description and Benefits: Building Fabric

As it stands the tower has a number of defects and unattractive features. First and foremost is the general air of dereliction it projects, which taken in association with its position, combine to create the sense of it being something sad and almost left behind.

Structurally it would appear to be sound, except for the pinnacles that may be suffering the effects of expanding, internal iron cramps. The exact condition of the pinnacles needs to be determined by a detailed survey once the scaffolding has been erected.

In many areas inappropriate repair techniques have been applied in the past and the current treatment of many openings is capable of improvement. For instance, cementitious not lime-based mortar has been used for repointed and rendering in several locations, and former window and doors have been infilled for reasons of security with merely expedient materials (brickwork and chicken wire).

Internally, whilst the masonry (stone and brick) is in reasonable structural condition, much of the stonework has a soft crumbly surface that is both unattractive and inappropriate in a new residential setting.

The proposals will result in the repair of these defects and the rectification of structural faults identified by the consulting engineers, according to detailed method statements to be agreed subject to relevant conditions on the grant of planning permission and listed building consent.

## 4.0 Conclusions

Insofar as possible the proposals do not disturb historic fabric. Such fabric as it is proposed to remove (the lower roof and the first floor structure) are of late nineteenth- or even twentieth-century origins and deemed not to have special interest as historic fabric.

It is required, however, to remove several joists forming part of an original, late seventeenth-century structural floor frame in an upper part of the tower. An original oak boarded floor at level system needs also to be partly removed.

These alterations have been kept to the minimum necessary to enable the installation of a lift mechanism. Every effort has been made on the part of the architects to source a reliable lift of the smallest dimensions practicable. It is argued that this intervention, whilst it does disturb authentic Wren-period fabric, is necessary to install a lift, without which the residential use of the entire tower - with the consequent benefits of this outlined elsewhere - would not be possible.

### Scheme Benefits: Use

The principal conservation challenge, then, is finding a viable new use for a structure whose original purpose - bell ringing ancillary to a church, demolished more than a century ago - has no prospect ever of being reinstated.

Residential use would appear to be both the optimum viable use - because of the unusual configuration of the structure, its modest size and setting amidst the dead commercial frontages of large-floor plate office buildings. Residential use also presents certain advantages in the sense that it generally requires a lower degree of servicing than other uses.

### Necessary and Desirable Alterations and Insertions

In order to provide easy vertical circulation in the lower stages of the tower, which includes a surviving and elegantly detailed domical porch, the proposals call for the construction of a stair to the north elevation, formed within a solid Portland stone wall which is a masonry bearing structure supported off its own foundations.

This principle of such a side piece has long been accepted (and approved, albeit now lapsed) by the planning authority and English Heritage, in the context of earlier discussions over proposed residential use (for another prospective owner). The advantages of such a new structure are:

- It enables vertical access to the upper stages of the tower without compromising the spatial form of the domical vaulted entrance spaces.
- It enables separate and more convenient access from the higher ground to the north, direct from the back edge of the existing pavement, helping in the transition of levels;
- It pushes vertical circulation space in the lower levels outside the critical interior and at upper levels provides essential space for kitchen, WCs and baths on levels 4 through 6.

This side extension relieves pressure on historic fabric and will reduce the subdivision of the new rooms on upper floors to the minimum, essentially a small lift enclosure. The parvise stair is able to function as a protected means of escape subject to detailed design measures agreed with the District Surveyor already.

This side piece is fixed to the north elevation of the tower, at the point where it formerly attached to the church. The facing here is relatively modern render.

The design of the side piece has been carefully considered and a suitable construction methodology agreed in order to ensure that it will weather in a way that is consonant with the adjacent tower. The jointing and configuration of blocks has also now been agreed, to ensure that these read as traditional masonry. The design of the new entrance is worked into the proposed stone jointing, ensuring a neat solution to this most important feature.

Elevationally the side piece reproduces the pattern and configuration of openings (a roundel surmounted by a round-arched light). The overall architectural expression is, however, understated and contemporary, and to ensure that the building archaeology is kept visually distinct from the addition the join between the two is treated as a narrow glazed slot. The height of the side piece's parapet has been carefully considered, and is similar to a mid-level storey band on the tower, resulting in a more harmonious visual conjunction than a slightly lower structure would.

