



SAVE

BRITAIN'S HERITAGE
NEWSLETTER WINTER 2023

Space and light:
The architecture of
Sir Michael Hopkins
'Watershed moment'
for M&S campaign

What next for
Manchester?



The Phoenix Columns in the
General Market, Smithfield

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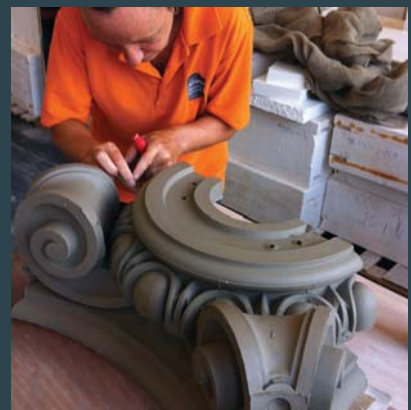
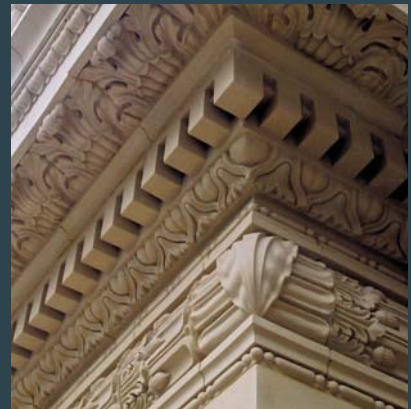
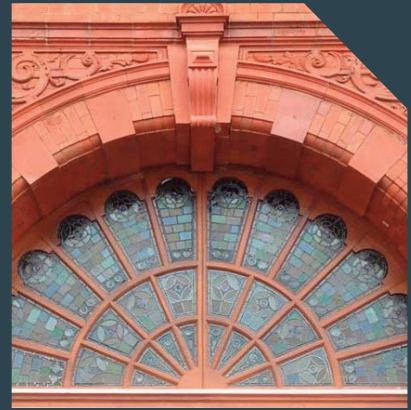
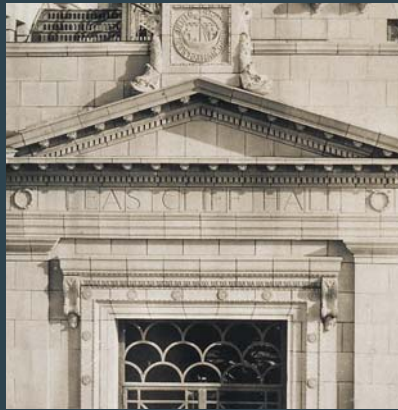
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Front Cover: The atrium of Portcullis House, Westminster, by Hopkins Architects, as it looked when it opened in 1999. (Credit: Richard Davies)

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DARWEN
TERRACOTTA
AND FAIENCE

Director's welcome

by Henrietta Billings



Our success at the M&S public inquiry earlier this year marked an epic moment for SAVE. Michael Gove's overturn of the inspector's decision was of fundamental importance, not just for the future of this handsome 1929 flagship building, but it was the first time heritage, energy and carbon were debated centre stage at a public inquiry. Our campaign made headlines across the UK and we received widespread support from the public as well as the built environment sector.

Now, following M&S's application to appeal, we enter the next stage of this battle knowing that the dial really is changing. We are seeing building owners exploring re-use alternatives for their existing buildings in a way that simply didn't register before the inquiry, let alone in 2018 when the M&S plans were first submitted.

According to developers like Grosvenor, Seaforth Land, General Projects and the Fore Partnership, a major driver for this change is the occupiers. Tenants and leaseholders want buildings with character, and a lower environmental impact. Re-using and adapting historic buildings with

stories to tell is an ideal fit, the opposite of massive "anywhere" style white boxes that already do so much damage to our historic city centres. In this issue we reflect on the inquiry and its impact, as we prepare and look forward to defending our position in the spring (p.10).

We chart a number of other live high-profile battles – including Ayr Station Hotel on the West Coast of Scotland (p.6) – a Victorian landmark at the entrance to the town hit by two fires in four months and under imminent threat of demolition by South Ayrshire Council. We are supported by a brilliant team of collaborators including the Ayr Station Hotel Community Action Group, 20 Scottish architects who signed our letter in the *Times*, and Ed Morton, managing director of The Morton Partnership who has been advising on the structural integrity of the building – and strategies for repair.

I'm delighted to include an interview with the new RIBA president Muyiwa Oki highlighting his sustainability-focused agenda, and to dedicate seven pages highlighting our newest SAVE report on Greater Manchester and the development threats and opportunities facing this great city. We launched the report at dual events in Manchester and Oldham – and have added several of the highlighted buildings to our Buildings at Risk register. We also report on another recent public inquiry – in Manchester's much-loved Northern Quarter (p.24). SAVE took part in the

proceedings, supporting the council against a major demolition plan for a run of Victorian warehouses – and we won!

We also highlight the huge variety of Yasmeen Lari's work, Pakistan's first female architect, and we revisit the Welsh Streets in Liverpool on the 10th anniversary of the public inquiry and a momentous campaign fought by SAVE that saved 400 terraced houses from demolition – now successfully adapted and refurbished as family homes. And we bring you a special and urgent focus on threatened heritage in Northern Ireland (p.41).

The recently proposed Creechurch Conservation Area – the first to be designated in the City of London for many years – gets a special mention, with buildings as diverse and significant as Bevis Marks Synagogue and Aldgate Underground Station. Also in London, we highlight the threats posed by the Liverpool Street Station plans (p.4) – now registered with the City planners and so controversial they have united national heritage organisations in opposition – including a welcome and outspoken early intervention from Historic England. Our joint petition against the plans has already triggered over 20,000 signatures, and more than 1,000 letters of objection. The Liverpool Street campaign is certain to be a main focus of our collaborative energy and expertise next year.

From all of us here at SAVE we wish you a restful Christmas break – and look forward to 2024 with gusto. Thank you for your support. [S](#)

‘Crass and unsustainable’

Proposals to redevelop Liverpool Street Station have united national heritage groups in fierce opposition

Highly controversial plans for the partial demolition and redevelopment of Liverpool Street Station – drawn up by Shard developer Sellar, Network Rail and Elizabeth line operator MTR – are currently being assessed by the Corporation of London.

SAVE Britain’s Heritage is robustly objecting to the plans, along with LISSCA – a coalition of heritage organisations uniting to protect Liverpool Street Station.

In a highly unusual move, Historic England – the government’s heritage advisor – has also come out as fiercely critical of the scheme,

describing it in the press as “grossly disproportionate” and stating the plans would harm the “extraordinary historic character of the City of London as a whole”.

The proposals

The proposals show grade II-listed Liverpool Street Station and its majestic neighbour, the grade II*-listed Great Eastern Hotel (now the Andaz), stamped on by massively overscaled development. A 10-storey hotel would be built on top of the station and a 16-storey block would be cantilevered

over the hotel, demolishing and piling through the notable 1990s extensions.

The currently light-filled station concourse would be covered over and key views of St Paul’s Cathedral would be interrupted by the sheer bulk of the scheme. The Bishopsgate Conservation Area would also be harmed by its overbearing and dominant height in a conservation area characterised by low and medium scale buildings.

