

SAVE BRITAIN'S HERITAGE

PRESS RELEASE 28TH JUNE 2013

PETITION SUBMITTED TO ED VAIZEY, MINISTER FOR CULTURE, COMMUNICATIONS AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES, CALLING ON HIM TO STOP THE GUTTING OF SMITHFIELD GENERAL MARKET, AND TO LIST IT. 2,665 SIGNATURES.

On the day that the consultation period formally closes for an application from Hendersons Global Investors to gut Smithfield General Market leaving only stretches of 3 street frontages, and replace it with an office development, we are submitting our petition to Ed Vaizey to stop the gutting of the market and to list it. Mr Vaizey has publicly spoken out regarding the significance of the market. We call on him to bring his influence to bear on this important matter.

Below are selected comments from the 2,665 people who signed our petition, and other supporters of the campaign.

*"If you go to St Bartholomew's and then walk through Smithfield, it is like walking from one cathedral to another. You wouldn't pull down St Bartholomew's, nor should you pull down Smithfield." **Alan Bennett***

'Too much of London has been mall-ized and it will happen here if the market buildings are not listed.'

Fay Maschler. Restaurant Critic, The Evening Standard

'Following the earlier public inquiry, a clear decision was made that the buildings should be retained. They are eminently adaptable to a range of exciting market and retail uses which would regenerate the wider area, as has been eloquently demonstrated by the alternative SAVE scheme, which

is backed by experienced developers. The current Henderson scheme is a very dated, old-fashioned approach to urban renewal, and a cynical exercise in facadism to conceal a totally inappropriate office development, which would traduce one of the finest sequences of market buildings in Europe. The existing buildings should be adapted and converted to retail/market and commercial uses within the existing fabric. Time and time again conservation-led regeneration has proved immensely successful in rejuvenating historic neighbourhoods. Nearby Borough Market is a text book example of what should happen here.'

Philip Davies, Author, 'Lost London 1870-1945'

'I am sick of seeing that which is good destroyed to make way for that which is mediocre, and which will have no merit whatsoever in 50 years time...'

Ian Constantinides, leading British conservator 1955-2013

'The city of London derives its character from the historic structures interspersed with contemporary high quality buildings. The Smithfield market buildings offer viable spaces in which to continue retail use, to support the increasingly diverse residential and working population in the neighbourhood. They should be sensitively adapted not gutted to provide more office space.'

Andy Bramwell, London

'The Smithfield buildings deserve a better fate.'

Gavin Stamp, writer, architectural historian

'I've only managed to get glimpses inside the building but it looks magnificent. I think the only reason there's not more of an outcry is because hardly anyone's been allowed inside for decades.'

Michael Tabona, London

'Food markets are vital to the lives of cities, as I explained in my 2008 book 'Hungry City: how food shapes our lives'. Smithfield Market has been operating on this site uninterrupted since the 9th century, and is a unique and vital part of London's history. The resurgence of the Smithfield area over the past two decades owes everything to the market; to lose this vibrancy for yet another clone-town mall would be a tragic mistake.'

Carolyn Steel, writer

"Smithfield was the scene of many martyrdoms - this would be another."
Alan Bennett

The scheme has been called 'Butchery', by the Victorian Society and criticised by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, Islington Council, the Charterhouse, the Council for British Architecture, the Twentieth Century Society, the Ancient Monuments Society, the Heritage of London Trust, many local residents including playwright Patrick Marber, and local businesses.

THERE IS A VIABLE FUNDABLE ALTERNATIVE. Eric Reynolds, the entrepreneur behind Camden Lock, Greenwich and Spitalfields Markets has made an offer to transform the General Market into a retail market on the lines of flourishing Borough Market. This will generate a £28m investment in reviving the historic market halls, with Mr Reynolds providing 40% of the capital. This will generate a rent of £700,000 to the City Corporation – level with the Henderson scheme

The application will go to the City Planning Committee in the next two months for determination.

Text from the petition:

Hanging in the balance is one of the grandest processions of market buildings in Europe. Directly under threat are the Smithfield General Market buildings, which comprise of three blocks - the General Market, the Annex (formerly the fish market), which is joined to the 'Red House' (a cold store) and finally the diminutive lavatory block. These are high quality buildings by a pre-eminent Victorian architect, former City surveyor Horace Jones, built between 1879-1899. They are key buildings in the Smithfield Conservation Area and should be listed. They form part of an enclave of historic buildings unlike any other in the City, retaining a powerful historic and architectural sense of place.

Smithfield is becoming one of London's major centres. The question of its heritage has never been more important as visitor numbers increase. The site connects the Barbican with Holborn Circus and Fleet Street, while Charterhouse, Hatton Garden, Clerkenwell, Barts and the City all

nestle around it. What the City chooses to do with the General Market will set a precedent for the future of the entire market complex. It must be treated as an ensemble, with a complete roofscape rather than broken up piecemeal. Heritage must be at the centre of any new development if it is to serve London and thrive in the long term.

Wake up City planners and Aldermen! Smithfield Market ranks as one of London's chief public spaces that should be serving the city and its visitors.

Do not allow the gutting of Smithfield General Market!



Interior of the General Market

<http://www.change.org/en-GB/petitions/ed-vaizey-heritage-minister-stop-the-gutting-of-smithfield-general-market-and-list-it>

For more information and images, please contact the office on office@savebritainsheritage.org / 0207 253 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.

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