

GUILDHALL

CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER SUMMARY



Department of Planning & Transportation

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CORPORATION
OF LONDON

Guildhall

Conservation Area Character Summary



Atlas Clock, Cheapside



Bishop Thomas, Cheapside



Column detail, Basinghall Street



81-87 Gresham Street, Irish Chamber



Stone detail, Gresham Street



Columns, Atlas building King Street



Benjamin Disraeli plaque, Frederick's Place



Railing detail, Frederick's Place



St Mary Cole Church plaque, Old Jewry



Guildhall Law Courts



Foot scraper, Old Jewry



Entrance to No.8 Frederick's Place



This conservation area summary of character identifies key characteristics of the area and particular planning considerations.

In the City of London the present urban form and character has evolved through many centuries and is the product of numerous influences and interventions: the character and sense of place is hence unique to that area, contributing at the same time to the wider character of the City. It is inevitable that the present knowledge and information is incomplete, and in the interests of brevity only the principal characteristics of the area are identified here. A more comprehensive appreciation of history and character of the City of London and the nature of conservation area character (with particular reference to the City) are addressed in *Conservation Areas in the City of London, A General Introduction to their Character*.

Each conservation area character summary should be read in conjunction with the General Introduction to enable a potential appreciation of any matters of possible importance in relation to any building, site, street or area. The role of such elements in the character and appearance of any area within the City of London will vary, and will be appraised in the light of particular proposals for alteration, extension or development. It is prepared in the light of national legislation, policy and advice provided in particular by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and PPG 15 Planning and the Historic Environment 1994, and planning policies for the City of London contained in the City of London Unitary Development Plan 2002.



Guildhall Conservation Area

O.S.2001



Prudent Passage



Junction of Gresham Street and Aldermanbury



St. Olaves Court

Guildhall

Location and Boundaries

Guildhall Conservation Area runs between Cheapside and Guildhall and lies between King Street, Aldermanbury and Coleman Street. It is at the centre of the City of London and shares a boundary with the Bank Conservation Area on its eastern side. The south western tip of Guildhall Conservation Area abuts the north-west corner of Bow Lane Conservation Area.

The conservation area boundaries are defined by Cheapside to the south, King Street, Lawrence Lane, Gresham Street and Aldermanbury in the west, Old Jewry and Coleman Street east side, part of Basinghall Street and the 15th century Guildhall. The Guildhall Conservation Area lies within Bassishaw, Coleman Street, Cheap and Cripplegate Wards.

Designation

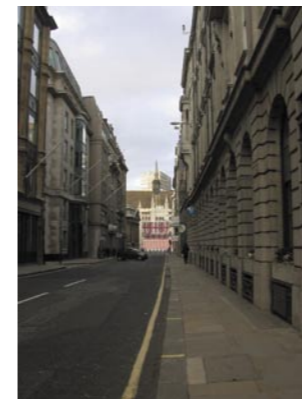
Guildhall Conservation Area was designated on 10 December 1981. The boundary was amended in 1991 to include the buildings on the north side of Mason's Avenue.



Aldermanbury



Masons Avenue, looking east



King Street



Irommonger Lane



Coleman Street



Cheapside



Basinghall Street, looking south to Gresham Street



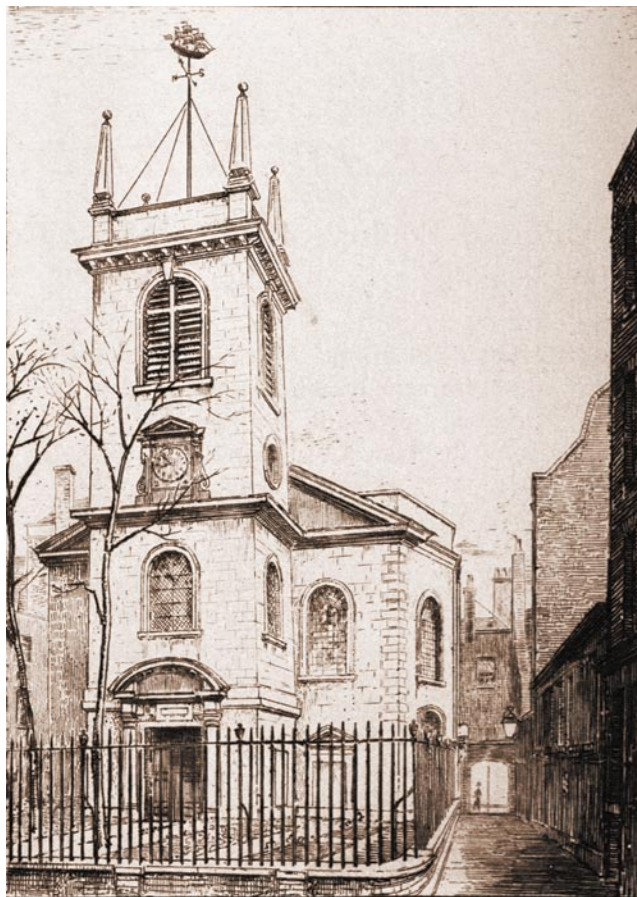
View of Cheapside, Poultry and Bucklesbury 1827

