

# The St. James's Conservation Trust

A Review of 2024

Edition 28



ST JAMES'S  
CONSERVATION TRUST

25  
YEARS



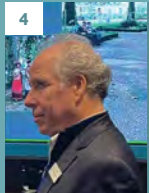


# 25 YEARS

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN ANDREW LOVE



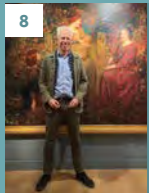
## Featured in this edition



**IDEAS FOR POSITIVE ACTION**



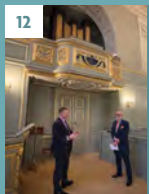
**PLANNING, LICENSING & HIGHWAYS**



**RUPERT MAAS GALLERY, DUKE STREET, ST JAMES'S**



**WESTMINSTER COUNCIL CONSULTS**



**THE QUEEN'S CHAPEL, MARLBOROUGH ROAD**



**MARLBOROUGH HOUSE GROUNDS**



**ST. JAMES'S 2024 IN PICTURES**

### 25 Years of Trust event

The St. James's Conservation Trust has, this year, celebrated twenty five years since its establishment in 1999 as a charity and a registered limited company.

On 26 November 2024, an evening party was organised by a welcome new trustee, Clio Georgiadis, restaurant director of Milos on Regent Street, St. James's. The successful event, hosted at Stonehage Flemming, 6 St. James's Square was to recognise this landmark anniversary with local supporters of the Trust (see page 4).

The 4 December Trust meeting was also a landmark event. Trustee of eight years, Miles Wade CBE, announced he needed to stand down to chair the Regimental Museum of the King's Royal Hussars. As former Royal Automobile Club secretary his contributions helped inform the Trust, particularly with his role of coordination for St. James's many members clubs and their needs. Happily, on the same day, a newly recruited trustee resident, Sir Jony Ive, a valuable pioneer of Apple design, attended his first Trust meeting.



Frances Blois, standing in for our present Mayor with the Trust's advisor, Peter Heath



The Ritz extension in progress

### The Trust's Positive Actions

Among the Trust's formal stated Charitable Objectives, is the aim to ensure the protection and dignity of the "Fragile Treasure" of the historic area and its continuing needs for maintenance and improvements. The quarterly Trust meetings of the year led to an important September 2024 review of aims for the future of the area and the Trust, entitled "Ideas for Positive Action". This focused on discussions guiding the way ahead for the Trust, to demonstrate what can be done, rather than the negative approaches to change.

### New buildings proposed and in progress

There have been quality design wins for the area, such as, the completion of the former Norfolk House's sensitively recreated façade on St. James's Square; progress on the 1906 Ritz Hotel's Arlington Street extension, realising César Ritz's original intentions; plans for improvements to parts of Jermyn Street at Nos. 103 – 105 and new frontages for the Cavendish Hotel (see page 6).



Christmas on Piccadilly at The Ritz Hotel colonnade

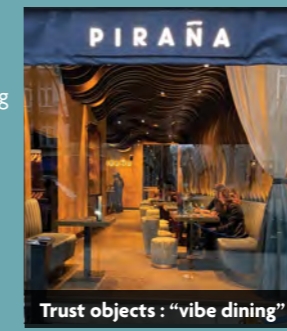
### The Trust objects

The local area residents and the Trust successfully opposed proposals for luxury cigar retail uses at 26 St. James's Square, although at the time of writing another applicant has now sought consent.

Sadly, there are significant disappointments with some new licensing uses and extended trading hours, as well as planning development designs consented against local opposition, including the monolithic development in progress on Duke Street, St. James's, which the Trust had twice objected to on height and bulk increases.

Similar issues with proposals for repurposing 1 St. James's Square include local concerns for the design, height and increase of bulk impacting on St. James's Square gardens.

Other Trust objections against extended late-night hours for sites on St. James's Street include the former Aura Club, now trading as the "vibe dining" venue Mistress of Mayfair with capacity for 210 seats, and Piraña with 120 trading as a nightclub-restaurant-entertainment venue at the former site of the Avenue Restaurant at Byron House.



Trust objects: "vibe dining"

### Trust in highways

Nationally (and internationally) e-bikes and e-scooters appear to have a negative overall impact on both carriageways and footways, while being promoted as a positive mode of travel, replacing commuter journeys in cars and on public transport. Enthusiasm for the concept in trials has failed to take into account the harm caused to the public realm in relation to both designated parking bays and those vehicles scattered on footways. This is in sharp contrast with Transport for London's previously successful, well-managed docking stands for hire bikes and conventional local authority cycle racks for public use.