The campaign

The members of the coalition – named after its 1970s forebear LISSCA, the Liverpool Street Station Campaign – include SAVE Britain’s Heritage, the Twentieth Century Society, Historic Buildings and Places, the Georgian Group, the Spitalfields Trust, Civic Voice, London Historians and the Victorian Society.

At the time of writing, the petition against the plans has already reached almost 25,000 signatures and a public meeting in November hosted by LISSCA was headlined by its chair, the comedian and conservationist Griff Rhys Jones.

SAVE sent strong objections to the developer as part of the public consultation process earlier this year ahead of a planning application which was submitted at the end of April, and only validated and made “live” seven months later in November.

SAVE passionately believes that building towers on top of and through listed buildings is a crass and unsustainable approach to developing

Existing and proposed: Bishopsgate entrance to Liverpool Street Station (Credit: Planning documents)



our towns and cities. If Sellar’s proposal for Liverpool Street is acceptable, why not build office blocks on top of other protected public buildings – the Albert Hall, the Tower of London, or the British Museum?

Recent listing

Liverpool Street Station and its hotel received enhanced protection in December 2022 after a major reassessment by Historic England of their architectural and historical significance. The upgraded listings now recognise the value of the station’s historic reconstruction in 1985–1992, with the former Great Eastern Hotel being upgraded from grade II to grade II*.

That decision followed urgent calls from SAVE, the Victorian Society and the Twentieth Century Society in autumn 2022 that the buildings needed greater protection in light of Sellar’s emerging plans.

History

Liverpool Street Station was originally built in 1873–75 for the Great Eastern Railway by chief engineer Edward Wilson. With a novel L-shaped layout and twin naves flanked by vaulted aisles, it is the City’s biggest rail terminus and one of London’s busiest.

Dubbed the Gateway to East Anglia by the Times in 1920, it has been used by generations of commuters as well as holidaymakers heading for the coast. It was also the point of arrival for refugees fleeing Nazi persecution via the port of Harwich. The station is particularly associated with the Kindertransport evacuations of approximately 10,000 unaccompanied Jewish children, a fact commemorated in a sculpture outside the station’s Liverpool Street entrance. [S](#)

Spirit of the 1970s

In the 1970s, changing demands led to plans for the complete demolition and rebuilding of the station and its underused neighbour, Broad Street, with a “stridently modernist” design by architects Fitzroy Robinson.

The plans were defeated at a public inquiry by a coalition of groups including the Victorian Society and SAVE Britain’s Heritage, backed by Sir John Betjeman. British Rail took the major infrastructure project in-house and its chief architect Nick Derbyshire designed what Historic England called a “full-blooded historicist” concourse matching the original trainshed.

The 1990s concourse and additions would be destroyed by the new plans, which are set to go before the City’s planning committee in spring 2024.



Existing and proposed: Liverpool Street entrance to station, on corner with Old Broad Street (Credit: Planning documents)

Future of Ayr Station Hotel uncertain as council rejects Ed Morton's advice on stabilising listed building

Eminent architects sign SAVE's letter to the *Times* arguing that the hotel can and should be saved after September's fire

The landmark Victorian Ayr Station Hotel, now under the care of South Ayrshire Council, stands as the gateway to the historic town of Ayr in west Scotland, and is one of the country's grandest railway hotel buildings.

The category B listed building, 30 miles south west of Glasgow, which has been empty since 2015, was hit by a serious arson attack in September – the second such attack in four months – and is currently being prepared for partial demolition due to public safety concerns.

SAVE offered expert structural advice from conservation-accredited engineer Ed Morton to help the council stabilise the structure and make it safe, to enable the road adjacent to the building and the train station to open as soon as possible. His approach was to work alongside the council's advisors and to offer his expertise.

However despite meeting Morton in late October, the council rejected his advice to make stable and to retain the listed building as far as possible. Instead the council appears to be pressing ahead with its stated aim of

“The joint letter argued that if repaired, the landmark chateau-style building would lend itself to a variety of new uses and could act as a catalyst for the renaissance of the town.”

The text of the letter in the *Times* and signatories

Sir, The fire at Ayr Station Hotel was shocking but we strongly believe the building can and must be saved (report, Sep 27). This Category B-listed landmark played an important role in the life of Ayr for generations and its repair and reuse can be a catalyst for the town's renaissance. We need look no further than Ayr's own Seafield House for examples of listed buildings restored after serious fires.

Thanks to the swift actions of fire crews, much of the building has been saved. What is needed now is an urgent condition survey by an accredited historic buildings expert to establish the facts, as only then can informed decisions be made. At the same time the council must begin compulsory purchase proceedings against the absentee owner. These are the vital first steps to getting the wraps off and the building back in use.

Signed:

Henrietta Billings, director, SAVE Britain's Heritage

Bobby Jewell, Architects Climate Action Network Scotland

Karen Anderson, president elect, RIAS

Professor Gordon Murray, past president, RIAS

Robin Webster OBE, PPRIAS

Malcolm Fraser, director, Fraser/Livingstone Architects, Edinburgh

Jude Barber, director, Collective Architecture, Glasgow

Ewan Lawson, partner and conservation architect, Simpson & Brown, Edinburgh

Michael Dougall, director, O'DonnellBrown and past president,

Glasgow Institute of Architects

Alistair Scott, architect, former director, Smith Scott Mullan Associates

Rory Olcayto, writer and critic, Pollard Thomas Edwards, London

Jocelyn M Cunliffe, national vice-chair, Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland

Iain J Wotherspoon, Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland, Strathclyde Group

Miles Glendinning, professor of architectural conservation,

University of Edinburgh

David Cook, director, Glasgow Building Preservation Trust

Jonathan Potter, president, Glasgow Institute of Architects

Fiona Sinclair, past president, Glasgow Institute of Architects

Ben Addy, managing director, Moxon Architects, Crathie & London

Kinlay Laidlaw, chair, Ayrshire Architectural Heritage Trust

Niall Murphy, director, Glasgow City Heritage Trust

Thierry Lye, chairperson, New Glasgow Society

Subsequent support from: Gloria J. Lo, chair, Scottish Ecological

Design Association (SEDA)

demolishing the south wing. This follows on from a vote in December 2022 where councillors voted to pursue a demolition strategy at the cost of an estimated £6.6m.

Letter published in the *Times* signed by leading Scottish architects and conservation experts

Also in October, 20 leading Scottish architects and conservation experts signed a joint letter to the *Times*, organised by SAVE, arguing that Ayr Station Hotel can and should be saved.

The joint letter (see box on left) argued that if repaired, the landmark chateau-style building would lend itself to a variety of new uses and could act as a catalyst for the renaissance of the town.

The letter notes that one needn't

look far to find examples of listed buildings that have been brought back to vibrant use after devastating fires. Less than a mile away, Seafield House – once home to the man who built the Forth Bridge – was named Best Renovation and Conversion project at this year's Herald Property Awards, after reopening as apartments 15 years after a blaze left it facing demolition.

The letter called for an urgent and comprehensive condition survey by an accredited historic buildings expert to understand the hotel's structural condition following the fire and how much can be saved. This is different from the council's building safety survey.

South Ayrshire Council's most recently stated preferred option – demolition of the south wing – would leave a partially cleared site beside a derelict building – all in the ownership of an absentee owner. The letter calls

on the council to begin compulsory purchase proceedings against the owner – something that has to happen in any case. These are the vital first steps to bring the building back into useful life.