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View of Guildhall Chapel and Blackwell Hall c.1800

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South west view of St. Olave Jewry

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Area Character

Historical Evolution and Key Features

Early occupation

The first settlement of the City was that of the Romans shortly after their invasion in AD43. The area was on the periphery of the earliest occupation of the Roman town and later was part of the walled defensive enclosure. A fort was constructed to the north-east of this area on the western side of present-day Aldermanbury. In the early stages of the Roman occupation, possibly as early as AD70, an amphitheatre was established in the area that is now occupied by Guildhall and its associated buildings. It was constructed from timber and earth but was destroyed by fire in 120AD and subsequently rebuilt in stone, tile and timber. Knowledge of the presence of the amphitheatre was lost until 1988 when the site was excavated, part of the structure found and the building was recognised. This can now be viewed beneath the Guildhall Art Gallery which is open to the public.

Londinium was abandoned by the Roman administration in early 5th century and the walled city left largely unoccupied until Alfred the Great ordered the occupants of the new settlement of Lundenwic to return in response to the Viking invasions of the late 9th century. The archaeological evidence suggests that the area around the present-day Guildhall was not reoccupied until the late 10th century or early 11th century when a settlement was established of a scale and organisation that rivals that at York. However, the alignment of Guildhall and St Lawrence Jewry with the earlier amphitheatre and pattern of Saxon names such as Basinghaga, from which Basinghall Street takes its name, suggests that there may have been some earlier occupation in this area.



Guildhall Library and Guildhall Museum 1872

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London had enjoyed certain freedoms and had its own civic administration since before the Norman Conquest. The evidence for the area being occupied for administrative purposes in the early medieval period is sketchy although some sources suggest that this was London's seat of government until William the Conqueror set up his administrative and defensive centre at Westminster during 11th century. There is also limited detail about the establishment of Guildhall. In 1128, a survey of properties belonging to St Paul's Cathedral mentions a Guildhall although its location is disputed. Fragments of a building dated around 1280 have been identified within the western crypt of Guildhall and there is archaeological evidence of an earlier substantial complex of buildings just to the south of the present-day Guildhall.

As trade volumes increased, administrative systems had to improve and this enabled London to assert its independence in a similar way to important trading centres on the continent. By 14th century, the Mayor and Commonality and Citizens of London, later to be also known as the Corporation of London, became established as an independent governing body whose primary function was to ensure the smooth and fair operation of trade and business.

The Guildhall, the Commonality of London and the Livery Companies

During the medieval period, the erection of public buildings, such as hospitals and churches, were dependent on the donations and bequests of wealthy private individuals. Benefactors, including the executors of Lord Mayor Richard Whittington's will, appointed John Croxton as master mason for the rebuilding of Guildhall and its library in 1411. Archaeological evidence from the Guildhall crypts indicates that this was probably the third to be built on this site. The work was completed in 1430 and some of Croxton's work such as the masonry walls to Guildhall itself is still in evidence.

The dominance of Guildhall and the Corporation of London made the area attractive to the Livery Companies. The Weavers', Girdlers', Masons' and Coopers' Companies all established halls on Basinghall Street during the 15th and 16th centuries. The Mercers' Company held their meetings in the Hospital of St Thomas Acon on the corner of Ironmonger Lane and Cheapside, eventually purchasing land from them and locating their hall on this site. The primary function of the Livery Companies or Guilds was the economic regulation of each trade. They also attended to the social and religious needs of their members.