Consideration for well-designed, functional and safe forms of street furniture for parking e-bikes and e-scooters, as well as sensitivities to well selected, locally supported locations, remains ignored after the trial has ended. Residential and business communities' objections have been ignored in consultations with negative impacts on settings of historic townscape (see page 7).

As these trials were led by private companies and local authorities in their roles as the public highway authorities, they have

lacked resources for effective enforcement powers, quality management and breaches in highway safety regulation requirements. Government statutory legislation may be needed for agreements between private and public local highway authorities to rethink the concept of dockless cycles, as already attempted by some international and UK historic cities.

### Neighbourhood plan

There is good news for the St. James's Neighbourhood Plan, which has moved on, with some minor Westminster City Council revisions, towards the final stages that should lead to adoption in 2025. After a long journey by the Forum, steered by the Trust's Roger Sharpley, the status of historic St. James's will have clearer planning guidance and confirmed policies. The Plan can provide more certainties in development planning, improvements in public realm and in the future Community Infrastructure Levy funds for St. James's and the continuing quality improvements and dignity of heritage where most needed.

### The Trust's next Summer Garden Party

The Trust is busy planning and promoting our next Summer Garden Party in St James's Square, for the evening of 26 June 2025, where important anniversaries are to be celebrated. Along with the Trust's twenty five years of positive achievements, we will also be marking 300 years since the 1725/6 Royal Act was enacted for garden improvement and maintenance. This historic landmark will be recognised by the launch of an updated book by the St. James's Square Gardens Trust. Tickets and early bird prices will be available in March-April (£70 - £80). For online ticket purchase and details go to [stjamestrust.org.uk](http://stjamestrust.org.uk).

Against the backdrop of the regular activities and services provided by the Trustees and advisors, it has been another busy year for the Trust with many changes related to developments, planning, highways and licensing issues across St. James's (see pages 6, 7 and 11). The Trust welcomes local interests in proposing and implementing continuing improvement ideas. Contact Mary Duffy, Secretary to the Trustees : [mary.duffy1594@btinternet.com](mailto:mary.duffy1594@btinternet.com)

## Letters to the editor

The Trustees would welcome letters or emails, with comments or ideas from readers concerning the history, architecture, commerce and social life of St. James's, for inclusion in future Newsletters.

Send your letters to The Trust Architect/Planner, Civic Design Partnership Ltd., Peter Heath RIBA MRTPI, Director, Dove Barn, The Street, Blo Norton, IP22 2JB  
Tel : 07803 260 700 Email : [peterheath1815@gmail.com](mailto:peterheath1815@gmail.com)  
[stjamestrust.org.uk](http://stjamestrust.org.uk)

# IDEAS FOR POSITIVE ACTION

The Earl of Snowden, President of the St James's Conservation Trust, invited guests from the local community to a reception on 26 November 2024, hosted by Stonehage Fleming, 6 St James's Square.



80 people attended and enjoyed an impressive display of historic and contemporary St James's, as well as slides of the Trust's latest initiative 'Ideas for Positive Action' (below)

**Ideas for Positive Action**

1

**FUTURE AIMS**

2

**PAST ACHIEVEMENTS**

- One local topic report every year on average
- Beau Brummell statue : 2002
- Annual newsletter : since 2004
- Masons Yard White Cube setting : 2006
- Award for design guidance : 2008
- St James's Square improvements : 2010
- John Nash tribute plaque : 2010
- Two-way traffic restored : 2012
- Waterloo Place improvements : 2015
- St James's Palace setting improved : 2019
- Jermyn Street improvements : 2020

...AND MORE TO COME

3

**LESSONS LEARNT**

- Listen to the business and resident communities
- Promote the Trust's visibility
- Communicate with private and public sectors
- Collaborate with multiple local stakeholders
- Research proposals to identify benefits
- Prepare positive responses, where possible
- Maintain updates on local authority policies

4

**CURRENT ISSUES**

- Westminster improvements : 2024-2029?
- Neighbourhood plan : 2025-2030?
- 5 large-scale private projects : 2024-2026?
- E bikes and E scooters : 2022-2025?
- Footway space for pedestrian increases
- Negative impacts of licensing
- Vehicle safety in St James's Square and district

5

**FUTURE AIMS**

6



Delightful harp music, played by Isabella Asbjørnsen complemented the Trust's 25 year Anniversary community event, in St. James's Square. Over 80 slides were screened for the attendees, comprising the best of new architecture, public realm improvements and the heritage of 350 years of historic buildings.

