



GENERAL INFORMATION LEAFLET

# SMITH SQUARE 21

Conservation Area



City of Westminster

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND CITY DEVELOPMENT  
DEVELOPMENT PLANNING SERVICES MAY 2004

TO VIEW CONSERVATION AREA MAP  
[CLICK HERE](#)  
FOR LINK TO  
WESTMINSTER MAPPING SYSTEM

**Designation:** First designated in 1969 as part of the larger Government Precinct Conservation Area. Redesignated in 1987 as the Smith Square Conservation Area.

**Historical Background:** The area developed in medieval times around Westminster Abbey (to the north). It was separated from the Abbey by the southern branch of the Tyburn, which ran approximately on the line of Great College Street. By the beginning of the 17th century the area was quite densely developed as far as Horseferry Road to the south and Strutton Ground to the west. Tufton Street was known as Bowling Alley in the 17th century and later became famous as the location of the Royal Cockpit, one of the last in London. Millbank ran parallel to the river front and was separated from it by wharves and houses. Horseferry Road (previously Market Street) led to the horse ferry across the Thames. In the early 18th century new residential development took place within the existing street pattern. Between Great College Street and Horseferry Road a new street pattern was created, focussed on Smith Square and St John's Church (Archer, 1720-25). This new development included Barton, Cowley, Gayfere and Lord North Streets. There are a number of 20th century commercial developments both in Smith Square and in the surrounding streets, particularly to the south and east including the Conservative and Unionist Central Office and Transport House. These buildings have tended to diminish the dominant appearance of St John's. Following bomb damage, St John's lay derelict until 1965-8 when it was refurbished by Marshall Sisson for use as a concert hall.

**Listed Buildings:** St John's Church is listed Grade I. The following buildings are all listed Grade II\*: Nos. 8-14 Barton Street; 2-11 and 14-19 Lord North Street; 1-9 Smith Square; 1-3 and 13-19 Cowley Street; and 9 Little College Street. There are more than 30 Grade II listed buildings, including No. 1 Millbank (Church Commissioners' Offices); Gayfere House and North House, Great Peter Street; Nos. 62-64 Horseferry Road; Imperial Chemical House and Thames House, Millbank. Within Smith Square, seven lamp standards and fifteen stone bollards are also listed Grade II.

**Key Features:** The existing street pattern is essentially late medieval, as altered by 18th century residential development. There has been little further change to it since then. The area is centred on the magnificent St John's, Smith Square, which dwarfs the contemporary terraced houses to the north, but has itself been dwarfed by 20th century buildings to the south and east. The area north of the church comprises a network of early 18th century streets and terraced houses which have survived remarkably well, retaining much of their original character. A number of 20th century buildings have been successfully slotted into those streets, such as North House and Gayfere House by Oliver Hill in the 1930's. To the south and east of the church are large scale commercial buildings fronting onto Millbank. At the northern end of this group are the offices of the Church Commissioners by W.D. Caroe (1903) and Corner House, Great Peter Street by Lutyens (1911). At the southern end are Imperial Chemical House and Thames House. These monumental Classical buildings are by Sir Frank Baines (1927-9). These buildings face the river and dominate views from Albert Embankment, on the South Bank. The area also includes a small section of the riverside, south of Lambeth Bridge.

**Adjacent Conservation Areas:** Westminster Abbey & Parliament Square Conservation Area to the north and east, Millbank Conservation Area to the south.

**Strategic Views:** Backdrop to the strategic view from Parliament Hill to the Palace of Westminster.

**Areas of Special Archaeological Priority:** Immediately adjacent to the Lundenwic and Thorney Island areas of special archaeological priority.

**Article 4 Directions:** None.

**Regulation 7 Directions:** None.

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

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

**Registered Historic Parks and Gardens:** None within the Conservation Area. The adjacent Victoria Tower Gardens are included in the Register.

**Contacts:**

**Built Environment**  
**Westminster City Council**  
**City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP**  
Tel: **(020) 7641 2513**  
[PlanningInformation@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:PlanningInformation@westminster.gov.uk)