View of Guildhall with restored East wing 1910

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Gresham Street showing Guildhall Tavern 1912

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Mercers Company Hall and Chapel, Cheapside

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Ogilby and Morgan 1676-79

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Ogilby & Morgan 1676-79

Undertaken when reconstruction of the City was well underway, the Plan is the "first large multi-sheet plan of a British town to be so delineated", and is considered to be relatively accurate; plans before this had been aerial pictorial views. The framework of the major streets is well established with Guildhall and Blackwell Hall dominating the immediate area. Most buildings occupy small plots.

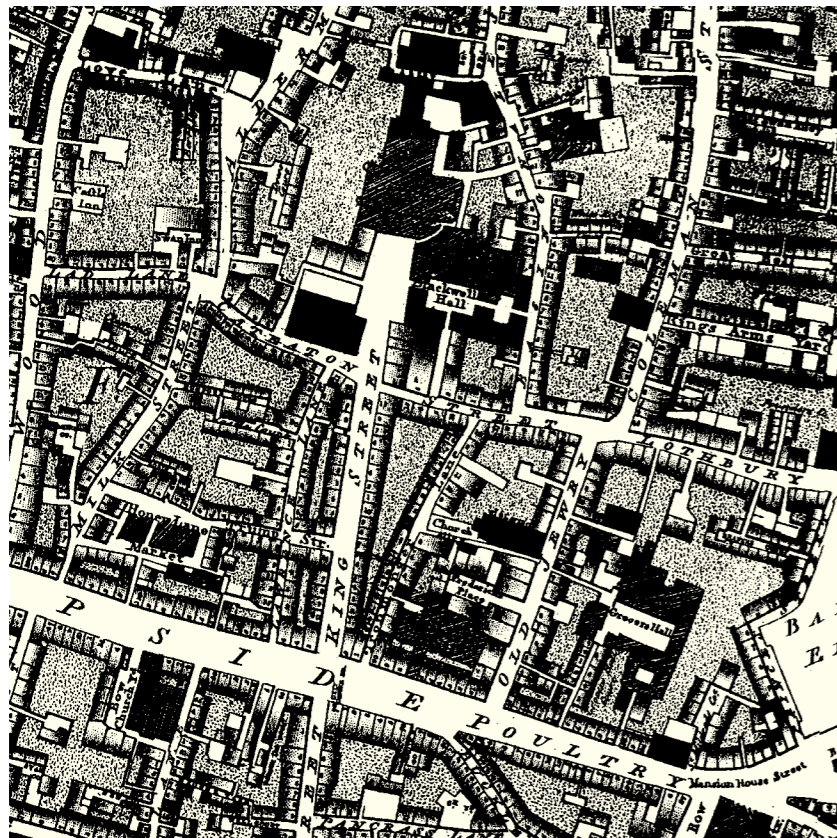
1870's Ordnance Survey

Blackwell Hall has been demolished and Guildhall Buildings constructed providing a route between Basinghall Street and Guildhall Yard. Lad Lane and Cateaton Street have been merged to form Gresham Street. Guildhall Yard has been expanded on the west side to include the memorial fountain but its overall shape remains largely the same.



Ordnance Survey 1870

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Richard Horwood 1792-99

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Richard Horwood 1792-99

This map is more schematic than Ogilby and Morgan. The street pattern remains largely the same, although the road widths correspond more closely with the present-day. Some street names have been slightly altered such as St Lawrence Lane has been shortened to Lawrence Lane.

1915 Ordnance Survey

The changes to the street pattern are minor and building plots remain relatively small. The redevelopment of the areas to the north and west of Guildhall and the alterations to Guildhall Yard did not begin until 1969 and therefore do not appear on these maps.



Ordnance Survey 1915

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View down Basinghall Street looking north

Trade was another important function of the area during the medieval period and is still reflected in street names today. Coleman Street takes its name from the charcoal burners who had settled here by the 11th century. Ironmonger Lane is first recorded in 1213 even though the ironmongers were removed to Fenchurch Street in the 15th century due to the pollution and smoke their work created.

The area has significant religious links and became one of the main places associated with the Jewish community. The great synagogue stood on the north-west corner of Old Jewry and there is physical evidence of mikveh, a ritual bathhouse, excavated beneath 81-87 Gresham Street and in Milk Street. The Jewish cemetery was relatively close to the area to the north-west of Guildhall just outside the City walls. The fall of Acre in 1291 led to the expulsion of the Jews from England but in spite of the absence of a Jewish presence until 17th century, the area retains its original association through street names such as Old Jewry and building names, such as St Lawrence Jewry.

