



PRESS RELEASE 11/04/2013

BATTLE LINES DRAWN AS ENGLISH HERITAGE PERFORMS A DRAMATIC CLIMB DOWN ON SMITHFIELD GENERAL MARKET

In a shocking volte face, English Heritage has written a letter to the City of London in support of a scheme to replace Smithfield General Market with an office development.

These splendid market halls built in the second half of the 19th century by City Surveyor Sir Horace Jones are a remarkable engineering achievement as well as being major architectural landmarks. The buildings are not listed but are part of the Smithfield conservation area and in SAVE'S view are the finest parade of market buildings in Europe.

Following a Public Inquiry in 2008, Government ministers rejected proposals to demolish the General Market and adjoining Fish Market Annexe. At the Inquiry, English Heritage was one of the chief bodies opposing demolition, standing shoulder to shoulder with SAVE.

Today, 5 years later, a scheme has been put forward by Henderson Global Investors that again entails large scale demolition.

EH has accepted the proposed demolition of Sir Horace Jones's handsome top-lit market hall with only three of the four street frontages retained. Hendersons are proposing a tall office building within the retained facades of the building, that will rise up to over 20 metres, and be matched by a seven storey office block that will tower over the Red House cold store and Fish Market.

Both office blocks will be highly visible from all viewing points, much to the detriment of the Smithfield conservation area.

In 2008, EH's QC Robert McCracken said: 'Smithfield as a location for a market not only enjoys close proximity to the massive tourist attraction of St Paul's, but it also enjoys close proximity to the high earners of the City and legal Holborn.'

EH accept Henderson's assertion that retaining the market halls is 'not financially viable'. However the Inquiry Inspector stated that this could only be tested by placing the market buildings on the open market. This has not happened.

David Cooper, the solicitor who acted for SAVE in the 2008 Public Inquiry, says: 'At the public inquiry EH were totally opposed to any scheme that didn't retain the buildings particularly their magnificent glass roofs. Their response to the Henderson proposals doesn't fulfil the inspector's conclusions in any shape manner or form. Their position is a complete volte face without any justification at all.'

SAVE's President Marcus Binney says: 'Hendersons propose the destruction of the best features of the Victorian market halls including the intact main arcade of the Fish Market and all the market halls of the General Market. This is the worst mutilation of a major Victorian landmark in 30 years'

SAVE's Director Clem Cecil says: 'The responsibility lies with the City to fulfill its public duty, and with the Heritage Minister Ed Vaizey to overrule the government's advisory body on heritage when it fails its duty.'

SAVE has gathered over 1,000 signatures addressed to Ed Vaizey calling on him to protect Smithfield General Market for the nation. See - <http://chn.ge/WLdAqA>



Close up of roofs of Smithfield General Market showing extent of planned demolition in the Henderson scheme, highlighted in red.

For more information and images, please contact Clem Cecil on clem.cecil@savebritainsheritage.org or call the office on 0207253 3500

NOTES TO EDITORS: SAVE Britain's Heritage has been campaigning for historic buildings since its formation in 1975 by a group of architects, journalists and planners. It is a strong, independent voice in conservation, free to respond rapidly to emergencies and to speak out loud for the historic built environment.

Press release issued by SAVE Britain's Heritage, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M
6EJ. Registered Charity 269129