

Architecture in the City

The City's map has changed little over time. Here, narrow medieval alleyways lead off major streets (many of them Roman). Changes to the buildings that line them however, have been vigorous and dynamic and, while much of the City's architecture still chronicles its great past, some 50% of buildings have been replaced over the last 20 years.

At the moment, the City is undergoing a particularly active phase with construction sites and cranes much in evidence. But this is all part of a great renaissance. The proposed and current schemes will provide the offices, hotels, visitor facilities, shops, bars and restaurants that meet the needs of increasing visitor numbers and a growing workforce and which ensure the City retains its competitive edge as a world-class visitor destination and a leading financial and business centre.

It is the City's global status that makes businesses want to locate here – many of them bringing the world's greatest architects to design spaces to house them. Given the City's 2000-year history, this creates an extraordinary and unique juxtaposition of ancient and modern (a particular characteristic of the City's landscape); be it Roman walls nestling under soaring glass office blocks or medieval churches flanked by cutting-edge contemporary design.

There's a real buzz about what happening here. Since Richard Rogers' **Lloyd's Building** was completed in 1986 the City's new builds have generated interest, excitement and debate. Described in Pevsner as 'the most consistently innovative building the City has seen since Soane's Bank of England building', the Lloyd's Building is of huge importance both functionally and architecturally with its exceptional interior spaces and external treatment.

It was a quiet start though and not until the construction of **30 St Mary Axe** (*the Gherkin*) by Sir Norman Foster in 2004 was there a radical change in direction for City buildings. Universally recognised as a symbol of London and now an iconic part of its skyline, it has attracted enormous interest for its design and its attention to sustainability issues.

Many other innovative schemes have been swift to follow – some built, some under construction. Like *the Gherkin* these too have been dubbed by a plethora of nicknames – something of a characteristic of new City builds which, because of their pioneering design and unusual shapes lend themselves well to what seems to have become a national pastime. Take your pick from the *Helter Skelter*, *Cheese Grater*, *Walkie Talkie* and *Darth Vader's Helmet* – all landing in the City soon.

To discuss all new and proposed buildings here would take pages. We have attached a chronology of some of the more well-known, with pictures to help you

identify them (or to give you an idea of what to expect for those not yet built), and we've picked a few out below to talk about in a little more detail.

The **Cheese Grater** (at 122 Leadenhall Street) is a new high-rise building designed by Sir Richard Rogers for British Land. Located opposite his Lloyd's Building, it will provide a major atrium space at its base with restaurants and public facilities.

On Bishopsgate, the **Bishopsgate Tower** or **Pinnacle** is being constructed. Designed by Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates (KPF) at a height of 302m, it is one of the tallest buildings currently proposed in Europe. The *Pinnacle* will provide major new office space, with retail outlets at ground level and improvements to the open spaces surrounding it.

Other tall buildings are proposed to the north of *the Pinnacle*; they include the **Heron Tower** which – designed by the same architects - is currently under construction near the junction of Bishopsgate and London Wall. This scheme provides offices, retail and a high-level restaurant.

Rafael Vinoly has designed a new building for Land Securities at 20 Fenchurch Street. Commonly known as the **Walkie Talkie**, its nickname derives from its unusual shape, being smaller at the base than the top. The scheme features a very large public roof garden, which will provide impressive new views of London and the City, and contains a café, restaurant and bar.

When Rothschilds decided to renew and expand their London headquarters they commissioned Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas. Located immediately to the rear of the Mansion House, **New Court** on St Swithin's Lane has been described as three boxes stacked on top of one another.

A new scheme has also been developed for Walbrook Square. Nicknamed **Darth Vader's Helmet** and designed by Norman Foster and Jean Nouvel, the building will provide offices, a shopping centre (to be created along the route of the former Watling Street), a new and more appropriate home for the Roman Temple of Mithras and a new entrance to Bank Underground station which will ease congestion.

Jean Nouvel has also designed a new building for Land Securities. Currently under construction at **One New Change**, it will provide major new retail facilities at the west end of Cheapside, new offices and a large roof garden with impressive views of St Paul's Cathedral. A new route through the site at ground level will also provide views of the Cathedral.

One New Change is the jewel in the crown of the Cheapside development scheme (see previous chapter for details) which will create a new and vibrant shopping experience for City visitors, workers and residents. The building will be

located opposite the Cathedral and be in very close proximity of the recently-opened **City of London Information Centre**.

Completed in late 2007, the centre was designed by Make Architects. As the first port of call for many of the City's visitors, the building provides an apt introduction and welcome to the area; its juxtaposition with St Paul's being characteristic of so many City views, where contemporary and historic are harmonious neighbours; its innovative design typical of modern City architecture; and its distinctive visual impact a foretaste of the unique built environment that the visitor will experience here.