The area was not a ghetto but occupied by Jews and Christians alike as a good business location. During the 13th century, many small shops were established along Cheapside. Combined with the surrounding market activity, reflected in the surviving medieval streets such as Bread Street and Milk Street, Cheapside became a focus for trade in the City which is still evident in the retail activity in the area today. A number of churches were located in this part of the City and the monastery of St Thomas Acon, later to become a hospital, was built in 1220 to commemorate the birthplace of St Thomas Becket where it remained until the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII in 1538.

The Great Fire and its impact

On the eve of the Great Fire of 1666, Guildhall and Livery Halls dominated the area. Guildhall was essentially still the structure built by Croxton but with some minor alterations. The streets were narrow with small courtyards off them, similar to the street pattern today, with the exception of Guildhall Yard and Gresham Street which have been widened.

When the fire reached the area forty eight hours after it had started in Pudding Lane, it completely destroyed all the Livery Halls and the roof of Guildhall itself. Fortunately the exterior stone walls of Guildhall survived reasonably intact and a new roof was erected in 1667-71. Although it was intended at the time to be a temporary solution, it survived 200 years. The post-



Frederick's Place

fire work is believed to have been supervised by Wren although it is more likely to have been undertaken by Peter Mills, the City bricklayer.

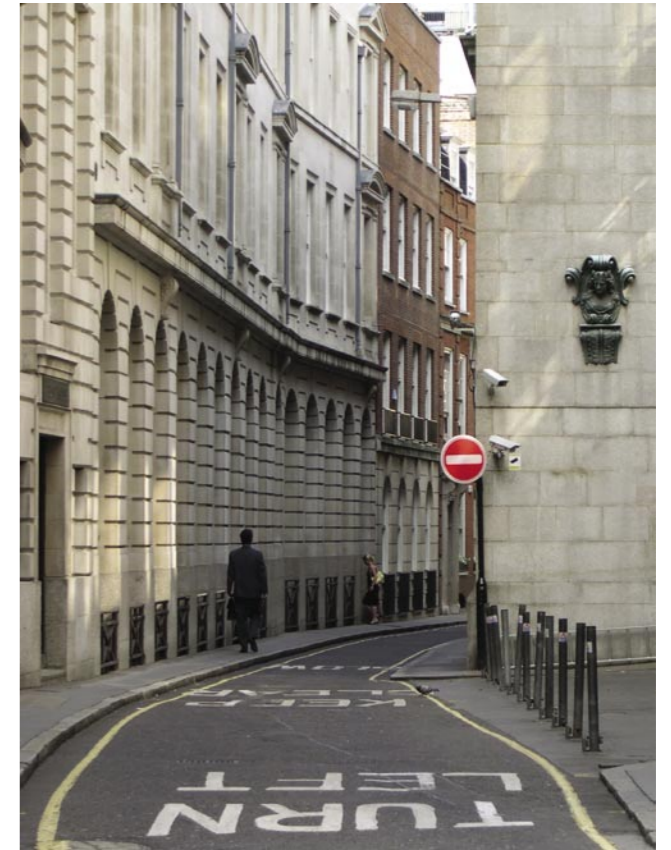
The Great Fire destroyed St Paul's Cathedral and 87 parish churches including St Lawrence Jewry, St Olave Old Jewry, St Stephen Coleman, St Martin Pomeroy, St Mary Cole and St Michael Bassinghaw. With the exception of St Martin Pomeroy and St Mary Cole, those destroyed in the area were all rebuilt by Wren under the 1670 Rebuilding Act at various intervals between 1670 and 1677. The street pattern was also predominately retained after the Great Fire, with the exception of the creation of King Street and Queen Street to the south, which formed a processional route from the River Thames to Guildhall, centred on Guildhall porch.

The next significant alteration to Guildhall was by George Dance in the 1780s. His additions included a new porch on the south side in 1788-9 which replaced the 14th century exterior of balcony and statues with a mixture of Gothic, classical and oriental motifs, partly inspired by the architecture of India. It was the first example of the Hindoo-Gothic style in England, extraordinary for its time and remains so today. His other significant addition was a new Council Chamber, which had the first pendentive dome in Britain and would later inspire his pupil, John Soane, when he designed the building for the Bank of England on Lothbury.

