



GENERAL INFORMATION LEAFLET

# ADELPHI Conservation Area

# 31



City of Westminster

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND CITY DEVELOPMENT  
DEVELOPMENT PLANNING SERVICES MAY 2004

TO VIEW CONSERVATION AREA MAP  
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**Designation:** Designated as a Conservation Area in 1981.

**Historical Background:** The Adelphi Conservation Area lies to the south of the Strand which developed as the link between the settlements of the City of London and Westminster/Thorney Island. By the 12th century the Strand was lined with large palaces with gardens running down to the Thames. Within the Adelphi Conservation Area were York House (later Buckingham House) and Durham House. Durham House was redeveloped in the 17th century to provide the New Exchange on the Strand and the remainder of its site and garden was redeveloped in the 18th century by the Adam brothers. They built a series of residential terraces on vaults high above the Thames, one of the first great riverside compositions in London, which gives the Conservation Area its name. The development ran into financial problems, in part due to its relative distance from the West End; in order to complete the project, an Act of Parliament to permit a lottery to raise the money was necessary. The river-facing terrace was much altered in the 1870's and the unique decoration by Adam was destroyed. In 1936 the centre of the Adelphi complex was redeveloped when the river frontage terraces were demolished and the Adelphi office block built (Colcutt and Hamp, architects). Buckingham House was redeveloped in the 1670's. The only surviving part of the original mansion is the York Water Gate (1629) which provided access to the river and now stands in Victoria Embankment Gardens. The redevelopment by Nicholas Barbon resulted in an estate owned by George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham. The streets laid out on the estate bore all parts of his name including George Street (now York Buildings) and Of Alley (now York Place). The whole area was transformed in 1864-70 when the embankment wall was constructed by Bazalgette and gardens created between the wall and the original shoreline.

**Listed Buildings:** The Royal Society of Arts, John Adam Street and No. 12 Buckingham Street (Pepys Houses) are both listed Grade I. The York Water Gate is also listed Grade I. The remainder of the surviving Adelphi terraces to Adam Street and Lower Robert Street are listed Grade II\* as are Nos. 8, 11, 13 & 14 and 17-21 Buckingham Street. Nos. 5 & 6 York Buildings, Nos. 21, 27 & 29 John Adam Street and the gateway, railings, wall and steps at the end of Buckingham Street are listed Grade II.

**Key Features:** The Adelphi Conservation Area is formed of two distinct sub-areas and phases of development. To the east is the Adelphi development with the street pattern as laid out by the Adam brothers, with surviving, but much altered, terraces to the north, west and east. No. 7 Adam Street is of particular importance providing a focal point for views along John Adam Street from the west. The original terraces are somewhat dwarfed by the 1930's brick Adelphi office block. Underneath the streets run vaults. Access to these can be gained from York Buildings whilst the rear entrance to the Royal Society of Arts building on Durham House Street is the northern end of one vault. To the west is the York House Estate with its street pattern as laid out in the 17th century and many important surviving buildings of that period; for example in Buckingham Street Nos. 8-21 date from the 1670's apart from No. 13 which was rebuilt in 1684 after fire, No. 19 (1794) and No. 21 (1700). Despite later alterations

many of the buildings retain fine interiors of considerable architectural and historic interest. At the south end of this area is the York Water Gate and site of the Exchange Stairs, which provided river access. Although originally developed as a high class residential location, the area is now dominated by institutional and office uses with some retail and restaurant uses in Villiers Street.

**Adjacent Conservation Areas:** The Adelphi Conservation Area is bounded by the Trafalgar Square Conservation Area to the north, south and west, and the Savoy Conservation Area to the south and east.

**Strategic views:** Not affected.

**Areas of Special Archaeological Priority:** Within the Lundenwic and Thorney Island Area of special archaeological priority.

**Article 4 Directions:** None.

**Regulation 7 Directions:** The whole area is affected by the requirement that any advertisement for the sale or letting of land (including estate agents' boards advertising shops, houses, flats or offices) must be given consent by the City Council as local planning authority. Displaying an advertisement without having first obtained consent, is a criminal offence,

**Planning Briefs and Design Guides:** No specific guidelines.

**Spaces protected by the London Squares Act 1931:** None

**Registered Historic Parks and Gardens:** None

**Contacts:**

**Built Environment**

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