



Planning News

1 Victoria Street

In September 2024, Westminster Society Newsletter no. 35 reported our disappointment with the proposed development on 1 Victoria Street which has since been given consent by Westminster City Council planners. In our representations we made it clear that we saw the scheme as a threat to the adjacent Westminster World Heritage Site.

The problem of the much taller new building on Great Smith Street, that would be seen from Dean's Yard, could easily have been addressed by setting back the top storey. We thought there should be no encroachment on the view of the Sanctuary when viewed along Victoria Street, and that the new building's prow should not have been allowed to exceed its original height.

1 Embankment Place



The Westminster Society were presented proposal by the Hopkins Architects to refurbish extend and improve energy efficiency of 1 Embankment Place originally designed by Terry Farrel. The designs were seeking to improve access and public realm outside this building at the heart of London's Charing Cross.

10 Spring Gardens

In November 2024 we were consulted on the latest proposals by the Crown Estate for 10 Spring Gardens. These are for part of the building to be occupied by the Irish Embassy alongside commercial office space. The embassy's official entrance will be in Carlton House Terrace. The ground floor café proposed in the previously consented scheme would be removed to provide a Consular Service entrance off the public space fronting onto the Mall.

In addition to the office spaces refurbishment, the Crown Estates will be looking to submit a planning application to extend the public realm improvements to the wider piazza nestled in the historic area between the Mall and Trafalgar Square in the autumn of 2025.



10 Spring Gardens Plaza perspective towards Trafalgar Square

Nobel House Smith Square

Yet another Criterion capital development for Zedwell hotel is in the offing. The proposed development is intended to convert Nobel House between Millbank and Smith Square into a hotel with 700 rooms, of which 600 will be windowless. The building will retain its heritage rooms at upper levels and these will be used as community spaces, though their exact purpose is still undecided. The development will feature a shared service yard with 9 Millbank, light-filled corridors connecting windowless rooms, and a roof extension for 20 additional rooms that will be visible from Smith Square.

Many local residents objected strongly to this application and would prefer the building to house offices or residential accommodation. However, if no developer has made a bid to renovate the building for office use or for upmarket apartments, development as a hotel may be the only alternative to demolition.

1 St. James's Square by Foster received planning permission under delegated powers. They incorporate the Society's suggested amendments.

The Goring Hotel. Westminster Society had a presentation for a proposal to update the Goring hotel - one of the last remaining family-owned luxury London hotels. The proposal includes the new basement spa and function room designed by the Blair Associates who also designed Claridge's. The proposed extension is positioned below an existing garden to the rear of the hotel and the planning application is expected to be submitted in the New Year.

The ongoing effects of the cyber-security incident at WCC remain a worry for local residents and businesses.

Queen Elizabeth II memorial in St. James's Park

Following a competition to design a memorial to Queen Elizabeth II in St James's Park, four teams were shortlisted, Foster+Partners, Heatherwick Studio, J&L Gibbons, Tom Stuart Smith and Wilkinson Eyre. Amenity societies were kept up to date about the details of the competition entries but were not formerly invited to comment critically on them.

The winning scheme is by Foster+Partners with Yinka Shonibare and Michel Desvigne Paysagiste.



Now, as the fine details of the scheme emerge, we and other societies are being invited to respond. Our comments will make use of a framework with which to evaluate the proposals developed by our colleague Lucy Peck of the Thorney Island Society. This framework emphasises:

- the need for long-term context,
- good connectivity,
- maintaining views,
- simplicity and
- ease of maintenance.

We also think it important to take account of the needs of wildlife in the park.

The Society's Biennial Awards 2025

The Society had made four biennial awards this year.
The winners in each category are as follows:

Architecture

The Coroner's Court Extension in Horseferry Road



Architects: Lynch Architects

Client: Westminster City Council and His Majesty's Coroner for Inner West London

Modest in size but with a big heart the remodelling of the Coroners Court demonstrates immense confidence and ability in dealing with scale, form and materiality.

The simple design aesthetic, with a limited palette of materials, creates calm uplifting spaces within and externally the unadorned end stone wall is a surprisingly memorable counterpoint to the Victorian flourishes of the court building.

Renovated architecture

The Pineapple Project, Bourne Street

Architect Matthew Lloyd

Client: St Mary's Bourne Street and St Mary's Trust



Tucked away down an unassuming Belgravia residential street, this Grade 2* 1874 church was given new life by Matthew Lloyd Architects. A sensitive and clever 're-stitching' exercise has greatly improved circulation and accessibility, connecting a number of elegant new community spaces, also used for potential revenue generation. Overall, the impeccable detailing and aesthetic simplicity throughout are a good foil to the complexity of the various historic architectural elements.

Urban Design

Strand Aldwych

Landscape architect and design lead: LDA Design

Client: Place Shaping at Westminster City Council



Strand Aldwych has reimagined a once-congested stretch of central London as a vibrant public realm, turning busy roads into a green, people-focused space. The scheme creates safer, slower streets, improved pedestrian routes, and a welcoming civic setting that invites relaxation, play, and connection.

Urban vitality

The Onion Garden

Jens Jacobsen



It takes a rare genius to transform a desolate concrete wasteland into a haven of peace and wellbeing. Westminster is very fortunate to have such a sage in Jens Jakobsen, a proud Viking and a superb floral artist. This award honours his creation, the unique Onion Garden, a place of magic in the shadow of City Hall, bursting with life, love, and compassion, where nature thrives and where onions really do grow on trees.

Obituary – Nathan Silver

The Westminster Society is deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Nathan Silver, distinguished architect educator and author, who died aged 89. Nathan will be fondly remembered for his formidable sense of humour and sharp observations on our planning news as our long-term newsletter editor.

Please see below tribute to Nathan by our chairman Olwen Rowlands.

On 19 May our long-standing member and Trustee, Nathan Silver, died. Born in New York, he studied at Columbia, came to the UK and taught design to undergraduates studying architecture at Cambridge – one of his pupils was our Patron, HRH the Duke of Gloucester. He was a talented draughtsman and writer and was at one time the architectural correspondent of the *New Statesman*. He was recruited to the Society in the late '90s by the formidable Mair Garside who later became chairman. For many years Nathan organised the Society's biennial awards and drafted the witty citations that appeared on the accompanying certificates he designed. And then he took over as editor of our newsletter, redesigned the format and transformed it from a worthy but rather bland account of the Society's responses to planning applications into something our members looked forward to reading. One of our members wrote me to say that Nathan did a lot for the Society. She wasn't wrong.

Nathan's obituary written by his son Gabriel Silver can be found in the Guardian link here - <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/jun/24/nathan-silver-obituary>

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