# City of London approves two new office towers despite heritage concerns



The City of London Corporation has granted planning permission for two significant office tower developments in the Square Mile, marking a notable expansion of the area’s high-rise cluster. One of these towers, located at 85 Gracechurch Street, underwent crucial design revisions after the discovery of ancient Roman ruins on the site, shedding new light on the city’s rich historical layers.

Originally proposed as a 32-storey tower by Woods Bagot for the Hershten Group, the scheme at 85 Gracechurch Street was revised following archaeological investigations by the Museum of London Archaeology. These investigations uncovered foundations and walls from a 1st-century Roman basilica, featuring materials such as flint, ragstone, and Roman tile. This significant find, part of the civic centre of ancient Londinium, prompted a reduction in the tower's height to 30 storeys to preserve the site. The updated design now integrates a public exhibition space in the basement to permanently display the ruins, alongside enhanced public amenities including a new hall, retail units, event spaces, and a fifth-floor heritage garden that offers views over nearby Leadenhall Market. City planners have welcomed the project, highlighting its potential to rejuvenate the market and celebrate the City’s 2,000-year history, despite opposition from Historic England on heritage grounds.

In parallel, Fletcher Priest has secured approval for a 46-storey office tower at 63 St Mary Axe, another prominent addition to London’s skyscraper skyline. Planning officers have recommended the scheme despite objections from Historic England, which expressed concerns about the tower’s impact on historic views, particularly those of the Tower of London, and on a medieval burial ground located at the site. The City of London’s Planning Applications Sub-Committee unanimously resolved to grant permission for this development, reflecting the ongoing prioritisation of office space expansion in the Square Mile amid efforts to balance heritage conservation.

Together, these developments illustrate the complex interplay between urban growth and heritage preservation in central London. While the towers will bring substantial new office capacity—35,000 square metres planned at Gracechurch Street alone—they also spotlight the challenges faced in integrating modern construction within a historically rich environment. The City Corporation’s planning decisions reflect a nuanced approach that accommodates economic development while endeavouring to protect and showcase key archaeological finds.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/woods-bagot-and-fletcher-priest-towers-get-green-light-from-city-planners/5136976.article), [[7]](https://www.constructionnews.co.uk/buildings/plans-approved-for-two-city-of-london-office-towers-08-07-2025/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.ctbuh.org/news/design-revisions-for-londons-85-gracechurch-street-will-preserve-roman-basilica-ruins), [[4]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/woods-bagot-submits-plans-for-city-tower-that-was-cut-down-after-roman-ruins-discovery/5135454.article), [[6]](https://www.theconstructionindex.co.uk/news/view/city-approves-comical-tower-over-leadenhall-market)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/fletcher-priests-46-storey-city-tower-tipped-for-approval/5136829.article), [[7]](https://www.constructionnews.co.uk/buildings/plans-approved-for-two-city-of-london-office-towers-08-07-2025/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/woods-bagot-and-fletcher-priest-towers-get-green-light-from-city-planners/5136976.article), [[3]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/woods-bagots-city-tower-set-to-get-green-light/5122184.article), [[6]](https://www.theconstructionindex.co.uk/news/view/city-approves-comical-tower-over-leadenhall-market), [[7]](https://www.constructionnews.co.uk/buildings/plans-approved-for-two-city-of-london-office-towers-08-07-2025/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/woods-bagot-and-fletcher-priest-towers-get-green-light-from-city-planners/5136976.article> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ctbuh.org/news/design-revisions-for-londons-85-gracechurch-street-will-preserve-roman-basilica-ruins> - Woods Bagot has submitted revised plans for a high-rise at 85 Gracechurch Street in the City of London, reducing the tower’s height from 32 to 30 stories following the discovery of significant Roman ruins on site. The archaeological find, uncovered by the Museum of London Archaeology, includes 1st-century AD foundations and walls from a Roman basilica, part of ancient Londinium’s civic centre. The new scheme now incorporates a public exhibition space in the basement to permanently display the ruins. Additional updates include an enhanced public hall, retail, and event spaces.
3. <https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/woods-bagots-city-tower-set-to-get-green-light/5122184.article> - Woods Bagot’s proposals for a 32-storey office tower in the City of London are being recommended for approval despite opposition from government heritage adviser Historic England and an acknowledged conflict with local planning policies. The practice’s vision for 85 Gracechurch Street would deliver 35,000sq m of new office space, as well as new food and drink space, a public hall and a fifth-floor “heritage garden” leading to a walkway with new views over neighbouring Leadenhall Market.
4. <https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/woods-bagot-submits-plans-for-city-tower-that-was-cut-down-after-roman-ruins-discovery/5135454.article> - Woods Bagot’s proposals for a tower in the Square Mile that had to be updated following the discovery of a Roman basilica at the site have been sent in to City of London planners. The scheme at 85 Gracechurch Street was set to be 32 storeys high and was given planning 18 months ago. It will include a new public hall and exhibition space. But archaeological investigations by the Museum of London Archaeology uncovered Roman ruins dating to the 1st century AD and include foundations and walls constructed from flint, ragstone and Roman tile.
5. <https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/fletcher-priests-46-storey-city-tower-tipped-for-approval/5136829.article> - Fletcher Priest’s designs for the latest addition to the City of London’s main tower cluster are set to be given the go ahead next week. Planning officers have recommended approval for the 46-storey office building at 63 St Mary Axe ahead of a meeting of the City’s planning applications sub-committee on 8 July. The endorsement was made despite an objection to the scheme filed earlier this year by Historic England, which said the tower would impact views of the Tower of London and harm a medieval burial ground on the site.
6. <https://www.theconstructionindex.co.uk/news/view/city-approves-comical-tower-over-leadenhall-market> - The City of London Corporation has approved construction of a 32-storey tower in Leadenhall Market Conservation Area despite significant opposition. City of London planners reckon that the new tower block at 85 Gracechurch Street, designed by Woods Bagot for the Hershten Group, will “rejuvenate Leadenhall Market, create major new public spaces and showcase the City’s 2,000-year history”.
7. <https://www.constructionnews.co.uk/buildings/plans-approved-for-two-city-of-london-office-towers-08-07-2025/> - The City of London Corporation has approved plans for two major office developments within the Square Mile’s skyscraper cluster, including a 45-storey scheme at 63 St Mary’s Axe and a 32-storey redevelopment at 85 Gracechurch Street on the site of Roman ruins. The Corporation’s Planning Applications Sub-Committee resolved to grant permission for a scheme at 63 St Mary’s Axe, while unanimously approving updated proposals for the redevelopment of 85 Gracechurch Street.