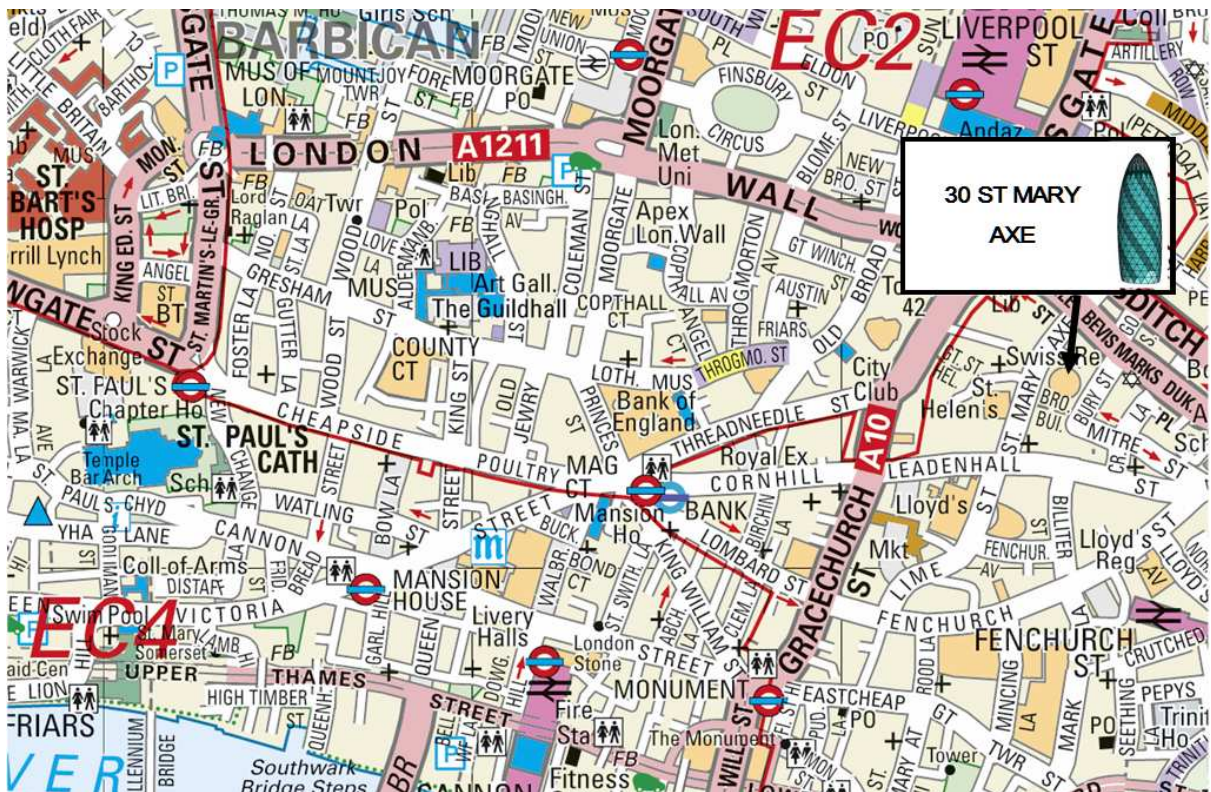




City of London

30 St Mary's Axe - The Gerkin



30 St Mary Axe (informally also known as "the Gherkin" and previously the Swiss Re Building) is a skyscraper in London's financial district, the City of London, completed in December 2003 and opened at the end of May 2004. With 41 floors, the tower is 180 metres (591 ft) tall, and stands on the site of the former Baltic Exchange, which was extensively damaged in 1992 by the explosion of a bomb placed by the Provisional IRA.

After the plans to build the Millennium Tower were dropped, 30 St Mary Axe was designed by Norman Foster and Arup engineers, and was erected by Skanska in 2001–2003.

The building has become an iconic symbol of London and is one of the city's most widely recognised examples of modern architecture.



The building stands on the former site of the Baltic Exchange, the headquarters of a global marketplace for ship sales and shipping information. On 10 April 1992 the Provisional IRA detonated a bomb close to the Exchange, causing extensive damage to the historic building and neighbouring structures. The one-ton bomb was contained in a large white truck and consisted of a fertilizer device wrapped with a detonation cord made from 45 kg of semtex. It killed three people: Paul Butt, 29, Baltic Exchange employee, Thomas Casey, 49, and 15-year old Danielle Carter. Another 91 people were injured

English Heritage discovered the damage was far more severe than they had previously thought. Accordingly, they stopped insisting on a full restoration. What remained of Exchange Hall was completely razed in 1998 with the permission of the planning minister John Prescott, over the objections of architectural preservationists, including Save Britain's Heritage who sought a judicial review of his decision.

In June 2006 an Estonian businessman, Eerik-Niiles Kross, found the ad for the Baltic Exchange on SalvoWEB whilst trawling the web for reclaimed flooring. He and his business partner Heiti Hääl bought the Baltic Exchange elements for £800,000 from Dennis Buggins of Extreme Architecture, and the 49 containers were shipped via Felixstowe to Tallinn in June 2007 where the exchange will be rebuilt in Central Tallinn.