Just 10 days before the fire SAVE published a report by Ed Morton which showed the building was in much better condition than previously thought. We called on elected councillors to re-think their controversial demolition plans and to fully consider a refurbishment option which could include much-needed station facilities with a range of uses on the upper floors, from modern office suites to studio space. Not only would a refurbishment approach bring the listed building back to life, restoring one of the region's great landmarks, but it would act as a signal of civic pride which could in turn trigger regeneration. **S**



The station hotel post fire, with safety works underway in late October 2023. The south wing is to the right, still largely shrouded in the original scaffolding encapsulation, much of which survived intact from the fire (Credit: © SAVE Britain's Heritage)

SAVE backs plan for new City of London heritage zone

Our response to the City of London urges a boundary extension to include important but currently unprotected historic buildings in the area, including Aldgate Underground Station

SAVE has submitted a detailed report supporting plans by the City of London Corporation to designate a new conservation area between Creechurch, Leadenhall and Aldgate in the east of the City.

Our report joins other statements of support from architectural experts and heritage organisations which would see the designation of the first new conservation area in the City for years.

The creation of a new heritage zone would highlight the architectural importance and history of these

streets and buildings, and also provide much needed guidance and policy to developers and building owners for new development within the zone. In addition, it would remove ‘permitted development’ rights meaning owners would not be able to demolish unlisted buildings without planning permission.

In our submission as part of the public consultation process, we urged the City planners to include a range of important historic buildings in and around Aldgate High Street which currently have no protection

“Our report joins other statements of support from architectural experts and heritage organisations which would see the designation of the first new conservation area in the City for years.”

or recognition under the planning system – as well as Aldgate Underground Station – with its remarkable Victorian train shed and much loved historic frontage.

Other heritage organisations





*The 1926 frontage to the unlisted Aldgate Underground Station
(Credit: SAVE Britain's Heritage)*

including The Twentieth Century Society, The Georgian Group, The Victorian Society and Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings are also supporting the new conservation area.

This is a rare opportunity to give a previously overlooked network of historic streets and buildings long overdue recognition and protection in the City. The creation of a new conservation area will encourage sympathetic and well-designed new development that enhances and reveals the character of these streets.

The proposed conservation area seeks to recognise the importance and



“This is a rare opportunity to give a previously overlooked network of historic streets and buildings long overdue recognition and protection in the City.”

designed with windows to all elevations to maximise light into the historic interior. Planning Committee councillors subsequently refused the plans in October 2021.

Aldgate Underground Station is a key landmark SAVE has proposed for inclusion in the new conservation area. The distinctive frontage building is by Charles Walter Clark built in 1925–26 and exhibits the classic white faience tiling which is familiar from other Metropolitan Line stations in London, including Paddington, Willesden Green and Farringdon, which are all grade II listed. Aldgate’s great cast iron trainshed behind the frontage was built by the Metropolitan Railway in 1876 as its new terminus station and was retained when the frontage building was rebuilt in the 1920s. Despite its clear historic importance, the station currently benefits from no heritage status or protection. A decision on the conservation area boundaries is due in December 2023. [S](#)

contribution of the area’s many listed buildings, including the outstanding significance of Bevis Marks Synagogue, grade I listed and the oldest operating synagogue in Europe. Other buildings proposed to be included include the grade I-listed Georgian church of St Botolph-without-Aldgate, grade II* listed Holland House on Bury Street – as striking on the inside as it is on the outside – and the grade II listed Aldgate School on Aldgate Place Square, the only state school in the Square Mile.

Built in 1757, Bevis Marks Synagogue is one of the most significant buildings in the proposed conservation area, recognising the many layers of social, architectural and archaeological heritage which make this area so special. Of particular importance is the cultural association of this area with the Sephardic Jewish community which first settled in Aldgate in the 18th century and once boasted three synagogues, two of which were lost in the Second World War.

In 2019 and 2021 SAVE objected to harmful proposals for a 47 storey tower just one block away from the synagogue. The tower would have drastically overshadowed the synagogue, which was deliberately

Left: The Aldgate Pump in 1847, with its original stone basin and ornate wrought iron lantern, both of which were removed in the early 20th century (Credit: Wellcome Library. CC BY 4.0)

Opposite page: The interior of Bevis Marks Synagogue which is a key reason for designating the conservation area. The building dates from 1757 and was designed with windows all round in order to allow natural light into the worship space. Several recent tower applications just meters away from the synagogue have threatened this sensitive setting by overshadowing the courtyard it stands in. (Credit: Adrian Seal / Alamy)

Watershed moment as Gove throws out M&S plans

Secretary of State cited heritage, design and sustainability issues in July's landmark ruling which threw out the retailer's controversial demolition and rebuild plans

The decision by Michael Gove in July 2023 was a significant victory for SAVE and all those who care about the carbon cost of the construction industry and re-purposing historic buildings.

Gove's ruling, which overturned the inspector's decision, marked a watershed moment for the planning and construction industry, because it was the first time a planning inquiry had sustainability and heritage as its joint focus. It challenged our laissez faire attitude to demolition and loss as simply being necessary for economic growth, and invites us to consider the townscape and environmental consequences.

On sustainability, Michael Gove's ruling stated: "The Secretary of State... notes that there was no dispute that the proposals would demolish and remove structurally sound buildings for a new larger development or that

redevelopment would involve much greater embodied carbon than refurbishment." He found this approach to be contrary to policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

He added: "The Secretary of State does not consider there has been an appropriately thorough exploration of the alternatives to demolition. He does not consider that the applicant [M&S] has demonstrated that refurbishment would not be deliverable or viable and nor has the applicant satisfied the Secretary of State that options for retaining the buildings have been fully explored, or that there is compelling justification for demolition and rebuilding."

On heritage, the report stated: "The Secretary of State has concluded that although Orchard House did not meet the listing criteria at the time it

was considered for listing in 2021, it has significant value in its own right and in its context. He has attached substantial weight to its loss." (para 203) This is highly significant for an unlisted building, outside a conservation area. He found that the proposals conflicted with national and local policies on the conservation of heritage assets.

On public benefits, Gove stated that the proposed public benefits of the scheme did not outweigh the harm to heritage assets.

Under the plans, M&S proposed to demolish the 1929 building on Oxford Street (Orchard House) and two connected buildings either side, opposite the grade II*-listed Selfridge's and in close proximity to a number of conservation areas. Their plan was to build a replacement 10-storey office block with two levels of carbon-hungry basements would have released



Reaction to the Secretary of State's decision

Duncan Baker MP, who brought the Carbon Emissions (Buildings) Bill to Parliament:

“SAVE Britain’s Heritage has successfully brought attention to the value of heritage preservation and the significance of making environmentally conscious choices in architectural and development decisions. The organisation’s campaign has left a lasting impact on the industry and society at large, further solidifying its role as a leading advocate for conservation and sustainable development. I fully support the Secretary of State’s decision.”

Steve Tompkins, founder, Haworth Tompkins Architects and Stirling Prize winner:

“We can’t afford to carry on demolishing decent, solid buildings when there are feasible alternatives. I hope this decision points to a wider realisation by government that our whole industry needs to prioritise low carbon retrofitting to drive down construction emissions, particularly in this pivotal decade. If so, removing VAT

on refurbishment would drive that change overnight by making the right choice more viable for building owners.”