Photographs : Peter Heath

# PLANNING, LICENSING AND HIGHWAYS UPDATE



**SUPPORT : 103 – 105 Jermyn Street/Apple Tree Yard – increased heights and mixed use.** The Trust supports the proposals (early to Mid Spring 2025 and target completion end of 2026) and the property developer’s consultations. Left and middle : West and east view on Jermyn Street, proposed improvement to frontage with repurposed lighter frames and glazing to replace existing red brick. Right : Apple Tree Yard London yellow Stock brick frontage with balconies. The architect designers Trehearne Architects celebrate their 125 year anniversary and kindly provided the existing photos and proposals as CGIs.



**SUPPORT : Cavendish Hotel, 81 Jermyn Street/Duke Street, St James’s – frontages and mixed uses.** The Trust supports the proposals for mixed uses repurposed as well as new lighting of entrances, greening, glazing and infrastructure.



Cavendish Hotel design team kindly provided the existing photos and proposals as CGIs in consultation with the Trust



## PLANNING

The St. James’s Conservation Trust has continued to monitor planning and new use applications as developments have increased across the Special Policy Area. The major property holder in St. James’s, The Crown Estate, has maintained their good relationship and track record in contact with the Trust on their major projects. These include :

- Extending the St. James’s Market, with next phases,
- 33-35 Piccadilly
- New Zealand House
- The former British Council building, which has included a new Irish Government Embassy use, together with commercial offices.

The City of Westminster has increased consultations with stakeholders on many issues over the last year. These have included proposed projects for highways improvements, notably for the eastern side of Regent’s Street, St. James’s historic district and updated Borough wide, “Streets and Spaces”; public realm guidance, in a new Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) of 181 pages (see page 11).



## HIGHWAYS : UPDATES AND IMPROVEMENTS FOR E-BIKES

The Trust’s advisor has now had contacts in 2024 with four Westminster transportation officers and one security representative on the issues of dockless e-bikes and e-scooters across historic St. James’s. Since the start of the Temporary Traffic Orders the Trust has monitored, with over 200 photographs, the negative impacts across the Special Policy Area. The results of these consultations have been minimal. More attention by the private operators, in tidying (or relocating) the eight trial sites and their sprawl beyond, is still not enforced. Promises of new Legislation and enforcement resources is urgently required.

Proposed Legislation for pedicabs has been set out by Transport for London (TfL) but only for consultations to March 2025 for actions. All pedicab drivers would have a one-year driver’s license and meet safety standards, criminal background checks and be required to have insurance. Currently there is no consistency to the way fares are charged and whether regulations or licensing requirements address driver conduct, loud music restrictions and antisocial behaviours.



**OBJECTION :** Loud noise, flashing lights of pedicab driven onto Fortnum & Mason footway crossing



**OBJECTION :** 49 St. James’s Street Mistress of Mayfair, a “vibe dining” restaurant with canopies to basement.



**OBJECTION :** 8-9 St. James’s Street : Piraña a “vibe dining” restaurant with glass frontage and roped off forecourt.

## LICENSING : HOURS AND USE CLASSES

- 8-9 St. James’s Street, Piraña “vibe dining” restaurant (not a Town Planning Use Class and not a night club). The Trust Objected twice : the final Hearing decision overruled objection and granted late hours. “Vibe dining” is now known as a restaurant concept that combines up-scale dining with nightlife. It features vibrant lighting, music and entertainment.
- 49 St. James’s Street, Mistress of Mayfair also a “vibe dining” restaurant. The Trust Objected : the Hearing decision overruled objections and granted late hours.
- 26 St. James’s Square, a luxury cigars humidor and retail premises on Pall Mall. The Trust Objected : the Hearing granted modified objections and residents agreed.
- Smithson Plaza, lower level luxury cigars humidor and retail premises granted.
- 40 Jermyn Street : Tramp, a private members-only nightclub, long established and well managed late hours, in the Trust’s experience (founded, 1969).

# RUPERT MAAS

The charismatic art dealer and Antiques Roadshow painting specialist talks to the St James's Conservation Trust

As a painting specialist for the BBC's *Antiques Roadshow*, Rupert Maas has a talent for assessing the detail and quality of many art styles, as he excitedly demonstrated to us in his delightful 6 Duke Street, St. James's gallery. Our one and a half hours with Rupert was most entertaining with many anecdotes on paintings, art dealing, his views on St. James's and even his China experiences. He also has strong opinions on many issues regarding planning, good and bad architecture, cycling cultures, regulations in general and changes in artists' rights, landlord rents and banking difficulties.

