## Palace of Westminster

### Identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EBN</th>
<th>110733</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Palace of Westminster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alternative Name</strong></td>
<td>Houses of Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construction Type</strong></td>
<td>building with towers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Status</strong></td>
<td>existing [under renovation]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continent Name</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th><strong>District (1st level)</strong></th>
<th>City of Westminster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country Name</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td><strong>Postcode</strong></td>
<td>SW1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Name</td>
<td>England</td>
<td><strong>Address (as text)</strong></td>
<td>Bridge Street and Abingdon Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metro Area Name</strong></td>
<td>London Metro Area</td>
<td><strong>Main Address</strong></td>
<td>Old Palace Yard Bridge Street Abingdon Street</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Palace of Westminster

City Name: London

Description
Facade System: applied masonry  
Architectural style: neo-gothic
Facade Color: light brown  
Main Usage: capitol (national)

Spatial dimensions
Height (structural): 336 ft  
Height (tip): 396 ft

Years and costs
Year (construction end): 1859  
Year (last renovation): 2025

Features & Amenities
• One of the city's famous buildings
• City landmark
• National landmark
• UNESCO landmark
• Clock(s) displayed on the outside
• Floodlighting at night

Facts
• The four faces of the clock on the north tower are 23 feet square; the minute hand is 14 feet long and the figures are 2 feet tall. Minutely regulated with a stack of coins placed on the huge pendulum, the clock is an excellent timekeeper, which has rarely stopped.
• Westminster Hall saw the trial of Charles I, the coronation banquet of George IV and more recently the lying in state of Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother.
• Victoria Tower and Hall house all laws passed in England since the 11th century, which amounts to around three million.
• The Palace of Westminster is officially the world's most recognizable government building, ahead of the The White House in Washington, DC and New York's United Nations Secretariat Building.

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- The Old Palace of Westminster was founded circa 1020 AD by King Cnut.
- Pugin designed the interior's wallpaper, the floor tiles (which were manufactured by Minton) and the State Throne in the House of Lords.
- The clock faces on the north tower were the world's largest when built.
- The Palace of Westminster was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987.
- The construction materials - cast and wrought iron, brick and stone - were selected to minimise the risk of fire which had destroyed the original building in 1834.
- The four clock faces on the north tower are made of cast iron with glass panels as infill and are illuminated electrically from behind.
- The House of Commons assembled in St. Stephen's until 1834 when the Palace was burned down. This fire destroyed almost all of the Palace except Westminster Hall, the crypt of St. Stephen's Chapel, the adjacent cloisters and the Jewel Tower. The present Houses of Parliament were built over the next 30 years. They were the work of the architect Sir Charles Barry (1795-1860) and his assistant Augustus Welby Pugin (1812-52). The design incorporated Westminster Hall and the remains of St. Stephen's Chapel.
- The current building covers 3.25 hectares (8 acres) with 100 staircases, almost 1,200 rooms and around 3 kilometres (1.8 miles) of corridors. It includes the 95.7 meter (314 foot) clock tower, and the 79.6 meter (261 foot) central tower.
- The passage of a time, aided by recent excavations, has resulted in the clock tower leaning some 35 millimeters (1.4 inches).
- The nickname "Big Ben" actually refers to the 13.5 ton bell at the top of the clock tower, which was named either in honour of the first Commissioner of Works, Sir Benjamin Hall or a prizefighter of the day named Benjamin Caunt or 'Big Ben'.
- Upon completion of Victoria Tower in 1858, the Houses of Parliament became the tallest secular (i.e. non-religious) building in the world.
- The House of Commons Chamber was destroyed in a German air attack in 1941. It was rebuilt after the Second World War, taking care to preserve the essential features of Barry's original. The architect was Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, and the new Chamber was completed in 1950.
- The palace's site was created by forming a granite cofferdam in the river Thames. The wall extends 7.6 metres (25 feet) below the high water mark, and the foundations were built on a concrete raft of varying thickness.
- The clock tower, which weighs some 8,600 tons is built of stone-clad brickwork which supports a cast iron frame and sits on a 3 metre (9.8 feet) thick concrete raft measuring some 15 metres (49 feet) square.
- The Houses of Parliament, and the clock tower especially, is one of the world's most famous and instantly recognisable buildings.
- The principal function of the central tower was originally to act as a ventilation system for the palace; however this revolutionary system never actually worked, rendering the tower purely ornamental.
• The river frontage is 286.5 metres (940 feet) long and built in Perpendicular-Gothic style.
• The 13.5 ton bell known as 'Big Ben' was cast at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry which is acknowledged by the Guinness Book of World Records as Britain's oldest manufacturing company still in existence. The bell itself is their largest ever casting and they also cast the original Liberty Bell of 1752.
• The tower clock was originally wound by hand up to three times a week until the installation of an electrical mechanism in 1913.
• In 1840 the foundation stone was laid and Queen Victoria formally opened the Palace of Westminster in 1852, despite not being completed.
• The clock in the tower is by E.J. Dent and E.B. Denison, and is accessed by 292 steps.
• The original Palace of Westminster became the regular meeting place for the English Parliament in 1338.
• The cost at completion was £2,167,000 whereas the original estimate was £700,000.
• Westminster Hall, the roof of which was built in the 1390s and survived the fire of 1834, is probably the world's greatest mediaeval hammer-beamed building with a span of 20.7 metres (68 feet).

Involved companies

Architect.................................................................................................................................

Sir Charles Barry
London
United Kingdom

Interior Designer.....................................................................................................................

Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin
Ramsgate
United Kingdom

Additional company data available for this building

Bell Foundry  Buy full PDF  General Contractor  Buy full PDF

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