Michelle Ludik, regional leader of heritage and adaptive reuse, HOK Architects:

“Congratulations on all SAVE’s hard work in fighting this landmark case. It is absolutely a milestone in changing minds and turning heads about the climate impact of demolition of existing buildings and of course a victory for the importance of retaining heritage in our built environment.”

Simon Henley, founder, Henley Halebrown Architects:

“Michael Gove’s decision to back the retention and adaptive reuse of the M&S Oxford Street store instead of a new building is good for the environment and good for the place Oxford Street. His decision protects both embodied carbon and embodied memory. Congratulations to SAVE, Simon Sturgis, Will Hurst and everybody else involved in the campaign to save these buildings. The creative opportunities for reuse are huge. This is an interesting and exciting moment.”

40,000 tonnes of CO₂ into the atmosphere immediately because of all the steel and concrete required for the new building.

However efficient this proposed new building would have been, retrofitting the existing buildings to contemporary standards would have a much smaller carbon cost – as well as being cheaper, quicker and less damaging for Oxford Street.

November 2023 update

Marks & Spencer requested permission from the High Court to legally challenge the Secretary of State’s decision. The claim has six grounds of challenge, and the Secretary of State has filed his defence to the claim, resisting it on all grounds. We have also filed a defence and are delighted that Matthew Fraser continues to represent SAVE together with solicitor Claire Saffer from Gunner Cooke. Westminster City Council has adopted a neutral position in respect of the claim and will not take part in the proceedings.

In late November the High Court ruled that the claim is “arguable” so the

matter will proceed to a substantive hearing in the spring.

SAVE’s campaign

SAVE’s campaign, supported by Will Hurst, managing editor of the *Architect’s Journal*, and many leading architects, engineers, urbanists, planners and heritage and environmental campaigners, put carbon firmly at the heart of the debate about knocking down buildings or re-using them.

In January 2022 we commissioned a report by net zero specialist Simon Sturgis which demonstrated how M&S’s proposals were not compliant with the government’s legally binding net zero commitments or the Greater London Authority’s policy to prioritise retrofit of existing buildings.

In April 2022, we published a report, *Departing Stores: Emporia at Risk*, examining the challenges and future opportunities for reusing department stores, including the M&S building.

With the campaign rapidly gaining national attention and press coverage, in May 2022 we published an open letter signed by architects, engineers and

historians calling on the government to call in the scheme for examination at a public inquiry.

In July 2022 we launched a crowdfunder for our legal fees which was backed by more than 400 people and raised – incredibly – more than £20,000. We were represented by Matthew Fraser of Landmark Chambers, along with our expert witnesses: Dr Julie Godefroy, a whole-life carbon and sustainability consultant; Simon Sturgis; and Alec Forshaw, a writer, planner and former head of conservation at Islington council.

Several high-profile figures gave evidence in person and in writing. These included Kristin Scott Thomas, Griff Rhys Jones and Julia Barfield, architect of the London Eye.

In March 2023 we invited Simon Sturgis to deliver our annual lecture, *Architecture and Climate Crisis: How the past can save the future*, to a full house at the Royal Academy.

The Secretary of State’s decision was announced in July 2023. [S](#)

Opposite page: Orchard House’s importance to the setting of Selfridge’s was noted by Michael Gove. (Credit: Matthew Andrews)

Muyiwa Oki: ‘We can’t build our way out of the climate emergency’

Creatively reusing buildings is a priority for the new president of the Royal Institute of British Architects – and it should be for all of us, he tells **Elizabeth Hopkirk**

Shortly before taking up his post as the 80th president of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) this autumn, Muyiwa Oki was on holiday with his girlfriend. They toured buildings in Belgium and Germany which he studied while training at Sheffield School of Architecture and never had the chance to visit. The list included Berlin’s Neues Museum, one of the city’s great 19th-century cultural

buildings which only reopened this century after extensive wartime bombing and a masterful restoration by David Chipperfield and Julian Harrap Architects. Its grandeur left a powerful impression.

“It’s retrofit on a magnificent scale, done very tastefully,” says Oki of the award-winning project, an icon of the arrested decay approach to conservation. “But we also need to

think about retrofit on a small scale. It won’t just be buildings of historical significance that need to be retrofitted but ordinary buildings too – and we need to get better at those.”

He explains: “We can’t build our way out of the climate emergency. Experts predict that 80% of our current building stock will still be in use in 2050, the year we want to be net zero. We need to make a concerted effort to realise the full potential of these buildings and take retrofit very seriously. An immense collective effort is needed.”

His words resonate deeply with SAVE and its mission to find sustainable uses for historic buildings – and in particular with the M&S Oxford Street campaign which brought embodied carbon to the heart of a planning inquiry backed by architects and engineers.

Oki was elected on a ticket of change, the youngest RIBA president by far at 32 and only the second person of colour to hold the august post. His manifesto pledged to reform a profession that is currently “in service to the wealthy, the privileged and the well-connected” by giving a voice to the disenfranchised and encouraging architects to see themselves as stewards and agents of change. It was a message that captured the imagination of an emerging generation which rallied behind his campaign.

“As RIBA president, I pledge to be a steadfast advocate for decarbonising the built environment,” he declared. But in an interview with SAVE he

*New RIBA president Muyiwa Oki
(Credit: RIBA)*



admits there's a long way to go: "Not enough people are on board. Every talk and panel I do, I mention it." It's true: since September he has hardly stopped talking about retrofit – in the press, on panels and in speeches. His very first engagement as president was a debate held in a former hospital in Fleetwood, Lancashire, which campaigners want to convert into a community hub. Called Re-fit for Purpose, the event with TV's George Clarke put a spotlight on the potential of reuse to drive regeneration in "left-behind" places. Industry magazine *Building Design* called it a "clear statement of intent" for Oki's two-year presidency. In the same pages he wrote: "I believe in architecture, that it is a force for good." But if architecture is to demonstrate its relevance in today's world a fundamental shift is required, he says, and that means tackling the big issues, from social inequality to climate change.

The built environment is responsible for nearly 40% of global carbon emissions, so reducing its impact is one of the most effective ways of helping the UK reach its legal commitment to be a net zero economy by 2050. "It's an opportunity for architects and the built environment and it's a skill everyone needs to learn," says Oki, pointing out that Britain has Europe's leakiest housing stock. "It's going to create new jobs and I believe architects can take a leading role in the delivery of the work. It's a case of thinking about yesterday's building, putting in today's technology, so we can use it tomorrow.