Speculative development was a significant feature in the growth of Georgian London. Whilst this dominated the expansion in the west end of London, there were comparatively few examples in the city. Frederick's Place is one of the few surviving examples of speculative building in the City and is particularly notable as it was undertaken by the Adam brothers. These buildings form a small enclosure and sit quite distinct in scale and design from the 19th century neo-classical buildings of King Street and Gresham Street. 26 Old Jewry is another distinctive although much altered survivor of the grand merchant houses built after the Great Fire. Set back from the main street, the building is accessed through a narrow alley which is reminiscent of the medieval tendency to set grander buildings behind less important street frontages.

Nineteenth Century to present day

Additions continued to be made to the Guildhall buildings during the 19th century including the Irish Chamber (1824-5) the only survivor of the late Georgian sequence in Guildhall Yard in the south



Ironmonger Lane



42-44 Gresham Street



Ironmonger Lane

west corner, Court House by Andrew Murray (1887-94) and Guildhall Library and Museum by Sir Horace Jones on Basinghall Street (1870-2). However, the establishment of the Bank of England in the late 18th century and the explosion in the rate and nature of commercial development during the 19th century had the most significant impact on the area. Its influence can still be seen today, particularly on King Street, Gresham Street and Ironmonger Lane. Italianate style architecture was particularly popular for commercial buildings with its columns and pilasters, strongly formed cornices and tall, emphasised ground floor facades. Of particular note is Atlas Assurance which forms the junction of King Street and Cheapside which was established in 1834-6 and is the earliest surviving Italianate office building in the City, although now much altered and extended.

Improvements were made to the street pattern at this time. Gresham Street was formed in 1845 pieced together from older lanes of St Anne's Lane, Maiden Lane, Lad Lane and Cateaton Street, which explains its uneven course. It was named after the 16th century City benefactor whose college, Gresham College, was founded on the corner of Gresham Street and Basinghall Street. Guildhall Buildings, between Guildhall Yard and Basinghall Street, was laid out in the 1820s when medieval Blackwell Hall and chapel were demolished to make way for the Court House.

The area suffered during the bombing raids of December 1940 when Guildhall, St Lawrence Jewry and St Stephen Coleman were all damaged. Whilst the roof of Guildhall collapsed, the medieval walls survived intact and a steel roof was erected as a temporary measure. St Lawrence Jewry was rebuilt during the 1950's and the new roof for Guildhall was erected by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott and covered in green Collyweston slates in 1953-4. The church of St Stephen Coleman was demolished and not rebuilt.

The layout around Guildhall and its main access from the south had remained unaltered for centuries despite various plans since the turn of 20th century to redevelop the buildings around Guildhall and Guildhall Yard. Between 1969-75, radical works designed by Richard Gilbert Scott of Sir Giles Gilbert Scott and Partners were implemented, which included the demolition of Church Passage, Dance's office range and the memorial drinking fountain of St Lawrence Jewry on the west side of Guildhall Yard. This enabled an enlarged Guildhall Yard to be created and the design included an ambulatory to link different styles and dates and to the new Guildhall library



St Lawrence to Guildhall Yard

and offices. These provide a striking addition to the development of Guildhall. The plan to develop the eastside of Guildhall Yard was implemented later and in 1997, work began to construct the new Guildhall Art Gallery also designed by Richard Gilbert Scott with D.Y. Davies Associates where the bomb damaged Guildhall Art Gallery, Courts of Law and chapel once stood. Guildhall Yard was also widened on the east side as part of this development.

The intimacy of scale in the area has survived the pressure for change in the 19th and 20th centuries. Many buildings retain narrow plot widths and have similar massing, height and scale. Few buildings exceed the general scale of 4-6 storeys and therefore the vibrancy of the roofscape is evident in views through the area. Whilst some 20th century buildings combine a number of smaller plot widths, those which successfully contribute to the conservation area have elevations that respect the bay structure and rhythm of earlier buildings.

Gresham Street divides the area east to west. The narrow streets south of Gresham Street stretch north/south and are intersected at angles by distinctive alleys on an east-west alignment. Some streets, such as Ironmonger Lane, derive their charm from their irregularity whilst the tightness of the street pattern is accentuated by narrow pavements and buildings that meet the back edge of pavement. This strongly contrasts with the regularity of King Street, formed by Wren after the Great Fire as part of the processional route, the openness of Guildhall Yard in the north of the conservation area and the dominance of Guildhall. The narrow streets help to restrict the volume of traffic travelling through the area. Gresham Street forms the main through route but most vehicles travel along Cheapside and Moorgate which are just outside the boundaries of the conservation area. The area is therefore relatively quiet and dominated by pedestrians.