There are two further external changes that warrant comment. The first is the proposal to spotlight the pinnacled top of the tower. The details of the fixtures will be the subject of conditions, but suitable, visually unobtrusive positions have been identified and agreed. This external lighting is, in our judgment, a very considerable benefit of the proposals, for in townscape terms the views of this part of the City from the south suffer from a rather dull, uninflected foreground. The lit tower will enliven this riverscape at the same as providing a visual link to Wren's great dome behind.

New external joinery will be of high quality materials and simple, self-effacing design, its detailed configuration to the subject to condition on the listed building consent.

The other potential risk when converting such a structure to residential accommodation is that new inserted floors will ride across window openings and disrupt the balanced architectural composition of the whole. The new space at Level 4, the first above the dome, and identified on the application drawings as a family room, corresponds exactly with the lower roundels on the tower faces. There is a similar consonance between new room positions and tower openings throughout the rest of the proposals except for the proposed Level 6.

Level 6, identified as a bedroom, cuts across a round-arched opening roughly at the tower's mid point; however, the corresponding tall opening will have new louvers, whose potential angle of opening will be restricted to limits agreed during the construction process, thus avoiding visual disruption.

Alterations to the roof structure of the tower - an area disturbed and rebuilt in the late nineteenth century or later - enable easy access by a new stair, and provides seating discretely positioned well below the parapet, so that the silhouette of the tower will not be interrupted or changed.

The proposals have been designed in consultation with a specialist historic buildings engineer who has confirmed, in a separate note, that nothing which is proposed poses any structural risks.

To ensure the safe cleaning of windows in the new side piece, the architects have proposed a bespoke solution. It is expected that the refurbishment of the roundel glazing at two levels in the tower will be the subject of detailed designs subject to condition on the listed building consent.

An unusual feature of the original tower are the largely undisturbed bell louvers in the upper stage. It is the intention to retain and repair these, replacing modern insertions in a more suitable material to achieve a better visual blend. These proposals are subject to more detailed survey information and design work, which was not possible in the pre-determination phase due to access difficulties. We suggest that here too a suitably worded condition on the listed building consent would secure their appropriate treatment.

### Summary

The proposals, then, are compliant with national and local planning policy on the historic environment, and have the added benefit of providing new residential accommodation, which is supported at both national and local levels equally.

This proposed use will in no way prejudice the commercial operations of the surrounding office buildings.

In this instance, given the location and configuration of the property, reuse as a single residential dwelling with scope for ancillary office, the proposed use, provides the most secure and certain future for a building that needs repair and requires ongoing, regular maintenance to preserve its special interest.

## 4.0 Conclusions

*In line with this policy context, the proposals have been developed on the basis of a full understanding of the listed structure's history and condition, established through careful visual/physical and documentary analysis.*

*The proposals have also been developed through detailed discussions with the planning authority's conservation advisors and with English Heritage.*

*Broadly speaking, the works are the minimum necessary to secure the most viable and least damaging solution to the long-term conservation needs of this tower, a structure which otherwise has no prospect of long-term beneficial use. The lack of such a use inevitably puts any historic building at risk, and the proposals are to be welcomed for this reason, as a matter of principle.*

*The approach to the new side piece - to do something in the manner of traditional building, but to interpret its character in a contemporary way - is also consistent with policy guidance and best practice, which takes a circumspect view towards ersatz or pastiche design. The piece is proposed on the elevation which has already been compromised, where the tower attached originally to the body of the long-demolished church.*

*The proposals to light the top part of the tower at night, whilst not necessary are certainly desirable and will have the effect of improving the appearance of an otherwise ordinary part of the City, as well as enhancing the group value with the lit dome of St. Paul's which forms the backdrop to the Tower in certain views.*

*The archaeological impacts have been considered, and the City archaeologist is content to handle them by means of a standard condition.*

*For the above reasons, we consider the proposals respect the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade I listed Tower and are therefore in accordance with statutory planning policy and other material considerations.*