Beyond illustrating his positive views on historic St. James's and the art world, he very kindly introduced us to his fondness for a special Chinese green tea. The end of our interview was not over until he excitedly mentioned his visits to China. These have included, to our surprise, a role as a brand ambassador for Ballantine's Whisky. "I went to do the pilot and I found that George Ballantine [1809-1891] – whose USP [unique selling point] was that he aged blended whiskey and made it taste nice – looked exactly like Vincent van Gogh. So, to this day, after all my presentations in China, there is a generation of rich Chinese who think that George Ballantine was related to Vincent van Gogh."

Rupert was born in London in 1960, the same year his well-known art historian father, Jeremy Maas, established the Maas Gallery in Mayfair. The gallery gained the reputation of having spearheaded the revival of interest in Victorian Art. Rupert has maintained and continued the family tradition of interest in this revival for over 60 years. In 1993 Rupert became a full-time director and in 1997 took over running the Gallery following his father's death.

In 1996 Rupert joined the BBC's *Antiques Roadshow*. When we asked him about his experiences on the show he was quick to answer that "it can be slow and boring but with some exciting moments of discovery and sometimes disappointing, when assessing bad and ugly paintings!" One of those "moments of discovery" came in 2016, when he made perhaps the most famous TV painting rediscovery, an intimate portrait by Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema OM RA (1836-1912) of his engraver Leopold Lowenstam (1883). At the time he described it as "one of the best pictures we have ever seen on the *Roadshow* in its entire history," having valued it at £200,000-£300,000 to the delight of all watching the show.

He is quick to point out that his focus is for the promotion, collection and sales of paintings from the Victoria era; to him this is one of the most important artistic periods for both the 19th century and for later artists. As he explains: "Victorian pictures are such an interesting area, I think, because it's our renaissance, as we didn't have one, you see, when everyone else did."



*The Kitchen* (detail), 1925 by Nora L. M. Cundell



Rupert Maas discussing Harold Knight's *A Cornish Boy*, 1917

We didn't have a golden age in the 17th century, not paintings, we didn't. It started in the late 18th, but mostly it was in the 19th century, in Victoria's reign. It's a fascinating period, also the most documented. So in other words, everything was exhibited. There were literally hundreds of art schools countrywide and there were 41,000 exhibiting artists between 1880 and 1945."

Rupert also enjoys acquisition research and told us of his most recent: "I was absorbed with researching a World War I picture that we bought, it's just completely gripping. It's by William Lionel Wyllie who lost one of his sons in the Great War. It's of an aerial dog fight, with his surviving son Harold flying one of the machines. It's the RFC (Royal Flying Corp), it's very early – 1915 – so basically the chaps are just taking potshots at each other with rifles or shotguns, and it's just brilliant, so fascinating."

We were struck by the variety of paintings on the two gallery levels. Among a striking nude, circa 1933, by George Spencer Watson (1869-1934), a riotously colourful enchanted garden scene called *The Child* by Thomas Mostyn (1864-1930) and a bold yet sensitive genre scene, *The Kitchen* (1925), by Nora Lucy Mowbray Cundell (1889-1948), there was one example we found absolutely beguiling – a beautifully restored and reattributed profile portrait of a young boy wearing a typical Newlyn fishermen hat. Rupert told us he had bought *A Cornish Boy* (1917) at a regional auction and has had it fully attributed to the painter Harold Knight (1874-1961). Another wonderful find.



Rupert Maas in front of *The Child* by Thomas Mostyn (1864-1930), oil on canvas.

## Maas Gallery highlights in 2024 :

- Maas Gallery lent their Anna Alma-Tadema panel *London Fog* to the Barber Institute of Art's exhibition "Scent and the Pre-Raphaelites" (11 October 2024-26 January 2025).
- *Soldier, at Bois de Trones*, 1916, by Alfred Kingsley Lawrence (1893-1975) acquired by The Fusilier Museum at the Tower of London.
- Milwaukee Art Museum acquired *Golden Eyes* by Norah Neilson Gray (1882-1931) from The Maas Gallery.
- The Speed Art Museum (Louisville, KY) acquired *The Piper in Blue* by Madeline Green (1884-1947).