"Of course, lots of architects have been breathing new life into buildings for years," he adds. But a whole property investment sector has grown up around the raze-and-replace business model where the certainty

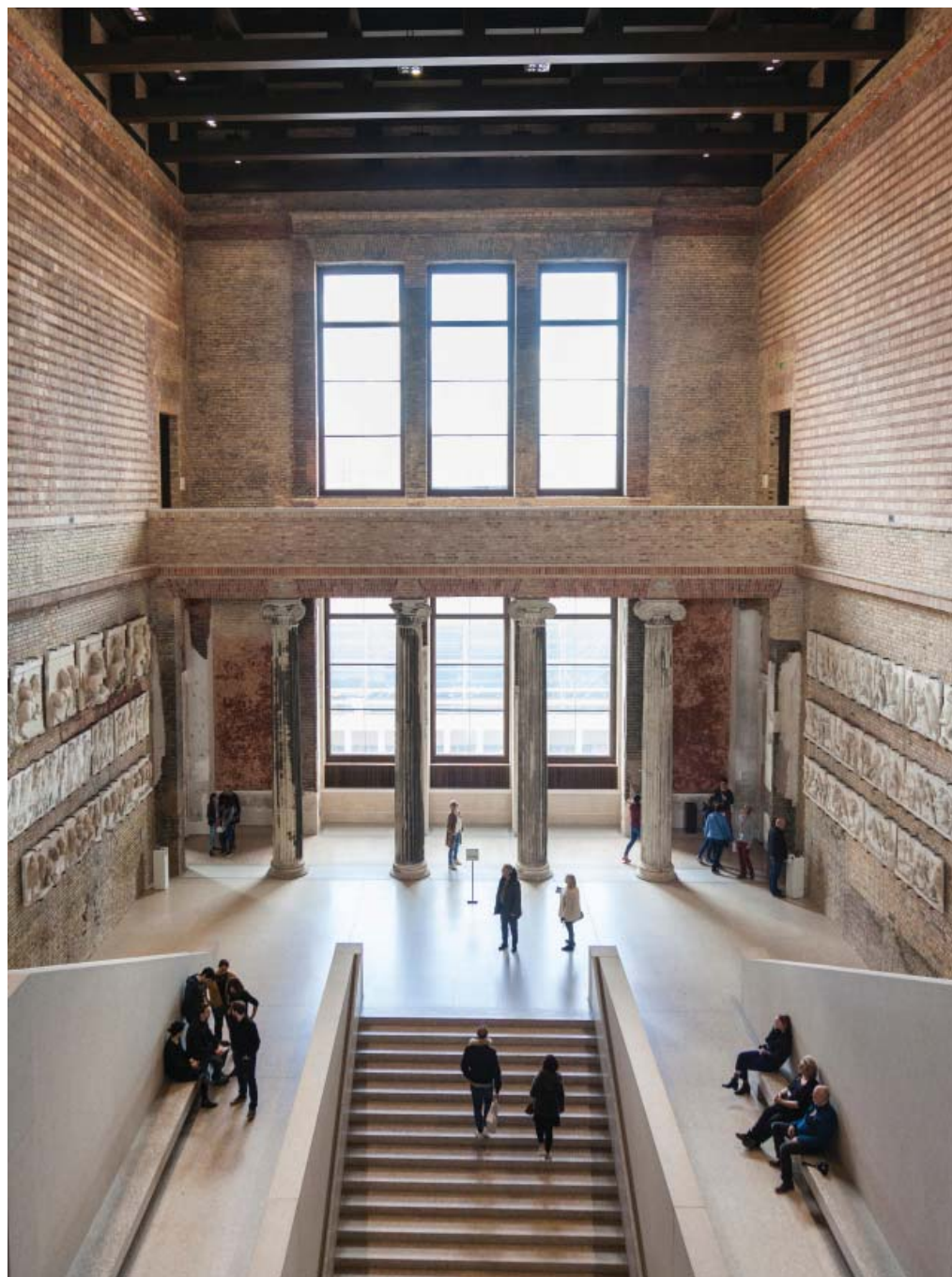
Berlin's Neues Museum, after its celebrated restoration in 2009 by the UK's David Chipperfield and Julian Harrap Architects. (Credit: © Galit Seligmann via Alamy)

of a cleared site and the efficiencies of replicable construction methods make returns of 20% predictable. In contrast, anyone working with existing buildings faces much uncertainty (as well as satisfaction).

Oki's solution is manifold. He wants architects to tell a story about how reusing buildings can have a positive impact on everyone's lives: it's good for the planet, good for the quality of our places, good for skills, good for energy security, good for people's pockets. "And it makes good commercial sense," he adds. "We need the more commercial players to see it as a business opportunity."

Even those developers who have already seen the light and are

enthusiastically engaged in reinventing buildings say they could do with a little more certainty and a few more incentives. These could include: equalising VAT on retrofit and new-build; a sliding scale of stamp duty for energy-efficient homes; accelerating planning approvals; allowing higher densities. Moreover, decision by expensive planning inquiry benefits no one and Oki and the RIBA have been vocal advocates for a national retrofit strategy which would bring clarity for everyone – but on which the government has been very quiet. "The first principle should be to think about what can be reused," he says. The institute is also working with other industry bodies on initiatives like Part Z (a proposal to regulate



embodied carbon through Building Regulations) and a net zero carbon building standard (which would ensure the same metrics are used to calculate the whole-life carbon emissions of every project, helping combat the greenwash that gets sloshed around).

Another of Oki's ambitions is to increase the diversity of the profession. Encouraging people from different backgrounds into the sector would have many benefits, among them a wider range of perspectives brought to bear on cutting our emissions. An issue as complex as the climate crisis won't be solved in a silo.

Finally, Oki wants to celebrate the good work already being done: sharing knowledge, inspiration and best practice. To that end the RIBA has introduced a Reinvention Award. The inaugural winner, announced at the prestigious Stirling Prize ceremony in October, was Houlton School, a secondary school in a grade II-listed former radio transmitter building in Warwickshire. It was designed by van Heyningen and Haward Architects for Urban & Civic and is the centrepiece of a new housing development being built on the 650ha site of Rugby Radio Station, once the largest radio transmitting station in the world. Reusing the 1927 transmitter building not only saves carbon and preserves heritage but gives an immediate sense of identity to a new community. It's a win-win and an engaging story featuring top secret Cold War communications with nuclear subs. Crucially, it has the appeal to cut through in a way that "embodied carbon" does not.

Whether he's using radio transmitters in Rugby or Radio 4 documentaries like Thomas Heatherwick's recent *Building Soul* series, Oki is energetically broadcasting his retrofit message from the rooftops. Let's hope the public is receiving, loud and clear. **S**

How to solve a problem like an unloved office

Some architecture is easy to love, but as our understanding of embodied carbon deepens we must broaden the scope of 'heritage' beyond popular buildings. All it takes is a little imagination, writes engineer **Anna Beckett**

Walking around our big cities there is one building type that is perhaps more unloved than any other, the 1980s office block. Often a concrete frame with a masonry or precast concrete façade, they are architecturally uninteresting. With older buildings there is a little more nostalgia and they're easier to love – even in the most average of Victorian and Georgian buildings there's a quality that we find charming. But an ugly '80s or '90s office is unlikely to be particularly fondly remembered by anyone.

When it comes to retrofit, these unloved office buildings present a challenge. They often have low floor-to-ceiling heights, limited natural light and poor ventilation. Many are now standing empty, considered unlettable because they don't meet modern requirements and at this point, we reach a dilemma. Should we retrofit the building or accept that it just isn't working any more and demolish it? If the floor-to-ceiling height is the problem, we're unlikely to be able to change that. So even if we retrofit, will the building just end up empty again in a few years' time?

If we consider the problem in terms of embodied carbon [the CO₂ required to erect a building] then there is an argument for demolition. A new building will be better insulated and make better use of daylight and natural ventilation, so the savings you'd make in terms of operational carbon [the CO₂ emitted by the building in use] would outweigh the embodied carbon

that you'd need to build it. But those savings take time to kick in, in most estimates around 30 years. And for the whole of that time the carbon released by manufacturing the new materials would be in the atmosphere, contributing to climate change.

