



Matthew Rosel
Planning Department
Islington Borough Council
222 Upper Street
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By email: matthew.rosel@islington.gov.uk

3 September 2009

Dear Mr Rosel,

Applications P091484 & P091493. 63 Clerkenwell Road, London EC1

SAVE writes to object in the strongest terms to these applications for the demolition of this building and redevelopment of the site.

SAVE has been monitoring this case for a number of years, writing in January 2004 to support Islington Council's unsuccessful efforts to secure listing status for the building. SAVE has long maintained that this is a key 'gateway' building in the Clerkenwell Green conservation area, complimenting the grade II* Sessions House opposite and framing views down Clerkenwell Road.

63 Clerkenwell Road was constructed as stabling and warehousing for the Great Northern Railway Company in the 1880s and, as well being looked at within the context of the development of Clerkenwell Road, it should be seen in the wider context of the massive metropolitan improvements in the area from the 1860s onwards, with the canalisation of the Fleet River, the arrival of the railways, the construction of railway marshalling yards to the south and the development of the General Market Buildings at Smithfield.

The rounded corner, and subtle articulation of the façade - with arches and roundels on the ground floor enlivened by red brick dressings and a handsome classical doorway on the west elevation - help it to blend-in harmoniously with the other Georgian and Victorian buildings in the conservation area. There is no doubt that this building makes a positive contribution to the character, appearance and architectural history of the conservation area.

SAVE is also concerned by the failure of the owner of the building to meet tests for demolition outlined in PP15. SAVE remains completely unconvinced that reuse or remodelling of the existing building is not economically viable, as claimed in the justification for demolition. 63 Clerkenwell Road has been home to a number of thriving businesses for many years and, to our knowledge, the freehold of the building has not been offered on the open market. The building is in good condition and, in our view, is eminently capable of being put into viable economic use.

The proposed replacement block will clearly have a negative impact on the conservation area. In terms of design, bulk, scale and height, it is alien and inappropriate to the conservation area and clearly contravenes your own guidance. Islington Council's design guidelines document for this conservation area states that *'There are very few buildings over five storeys and most of these detract from the appearance of the area. Normally no new building or extension will be permitted above five storeys'* (1.21). The proposed replacement block is 7 storeys. Furthermore, at 10,500 sq metres the new building is over twice as large as is advocated in your design advice:

'Large scale building and comprehensive redevelopment is not appropriate to the tightly-knit and small scale character and appearance of the area. There are very few buildings larger than 3,000 square metres in the area. Where a redevelopment in excess of this is proposed, the Council will normally expect the scheme to comprise several individual buildings, with separate access and servicing.' (1.25)

In terms of design and materials, it is clear that there is further conflict with your guidelines: *'Large areas of glass, curtain walling or metallic finishes, alien to the character of the area, should be avoided.'* (1.33). Overall, it is clear that the new building does not accord with your council's own design advice, that it would have a detrimental impact on the conservation area and that the scheme does not deliver the substantial benefits needed to help justify the demolition of the existing building.

To summarise, SAVE considers 63 Clerkenwell Road to be an important building in the conservation area which makes a positive contribution character and appearance of this area. It is a key anchor building which gives harmony and balance to views towards Clerkenwell Road and helps to enforce a sense of visual continuity with other buildings in the conservation area.

SAVE urges your council, in the strongest terms, to reject this application in favour of a scheme which retains and reuses this building.

Yours sincerely,

William Palin
Secretary

cc. English Heritage, London Region
Heloise Brown, Victorian Society