*“It’s a joy to be amongst my fellow dealers. And when I moved down here, I remember one of them saying to me, you were right to be down in St James’s. It’s where all the gentlemen art dealers are.”*



Maas Gallery, 6 Duke Street, St. James's



Maison François, 34 Duke Street, St. James's

The Maas Gallery has regular exhibitions as well as shows at The European Fine Art Foundation (TEFAF), a leading organisation for fine art, antiques and design in Maastricht, Netherlands. Five years ago, Rupert moved the gallery to 6 Duke Street, St. James's, which is five times bigger and two-thirds of the rent of the original Mayfair premises. “Here, I think it is better. People seem to have more time, there’s less traffic and there’s less dilution by, you know, sales of knickers and handbags,” he says alluding to the increasing dominance of fashion outlets in Mayfair. The location has many advantages for the quantity, variety and quality of neighbourly art dealers and their galleries, all in the historic setting of buildings from across the centuries. “You can just walk in and out of all the galleries and you don’t have to buy anything, you can just look. There is still a culture in this, of just looking, and we encourage it. It’s a joy to be amongst my fellow dealers. And when I moved down here, I remember one of them saying to me, you were right to be down in St James’s. It’s where all the gentlemen art dealers are.”

When asked to name his favourite buildings and places in St. James's, Rupert immediately answered, “it’s got to be St James’s Piccadilly, I absolutely love it! I mean, it’s the art dealers’ church. But also with the Reverend Lucy Winkett, an amazing woman, she’s extraordinary – I’m a mad keen fan. I’m also an enthusiastic member of the Blake Society [founded in 1985 to celebrate the work of William Blake]. Our AGM is in St James’s Piccadilly and Lucy hosts it. You just listen to her on [Radio 4’s] *Thought For The Day* – she’s brilliant. My kind of priest.” Another of Rupert’s favourites is St. James’s Palace. “If you are privileged enough to get in, as I have, it’s an amazing place.” In addition, we’ve got some very good restaurants around here as well. Maison François has been a great success; run by my nephew’s school friend.”

We moved on to talking about St. James’s Square, which this year will host a celebration of the 300-year anniversary of the Square Act, alongside the 25-year anniversary of the St. James’s Conservation Trust, at the Summer Fundraising Garden Party on 26 June – co-organised with the St James’s Square Trust. “I like St. James’s Square, one of the most elegant squares in London. It’s truly beautiful, and that huge sculpture of King William III – a wonderful sculpture, wonderful park. I’d love to see more Shakespeare outdoor plays in the gardens there.” The Square hosts another of Rupert’s favourite buildings, the London Library, “and how could it not be” he enthuses. Along with Davy’s basement Wine Bar in the historic Crown Passage – “good for a quiet refreshment” –

Rupert declares they are both library and wine bar are “full of well-established character.”

We showed Rupert part of the planning application proposal for improvements to the entrances of the Cavendish Hotel further up Duke Street. He thought the new lighting design looked good in the document images (see page 6-7) and also, when cleaned up, that the Paolozzi-like, William Mitchell 1960s concrete frieze “will again be special”. Nestled on the corner of the Cavendish site is the textile dealer S Franses, described by Rupert as an “extremely civilized person, the best antique tapestry dealer in the world. He’s had a great battle with his landlords, who wanted him out from his gallery on the corner of Duke Street and Jermyn Street. He won the battle, to the great admiration of ‘the trade’, but has he won the war?” Our discussion turned to Rupert’s least favourite buildings. “I hate to say it,” he declared, “but I loathe the 1963 Economist building. I mean, I know I should like it, and yet I don’t, it’s an alien place. I feel that it’s brutal and it is not on a human scale. The spaces that are meant to be public are very forbidding and unpleasant”.

Rupert is a cyclist so we were keen to get his views on dockless e-bikes and any negative impact they might have on the character of the area, or any suggestions he might have. “Well, I’m two kinds of cyclist. I’m a warrior at weekends and then I’m a commuter on an ordinary bike. Twice last year I was hit, not by cars, by bloody e-bikes just careering into me, going too fast and then shouting at me! I was badly damaged by the first one. So, I’m afraid, I don’t like it. They take far more liberties than regular cyclists do with where you’re not supposed to cycle and park. I will tell you what I saw in Beijing, where it got to the point where there were so many e-bikes, that what they did, in that rather totalitarian state, was that they got a big old truck and just picked up 20 of them, put them in the back of the truck and drove them away, and they were never seen again.”

Rupert is a naturally creative thinker and offered his final thoughts on improvements in St. James’s, “given that we’ve got a lot of retailers and art dealers in this immediate area, we ought to do a street party once a year. Close some roads, invite stallholders to come as well. The problem for shop holders is that stallholders compete with no over-heads and set up goods that aren’t as good as theirs. I think it has to be curated in such a way that the shops can also open their doors at the same time.”