More often than not the structure is still sound and with regular inspection and maintenance it can far exceed its original design life. With an '80s or '90s office building the original structural drawings might still be available, so we can be reasonably confident about the structural form and the way that the building was designed. Reusing the structure, no matter how unfashionable the building, makes a lot of sense. But how do we deal with fundamental issues such as the floor-to-ceiling heights?

If we're prioritising retention, then we're going to need a more creative approach. We can minimise finishes to create more height (while also minimising carbon), improve façades to allow for more natural ventilation and introduce atria to bring light into the centre of large floorplates. We can consider less conventional MEP strategies (mechanical, electrical, plumbing) and light the space differently. There are plenty of places where compromise will be needed, but there are also lots of opportunities for innovation.

Of course there will always be a commercial aspect to this problem. If the form of the original building really

is preventing the space being let, is it better to leave a building empty than to knock it down? While retrofit should be considered first, in this scenario carefully dismantling a building so that the materials can be used elsewhere can also offer carbon savings.

But the creative approach can also extend to a building's use. Could it be used for a different purpose? With

demand for office space declining as more people work from home, what about repurposing these buildings to help meet our housing demands? The floorplates may be laid out differently from your typical residential building, but with imagination there's still plenty of opportunity to make use of the existing structure.

As we try to make the best use of

the buildings we have, we need to look past appearance and consider the potential they offer. Whether we retrofit the building or extract the materials it's clear that reuse needs to become an everyday part of the construction industry. A 1980s office may be unloved, but that doesn't mean it doesn't have anything left to give. **S**

Case study: Mending a broken heart

This imposing six-storey building on the corner of Bleeding Heart Yard in London's historic Hatton Garden looks like it has stood there since Edwardian times. In fact it was only completed this year (left image: before refurbishment). What appear to be solid stone walls are perforated metal, encasing the structure of an unloved 1970s office building with an evocation of what might have stood there before. Developer Seaforth Land and architect Groupwork chose not to demolish but to transform. This imaginative refurbishment was quickly snapped up by Swiss bank Julius Baer for its UK headquarters after CEO David Durlacher rejected a string of new-build contenders for something with character and a smaller carbon footprint. (Credit: Timothy Soar for Groupwork / Seaforth)



Before



After

10 Years On – Liverpool’s Welsh Streets and the planning battle of the century

A decade on from SAVE’s bitterly fought victory in what the *Times* called ‘the planning battle of the century so far’, Jonathan Brown revisits Liverpool’s Welsh Streets and hears from residents and fellow campaigners.

A woman laughs warmly as she returns to her house on Voelas Street, seeing me try to frame trees, blooms and arched brick doorways in the last of the late summer sun.

“Everyone loves those flowers! They’re always taking pictures,” she says.

I’m photographing the Victorian “Welsh Streets” in the Dingle, Toxteth, a ladder of long terraces stepping towards the Mersey south-east of Liverpool city centre.

Tonight the Welsh Streets feel eternally serene and friendly in the rose gold evening light.

But then they always did – even in

“Bab, get down to Mum’s now, the council want to demolish our house.”
Barbara Smith, Kelvin Grove resident and Welsh Streets Home Group (WSHG) co-founder

their darkest hours, which are what I’ve come back to remember.

Barbara Smith’s late mum Tilly moved to her new council house on Kelvin Grove in 1952, a three-bedroom palace risen from the ashes of a Second World War bomb site.

From here Tilly raised eight children, while dad Jimmy commuted by bus and ferry to work at Camell Laird shipyard.

Barbara recalls the shock of finding her entire neighbourhood – 440 homes – including the birthplace of Beatles drummer Sir Ringo Starr – had been condemned apparently without consultation with anyone in their street.

“Allegedly there had been consultations since 2002 but none of us knew,” she recalls. “If the people who were pro demolition had been told the truth we wouldn’t have had this big campaign. They were promised houses they weren’t going to get.”

“So after that meeting we thought we’d better get organised, and with Nina and others we formed the Welsh Streets Homes Group (WSHG).”

I first met Barbara and Nina on 31st July 2004. This was the bridge to SAVE, whose secretary at the time was the redoubtable Adam Wilkinson. We both realised that regeneration was being distorted in Liverpool, with officials using the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott’s 15-year £2.2bn “Pathfinder” programme to build land banks that mutilated inner city communities and their historic environment.

“I came up to Liverpool and you introduced me to Nina in her house, and Elizabeth Pascoe in Edge Lane, and the people in Bootle,” recalls Adam, now chief of heritage and culture at a heritage site in Saudi Arabia.

Soon Adam and I did the same blighted city circuit with journalist Charles Clover, environment editor



Condemned: hundreds of attractive homes in Toxteth were set to be bulldozed before SAVE stepped in. (Credit: Jonathan Brown)



The Welsh Streets today. (Credit: Jonathan Brown)



“Two-into-One” restorations of the terraces of Voelas Street, Liverpool 8, pictured exactly 10 years after SAVE forced a public inquiry into their managed decline and demolition. (Credit: Jonathan Brown)

“We thought all these battles had been fought and won 25 years earlier.”

Charles Clover

of the *Daily Telegraph* and later *Sunday Times*. Over the next 10 years I would show countless journalists, politicians, TV crews and potential SAVE supporters inner Merseyside’s deteriorating historic streets.

Charles’ journalism launched the Pathfinder scandal from local news to national front pages and then TV screens, and put government ministers firmly in the frame for the excesses of their provincial administrators.

“We broke the Ringo story in the national press,” says Charles. “Then I worked out that Prescott was proposing to destroy more houses than the Luftwaffe! That gave the story a lift.”

After this SAVE’s Pathfinder campaign became ever more intense, with evictions pushing previously stable streets into terrible twilight zones, and bulldozers tearing through neighbourhoods while people still lived in adjacent houses.

We submitted evidence to House of Commons select committees, triggering an investigation by the National Audit Office (NAO). Influential opposition MP Alistair Burt was particularly helpful.

The eventual bipartisan report of the Commons Public Accounts Committee in November 2007 damned Pathfinder’s poor value, and warned existing residents were being “...priced out of the housing market altogether”.

SAVE moved to hasten Pathfinder’s obituary in April 2011 with my *Housing Scandal!* post mortem report, and worked for much of that year on

George Clarke’s Emmy- and Bafta-nominated Channel 4 documentary.

And gloriously, on 24th November 2011, housing minister Grant Shapps officially scrapped the programme, quoting the SAVE report and saying:

“Local communities in some of the most deprived areas in the country were told they would see a transformation of their areas, which in reality amounted to bulldozing buildings and knocking down neighbourhoods, pitting neighbour against neighbour and leaving people trapped in abandoned streets. This was wrong.” (Hansard, 24th November 2011, Col. 30WS)

But Shapps somehow agreed in early 2012 to a £70m “Transitional Fund”. This was supposed to revive derelict streets and wind down the



David Cameron brought his shadow cabinet to Liverpool in March 2006. SAVE led the future prime minister with Lord Heseltine and residents on a tour of demolition areas. The visit made that night's TV news and the following morning's *Today* programme on BBC Radio, on which Cameron declared himself 'baffled' by what he'd seen. (Credit: Jonathan Brown)

bulldozers, but instead refuelled them, with 5,000 homes green-lighted for demolition *after* Parliament had been read Pathfinder's death sentence.

