



GENERAL INFORMATION LEAFLET

# SOHO

Conservation Area

# 14



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 1969; extended west in 1975 from Wardour Street to Kingly Street and also to include an 'island' in the Gerrard Street area; extended again in 1983 to include Cambridge Circus, Shaftesbury Avenue and Leicester Square; reorganised 1990 to create the Leicester Square Conservation Area and include several important buildings on its boundaries.

**Historical Background:** Soho was originally developed as a residential area which at its height rivalled Mayfair and St James's as a fashionable central London address. Development of the area was first considered in the early 1660s and was given a decisive boost by the Great Fire in 1666, which created a huge demand for new housing. Building began in Golden Square, Gerrard Street and Old Compton Street in the 1670s and Soho Square was laid out in 1681. The area was largely built up by the end of the 17th century, but fine new terraces, for example in Broadwick Street and Meard Street, were still being built in the 1730s. Soho's popularity as a fashionable address declined from the mid 18th Century. This fact is responsible for the survival of many early buildings, and also allowed various road improvements (Regent Street, Shaftesbury Avenue and Charing Cross Road) which cut through the previously densely packed streets. This introduced larger scale Victorian development to the area, and allowed the construction of the numerous theatres concentrated around Shaftesbury Avenue. The new roads also made the area more accessible and in their wake came a considerable number of semi-industrial buildings, particularly in the Golden Square and Wardour Street areas and in the hinterland of Oxford Street. Post War development has left some ugly scars in the area, but has not greatly affected its character.

**Listed Buildings:** Almost all the 17th and 18th century buildings in the area are listed, as are the Victorian theatres. There are 4 Grade I listed buildings (the House of St Barnabus in Soho Square and 26,27 & 28 Dean Street), 35 Grade II\* buildings and about 300 Grade II listed buildings.

**Key Features:** In terms of its street plan, the Soho Conservation Area can be neatly divided into the original seventeenth century layout and the Victorian intrusions of Shaftesbury Avenue and Charing Cross Road (1880s). To some extent, the same can be said of its buildings. Small scale 17th and 18th century houses dominate the inner parts of the Conservation Area, which is ringed and cut in half by larger scale Victorian development. The narrow width of building plots and consistency of materials, design and scale are of great importance to the inner parts of Soho, but within this uniformity there is a great deal of variety, reflecting the fragmented, small scale nature of early development and later land ownership. In the inner area, Victorian and early 20th century redevelopments sometimes occupy half a dozen building plots, but away from Shaftesbury Avenue they never occupy whole street blocks and rarely dominate the street scene, where earlier development is almost always in evidence. This mixed character of buildings and the chequered history of the area creates a rich mix of uses. This is invigorated by the presence of the theatres in Shaftesbury Avenue, which have encouraged the area's development into a place of entertainment, as well as a place for shops, homes and the media industry.

**Adjacent Conservation Areas:** Soho Conservation Area is bounded on the north, south and west sides by the Leicester Square,

Haymarket, Regent Street, East Marylebone, Charlotte Street West and Hanway Street Conservation Areas. To the east, in the London Borough of Camden, it is bounded by the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

**Strategic Views:** The strategic view from Primrose Hill to the Palace of Westminster cuts through the Conservation Area from north to south.

**Areas of Special Archaeological Priority:** Lundenwic clips the south east corner of the conservation area in Gerrard Street and Cambridge Circus. The area surrounded by Little Newport Street, Newport Place, Newport Court and Charing Cross Road, as well as Nos. 136 to 140 Shaftesbury Ave., and the Welsh Presbyterian Church (south of Cambridge Circus), are within the Lundenwic and Thorney Island designated area.

**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 Guidelines:** No design guides specific to this area.

**Spaces protected by the London Squares Act 1931:** Soho Square, Golden Square

**Registered Historic Parks and Gardens:** None.

## Contacts

### Built Environment

#### Westminster City Council

Westminster City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6QP

Tel: (020) 7641 2513

[PlanningInformation@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:PlanningInformation@westminster.gov.uk)