The quality of the streetscene in the conservation area is enhanced where Yorkstone paving is employed. Frederick's Place is distinguished by the granite setts in the roadway which forms an important part of the setting of the listed buildings. Guildhall Yard has a distinctive geometric paved pattern of limestone and slate whilst a more subtle pattern of Caithness stone and granite are laid to the approach from Gresham Street. A paved line of slate delineates the predicted line of the arena of the amphitheatre which survives below part of the Yard.



St Olaves Court looking west



6 Frederick's Place



Aldermanbury and Guildhall West wing



Atlas House, 92 Cheapside



Guildhall Yard

The starkness and scale of Guildhall Yard contrasts strongly with the other open spaces in and around the conservation area. The churchyards are planted areas that form an important part of the character of the area. The churchyard of St Olave Old Jewry is densely planted with trees and shrubs which spill out beyond the railings into Ironmonger Lane and St Olave's Court. The trees, natural planting and pond at St Lawrence Jewry are of particular significance as they form a key part of the view into the conservation area from the west. The churchyard and ruins of St Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury to the north-west of the conservation area boundary contribute positively to the setting of the area. There are few street trees in the conservation area but those lining Aldermanbury and the Hornbeam next to the Old Guildhall Library on Basinghall Street form an important part of the streetscene.

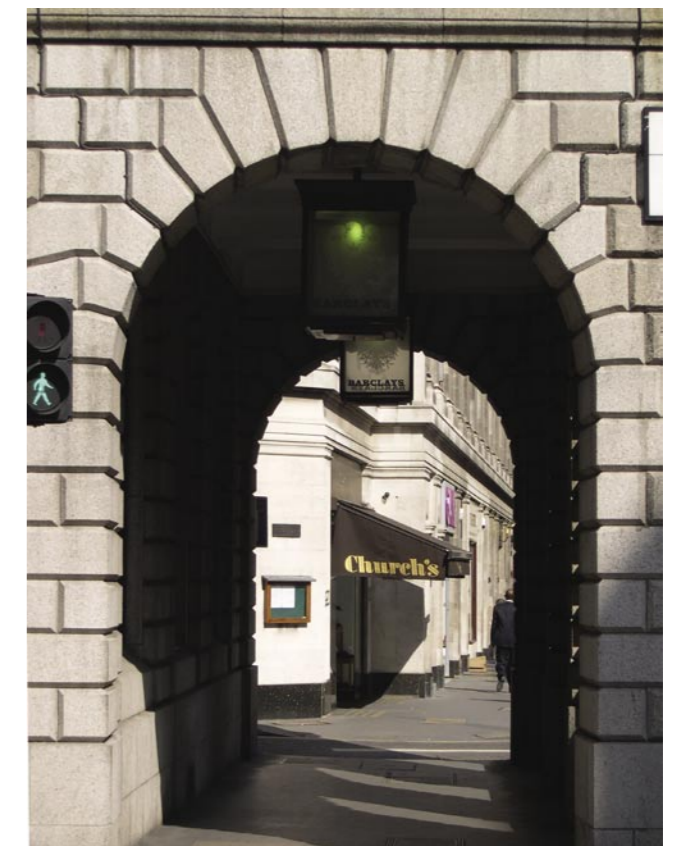
The impact of the growth in commercial banking during 19th century is still evident today. Many buildings in the area originate from this period, frequently neo-classical in style and constructed from Portland Stone. The grandeur of such architecture complements the intimacy of the area with the quality of the detailing contributing significantly to the sense of vibrancy. The façades have a vertical emphasis with strong secondary horizontal elements such as rustication at lower levels and projecting cornices at high level. Deep reveals to windows and doors combined with the quality of sculptural and decorative details in the stonework provide interest and contribute to the rich and varied architectural townscape character. Several of these buildings continue in their original use, with a number occupied as the British headquarters of overseas banks. However, others have been converted to offices, some of which have small retail units at ground floor.