The lion's share went to Liverpool because it had emptied the most homes, a reward for failure if ever there was one.

SAVE rushed to High Court judicial review and successfully quashed the Transitional Fund as unlawful in June 2012, under our brilliant legal team of Richard Harwood QC and Susan Ring.

SAVE fought valiant rearguard legal actions, staying demolition pending an Environmental Impact Assessment.

The only real hope now was to force a public inquiry to make the Secretary of State in London, Eric Pickles, the ultimate arbiter. We had only two routes to an inquiry, both hugely long shots. SAVE took both.

One was to make the case for "call in", a rare reserve power used in a minuscule percentage of planning cases, on average just a dozen or so of the c.400,000 applications each year.

The other was to pull a masterstroke and become Welsh Streets homeowners with a view to resisting compulsory purchase (CPO).

"I remember emailing the SAVE trustees to ask if we should buy the last occupied house on Madryn Street, number 21," recalls Will Palin, SAVE's secretary from 2008 to 2012.

"There was an almost immediate reply from the late great John Harris, which simply read, 'Of course you bloody well should'."

And so it was on 23rd September 2013, SAVE forced the climactic final act of what the *Times* called "the planning battle of the century so far".

Our long shots had hit bullseye. Secretary of State Pickles called in the application, expanding the inquiry's scope from CPO of our single home at 21 Madryn Street.

By this time many tenants promised new homes by the council had been left for a decade in streets where major repairs had ceased.

Clementine Cecil, SAVE's secretary during the 2014 public inquiry, remembers the situation.

"This was in its way a real war too, one of attrition, of a local and national bureaucracy grinding inner-city homes and communities into dust.

"Yet it brought good people

together, there was such teamwork involved, with different characters emerging at each stage, bringing their skills, passing round the baton.

"We connected brilliant people like Alec Forshaw, Fiona Deaton, Dr Gareth Carr, the young lawyer James Potts, Griff Parry, Xanthe Hamilton, Ed Vulliamy, Paul Sutton."

The public inquiry and eventual victory are another report themselves – one we published in January 2015, as the Secretary of State found decisively in favour of the Welsh Streets.

Not only did the outcome lead to the renovated and reoccupied streets I walk today, it changed national regeneration policy, scrapping "Neighbourhood Renewal Areas" and enshrining consent, making demolition a last resort.

Sir Simon Jenkins in *Country Life* called the Welsh Streets "the greatest conservation victory of the decade, showing no old street, no matter how poor or derelict, is without value".

Victory also shifted the official framing of terraced housing from "relentless rows of Victorian cottages built to house Welsh navvies" (Delyse Bailey, Liverpool Pathfinder official) to the Turner Prize-winning national treasures they became in 2015.

Eric Pickles' decision rested on SAVE's arguments "that the surviving built and cultural heritage in the Welsh Streets is of considerable significance", not only for their Beatles heritage and relation to adjacent listed buildings and conservation areas, but also as "unique survivors in terms of their stage of development" and the "influence in the development of Victorian Liverpool" of their Welsh architect Richard Owens.

A serendipitous detail is that Owens' name and extraordinary importance (he built 8,000 terraces across the city, and over 300 chapels here and across North Wales) had only come to light six months before the

Sir Simon Jenkins in *Country Life* called the Welsh Streets “the greatest conservation victory of the decade, showing no old street, no matter how poor or derelict, is without value”.

inquiry in the painstaking research of academic Dr Gareth Carr.

Owens’ mislabelled archive had languished in the Merseyside Records Office for 50 years. SAVE’s legal blocking moves had bought just enough time for the facts to emerge.

David Ireland OBE, whose help as CEO of charity Empty Homes was crucial, reflects that, “Liverpool’s experience shows how ‘regeneration’

is really open to corruption without good governance.”

It certainly galls that no official review was ever forthcoming as to how £2.2bn was spent on generating dereliction across inner city England.

Place First, a specialist developer spun out of public regeneration agency English Partnerships and private consultancy Tribal, received the entire Welsh Streets estate for a reported £1, an asset which had cost over £20m of public money to assemble.

They have done a magnificent job in remodelling and restoring streets the local council and social landlords ran into ruin.

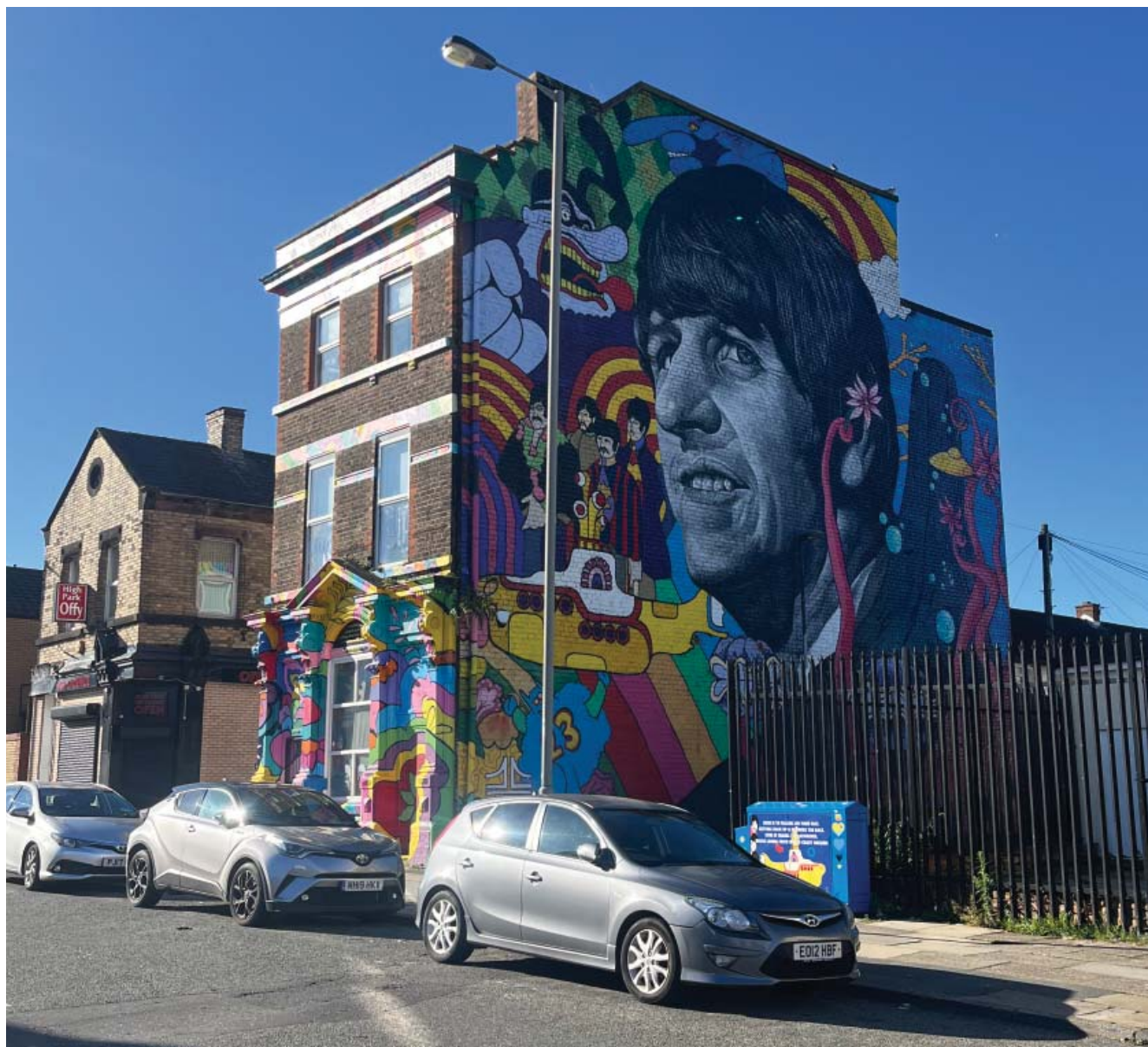
Many of the interventions we advocated have been implemented with communal gardens, “two into

one” conversions and three-storey new-builds further diversifying the house type mix.