# WESTMINSTER COUNCIL CONSULTS

The City of Westminster has been sharing their thoughts in many recent consultation documents on Streets and Spaces across the borough. Examples of the key issues Our Public Realm Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD 181 pages) are of value to maintain quality and safety. Consultations have closed, which was limited in time for such a complex analysis. The latest consultation invitation for a new large project proposal affecting parts of St James’s and the whole of Regent Street is now in progress.



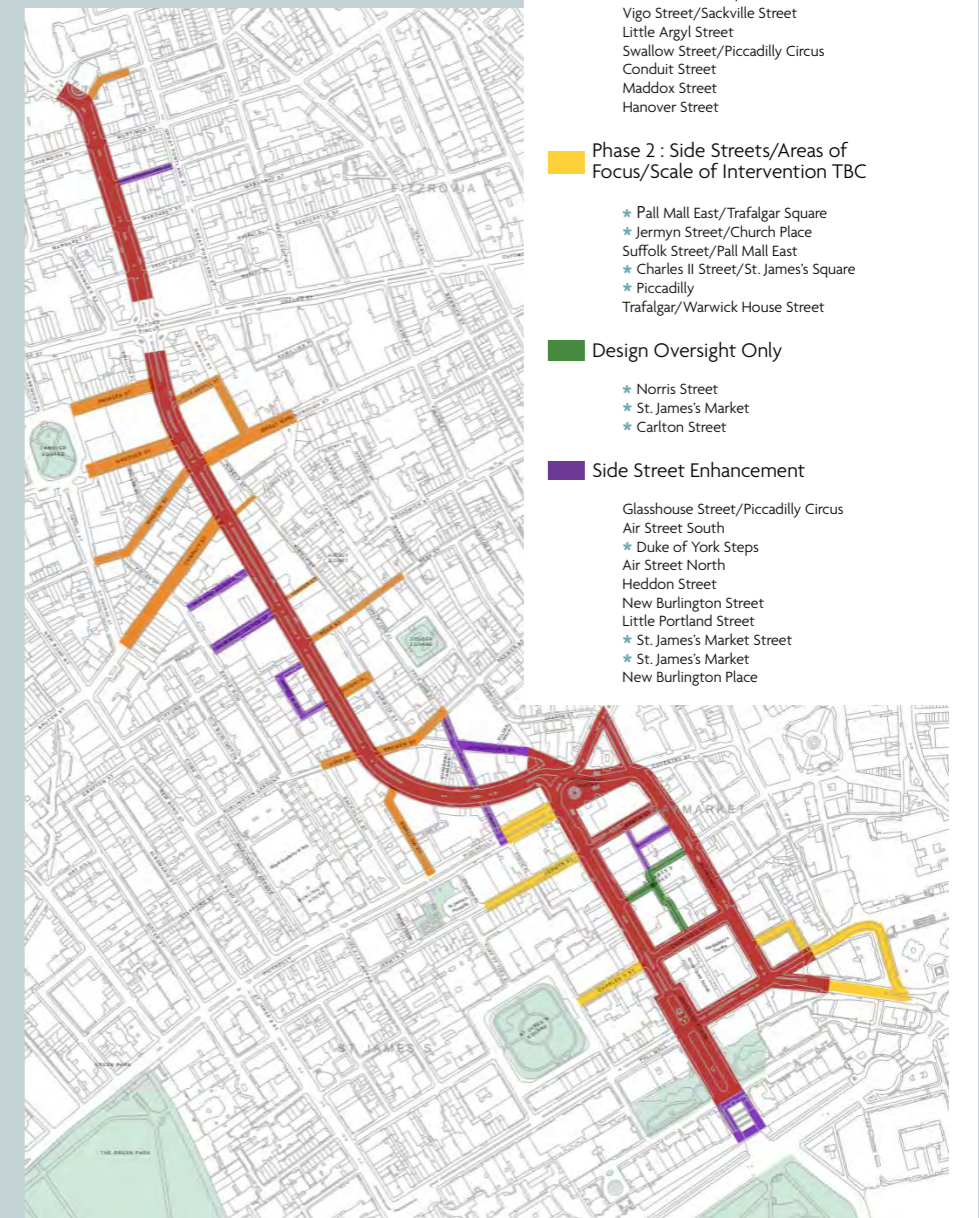
## A WORD FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM CHAIRMAN, ROGER SHARPLEY



The final St. James’s Neighbourhood Plan has passed the required consultation process to reach, at last, the approval stages comprising the

independent inspector and a local democratic referendum. The plan when adopted hopefully in 2025 or 2026, has policies that will help clarify local planning, for developers and protect and enhance historic St. James’s. In addition, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding can be generated for identified public realm projects of the renewable five-year Neighbourhood Plan, when adopted.