Overall the area is rich in a detail with buildings from a variety of periods. Whilst the area is dominated by stone, there are notable exceptions such as the brick buildings on Frederick's Place and Ironmonger Lane which exemplify a different architectural style with a domesticity of scale and detail. These Adam buildings are also unusual as they employ lightwells and railings which are otherwise uncharacteristic of the conservation area. There are some examples of brick elsewhere in the conservation area, the most unusual of which is the glazed brick used in Prudent Passage. Otherwise, limestone clad buildings dominate although there are some examples of granite used as the principle elevational material or as a detail.



Basinghall Street

The view north up King Street towards Guildhall is an important part of the processional route from the river and frames the view of Guildhall and the Dance Porch. Views through the narrow streets, such as Ironmonger Lane, give a strong sense of the earlier medieval street pattern whilst the view across Frederick's Place to the buildings in Ironmonger Lane illustrates the intimate relationship of scale between the buildings throughout the conservation area. The area also has a close relationship with Bank Conservation Area with which it shares its eastern boundary and there are significant views in and out of the area such as those towards Tivoli corner and along Old Jewry although it does not share the monumentality or scale of buildings in the adjacent conservation area.



Archway through Atlas House, 92 Cheapside



Tower of former Church St Olave

Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments

- Church of St Lawrence Jewry
- Former Guildhall Library
- The Mayor's and the City of London Court, Guildhall Buildings
- Guildhall, Guildhall Yard
- Irish Chamber, Guildhall Yard
- Police Public Callbox, Guildhall Yard
- Gresham College, Gresham Street
- 42-44 Gresham St
- 13 and 14 Basinghall Street
- 92 Cheapside/3 King Street
- Tower of former Church of St Olave, Ironmonger Lane
- 11 Ironmonger Lane
- 26 Old Jewry (former Police Headquarters)
- 35 Old Jewry
- Ye Old Dr Butler's Head Public House, Mason's Avenue
- 3 Frederick's Place
- 4 Frederick's Place
- 6 Fredericks' Place
- 7 Frederick's Place
- 8 Frederick's Place
- London Wall: remains of Roman fort wall and east gate under Aldermanbury



3 Frederick's Place



Irish Chambers, Guildhall Yard

Additional Considerations

The western boundary of Guildhall Conservation Area immediately adjoins Bank Conservation Area. The south west corner of Guildhall Conservation Area forms the north east boundary of Bow Lane Conservation Area. Both of these conservation areas are within the City of London. There are a number of views into and out of the area along thoroughfares and through these adjacent conservation areas. Some of these views between the conservation areas also constitute important settings of listed buildings.

The following listed buildings also contribute to the immediate setting of Guildhall Conservation Area:

- 51 and 52 Coleman Street
- 53 Coleman Street
- 54 and 55 Coleman Street
- Monument to John Heminge and Henry Condell in former churchyard of St Mary Aldermanbury
- Footings of former Church of St Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury
- 7-11 Moorgate
- 3 and 4 Lothbury
- Police Station, Wood Street
- Tower of former Church of St Alban, Wood St



The Mayor's and the City of London Court



Frederick's Place



Irish Chambers, Guildhall Yard

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References

The brief quote in the reference to the Ogilby and Morgan plan is taken from the introduction to this series of maps by Ralph Hyde, Guildhall Library. Readers are also referred to the sources mentioned in the General Introduction to this series on the Character of the City's Conservation Areas.

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Further Information and assistance:
Department of Planning & Transportation
Corporation of London
P.O. Box 270 Guildhall
London EC2P 2EJ
Tel: 020 7332 1716

Produced under the direction of:
Peter Wynne Rees B.Sc, BArch, BTP, RIBA, FRTP, FRSA.
The City Planning Officer
Corporation of London
P.O. Box 270 Guildhall
London EC2P 2EJ

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New Caithness stone paving at Guildhall entrance



Fountain and pond, St. Lawrence Jewry

The Corporation of London is the local authority for the financial and commercial heart of Britain, the City of London. It is committed to maintaining and enhancing the status of the Business City as one of the world's three leading financial centres through the policies it pursues and the high standard of services it provides. Its responsibilities extend far beyond the City boundaries and it provides a host of additional facilities for the benefit of the nation. These range from the Central Criminal Court, The Old Bailey, to the famous Barbican Arts Centre and open spaces such as Epping Forest and Hampstead Heath.

Among local authorities the Corporation of London is unique; not only is it the oldest in the country, combining its ancient traditions and ceremonial functions with the role of a modern and efficient authority, but it operates on a non-party political basis through its Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the Court of Common Council.

The Corporation of London: a unique authority for a unique City.