The phases of consultation on the whole length of Regent Street for improvements, have now taken two years, with a new phase proposed for extensions to Piccadilly Circus, Haymarket, Charles II Street and into St. James’s at Waterloo Place. The Trust’s Advisor, Peter Heath is monitoring the progress of this City of Westminster and the Crown Estate Advisory Panel. Invited representatives of local interests, local organisations and Amenity Societies recommended including the Trust’s Advisor in January 2025. The aim is for design ideas to be prepared by 2026 and if approved, to be implemented.



- Key**
- Core Scheme**
    - ★ Regent Street South
    - ★ Pall Mall
    - ★ Charles II Street
    - ★ Haymarket
    - ★ Jermyn Street
    - ★ Great Windmill Street
    - ★ Shaftesbury Avenue
    - ★ Piccadilly Circus
    - ★ Warwick House Street
    - ★ Regent Street, St. James’s
    - ★ Waterloo Place
    - ★ Regent Street North
  - Phase 1: Side Streets/Area of Focus/Scale of Intervention TBC**
    - ★ Beak Street
    - ★ Foubert Place
    - ★ Great Marlborough Street
    - ★ Princes Street
    - ★ Tension Court
    - ★ Riding House Street
    - ★ Regent Place
    - ★ Glasshouse Street/Brewer Street
    - ★ Vigo Street/Sackville Street
    - ★ Little Argyll Street
    - ★ Swallow Street/Piccadilly Circus
    - ★ Conduit Street
    - ★ Maddox Street
    - ★ Hanover Street
  - Phase 2: Side Streets/Areas of Focus/Scale of Intervention TBC**
    - ★ Pall Mall East/Trafalgar Square
    - ★ Jermyn Street/Church Place
    - ★ Suffolk Street/Pall Mall East
    - ★ Charles II Street/St. James’s Square
    - ★ Piccadilly
    - ★ Trafalgar/Warwick House Street
  - Design Oversight Only**
    - ★ Norris Street
    - ★ St. James’s Market
    - ★ Carlton Street
  - Side Street Enhancement**
    - ★ Glasshouse Street/Piccadilly Circus
    - ★ Air Street South
    - ★ Duke of York Steps
    - ★ Air Street North
    - ★ Heddon Street
    - ★ New Burlington Street
    - ★ Little Portland Street
    - ★ St. James’s Market Street
    - ★ St. James’s Market
    - ★ New Burlington Place
- ★ Relevant to St James’s Conservation Trust





# HISTORIC TREASURES THE QUEEN'S CHAPEL



Upper level view with Jon Simpson, Serjeant of the Vestry and Peter Heath



Gallery organ, played by notables including George Frideric Handel



One of Grinling Gibbons wood carved and gilded panels of St Peter and St Paul



Interior view West to main door beneath the balcony



View East showing the elliptical barrel vault ceiling



Madonna painting by Annibale Carracci 1560-1609



"Venetian" window encircled by Grinling Gibbons ornament



Upper level fireplace with Catherine of Braganza's Coat of Arms

The Sub Dean, Reverend Paul Wright, kindly organised for Jon Simpson, his Serjeant of the Vestry and Head Verger Ecclesiastical Household (formal titles that date from 1256), to show my wife and I around the historic, Queen's Chapel. His roles and knowledge are extensive and as an added bonus, he was able to give us a tour of the outside of the Chapel and the adjacent Marlborough House and grounds.

The early 17th Century building is by the innovative Architect, Inigo Jones, the King's Surveyor, who was also the designer of the 1630 piazza in Covent Garden and St. Paul's Church, 1631. Initially, the idea was a Chapel for the Infanta of Spain with the intent to marry Charles I, but the union failed in the negotiation stages. The building began in 1623, but was again delayed and restarted, with completion 1626-27. It was refurbished by Christopher Wren and in 1662-80 for Charles II's Catholic wife, Catherine of Braganza, whose Coat of Arms appears above the east window and above the Inigo Jones fireplace in the Queen's pew. This upper level looks down to the length of the elegant space and is adorned with historical full-length paintings of Royal portraits of Mary II and William III by Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723). Woodwork by the famous Grinling Gibbons and Robert Streater of 1662, includes the ornamentation around the organ gallery. George Frideric Handel and Henry Purcell, along with many other renowned composers played the organ in the chapel. WWII bomb damage required repairs and in the 1950s further refurbishments aimed to meet the original architect's intentions and the interiors of the double cube form. The wooden and decorated barrel-vaulted ceiling redecoration and the "Venetian" style east window have all been restored.

Amongst the many Royal events, George III married Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz in the Chapel in 1761. Nowadays, there are about 25 weddings a year and regular services for locals and royals. The Chapel has seen many faiths including Roman Catholic services, Dutch Reformed for William and Mary, German Lutheran for the Hanoverians and Danish for Queen Alexandra. It was also known as the German Chapel Royal until 1901.

April 2025 will have a service for the 400th anniversary of the Chapel.



Above : Queen Mary II and King William III, c.1690 by Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723)



Opposite : Inigo Jones based the interior on a double cube proportion for the chapel and details, inspired by his Italian travels





# HISTORIC TREASURES MARLBOROUGH HOUSE

Security for the Commonwealth Secretariat at Marlborough House and its functions, means that a visit to see the interiors, which feature grand spaces and famous paintings, are regrettably restricted. Built in 1709-10, the site was granted a 50-year lease in 1708, just before a quarrel between Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough and her companion, Queen Anne. Sarah had persuaded the Queen to build the house for herself and her husband John Churchill. It is one of the many Grade I Listed buildings facing The Mall and St. James's Park, but only visible for the main, beautiful, Sir Christopher Wren designed, two-storey, elegant red brick façade. Wren and his son were briefed to produce a "strong, plain and convenient and good" new home. To achieve a viable mansion, the Duke bought bricks cheaply in Holland while on campaign and had them used as ship's ballast in empty troop ships.

The Duchess soon quarrelled with the Wrens over their contractors, soon taking over the design of the project and keeping a close watch on details. It was finally completed in 1711. The Duchess was determined to have a direct central entrance on Pall Mall, which opponents blocked by land purchases. In 1729 the Duchess demolished four houses to achieve the connection to Pall Mall, but by "a rather pokey" diagonal entrance, still in place.

In the 1770s the 4th Duke of Marlborough hired the architect Sir William Chambers to build a third storey and decorative details for ceilings and chimney breasts. After the fourth Duke's death in 1817 the house became a Royal Residence. From 1861 to 1863 architect John Nash's collaborator, Sir James Pennethorne enlarged the structure with



two additional floors to the centre and one to the side blocks, a four columned portico and a range of rooms on the north side for the then Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra. The future King George V was born at Marlborough House in 1865 and lived there with his family until 1901 when his grandmother, Queen Victoria died. In 1936 Queen Mary resided at Marlborough House until her death in 1953, a place where she had redecorated many of the interiors.

Our visit to the Royal lawned grounds of the Marlborough House buildings – on the same day as the Queen's Chapel interior visit (see page 12) – was by courtesy of our guide Jon Simpson, Serjeant of the Vestry. The outside settings of the buildings with the walled grounds are hard to see even from the Mall. These exterior areas happily allowed us to see Queen Mary's pet cemetery and her thatched-roofed, rotating summer house in the extensive lawned garden.

The original early 18th century mansion house interiors with design changes from different periods, are still full of ornate and decorated spaces with giant paintings of famous victories by the 1st Duke, John Churchill, all of which served for over a century as the London residence of the Dukes of Marlborough Royalty. Since 1965 the Commonwealth Secretariat Foundation has found a magnificent home in Marlborough House, a place of history, as well as global futures.

Top : View from the Mall of Commonwealth flags along the wall of Marlborough House garden.  
Left : Jon Simpson, Serjeant of the Vestry, with Dr Jennifer van Schoor visiting the outside of the Queen's Chapel, adjacent Marlborough House.



Above : The route from Pall Mall that the Duchess of Marlborough described as "a rather pokey" diagonal entrance. Below : Queen Mary's Summerhouse built to rotate for the angle of sunshine. Inset : Queen Mary's pet cemetery tombstone photograph



Above : The Royal Red Tarmac route to the courtyard entrance of the Marlborough House; below : The original 1711 two-storey Christopher Wren brick and stone was extended by Sir James Pennethorne with two additional floors and one to each side block.



Photographs : Peter Heath

# ST. JAMES'S 2024 IN PICTURES

*...in the Trust's 25th anniversary year*



Carlton House Terrace



King Charles III  
by Jonathan Yeo at  
Philip Mould Gallery



The First Supper (2021-23)  
by Tavares Strachan  
at the Royal Academy in 2024



The Queen Alexandra  
Memorial, 1926-1932, by  
Sir Alfred Gilbert, on  
Marlborough Road



Royal carriages outside  
St James's Palace



Schomberg House, 80-82 Pall Mall

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