But the tenure and ownership is far from diverse, with a single private landlord now monopolising the area, and just a handful of “affordable” social rented properties available. The fruits of regeneration were denied the original residents.

“The Welsh Streets were the turning point, without which the steamroller would have continued to go on and flatten 100,000 or more homes,” said SAVE founder Marcus Binney, whose moral clarity and principled determination held firm throughout. **S**

The former Empress pub on Admiral Grove, Toxteth, where Ringo Starr’s mother Elsie once worked as a barmaid. Starr, who grew up round the corner on Madryn Street, featured the building on the cover of his first solo album in 1970. No longer a pub, it has become a mecca for Beatles fans and the mural, by Liverpool artist John Culshaw, was unveiled last year. (Credit: Jonathan Brown)



Greater Manchester: What a story!

Manchester has long been famous for its music scene, but its historic buildings are no less dazzling. SAVE's latest report celebrates their potential – and is a timely warning, as we explain on the following pages

Central Manchester is experiencing an economic boom which is reshaping its skyline, with around 70 towers currently planned or under construction. It's an exciting time for the city, but such rapid growth comes with a risk of its remarkable built heritage being swept away – when it

could be harnessed and reused as a vital part of a sustainable 21st-century city. At the same time, the boom has not reached the region's outer boroughs, many of whose historic buildings face decay or demolition.

SAVE's latest report seeks to draw attention to the threats faced by

Greater Manchester's historic buildings – but also to their great potential. Potential to restore civic pride in struggling communities, potential to catalyse economic and social regeneration, potential to propel the conurbation towards its laudably ambitious net-zero targets.



Boom Not Bust: How Greater Manchester can build the future without destroying its past is a fully illustrated 60-page report written by SAVE and local experts Eamonn Canniffe and Mike Ashworth focusing on three areas: central Manchester, Rochdale and Oldham, those former giants of the cotton industry. It is a celebration of the many fine buildings of all ages in the conurbation as well as a call to action.

We launched it in September with an event at Manchester’s Friends’ Meeting House and two sold-out guided walks led by Eamonn and Mike. The story caught the attention of all Manchester’s main media, from BBC

radio to the *Evening News*.

We then added 18 of the buildings identified in the report to our Buildings at Risk register which generated a further round of media interest. Conservation officer Ben Dewfield-Oakley led viewers of *BBC North West Tonight* on a tour, while Buildings at Risk officer Liz Fuller was invited to do the same for Sky News.

The report also helped us forge stronger connections with local groups, councils and conservation officers. So far this has resulted in us getting involved in two significant local cases, both involving listed buildings in conservation areas. One is Reedham House, a 19th-century

carriage works threatened by a tower, and the other a collection of historic warehouses in the Shudehill area whose story you can read overleaf. Both also made headlines.

Opportunities to be seized

The report comes at a pivotal moment. The mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, and his combined authority (GMCA), working with local councils, published a 15-year strategic road map for housing, jobs and infrastructure. GMCA has also announced a “mayoral development zone” around the conurbation’s northern edge. Branded Atom Valley



Clockwise from far left: 51 Richmond Street; The Salisbury pub, Little Ireland; Albert Bridge House; Charter Street Ragged School; corner of Mason and Marshall Streets, all in Manchester (Credits: Mark Watson)



SAVE'S conservation officer Ben Dewfield-Oakley is interviewed by Juliet Phillips for BBC North West Tonight

in a reference to the city's role in splitting the atom, the authorities hope it will bring investment to the outlying boroughs.

Conservation-led regeneration has been one of the great successes of northern towns. Thirty years ago only 600 people lived in central

Manchester. Today, thanks partly to the refurbishment of warehouses and civic buildings, the city centre population has risen to around 60,000. Manchester's handsome town halls, libraries and baths have long been important community facilities. As the city once again booms, they are



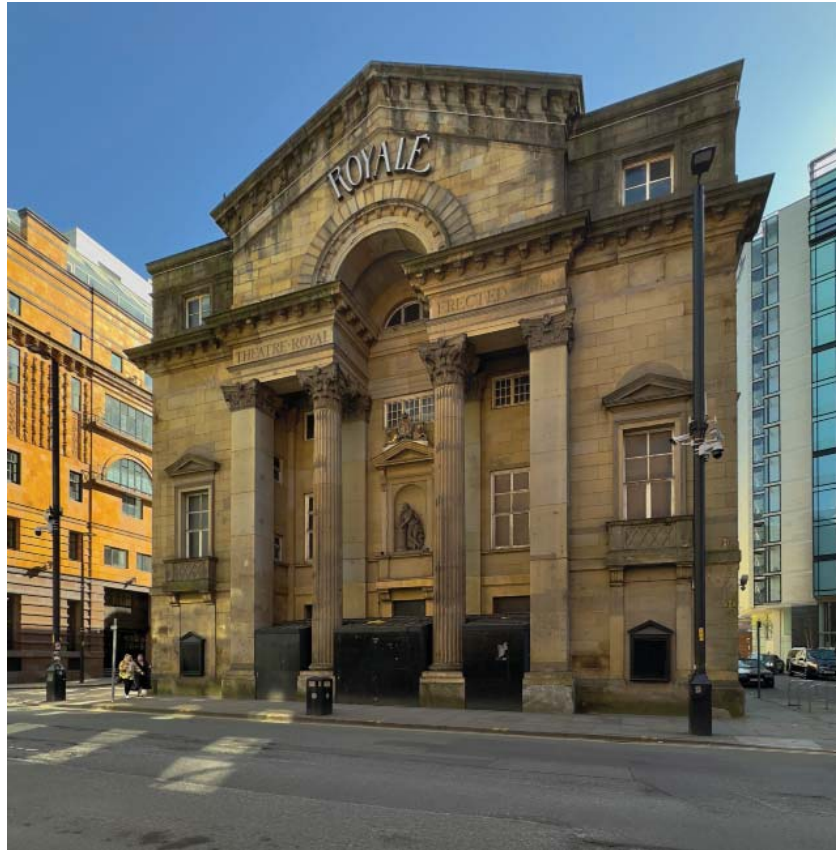
part of its distinctiveness and appeal and should be harnessed.

Manchester has always been a place of innovation. It was one of the first cities to declare a climate emergency and has pledged to be zero-carbon by 2038. To meet this target, 12 years ahead of the national deadline, property consultant JLL has warned Manchester to “embrace retrofit”. The outdated thinking that regards towers as symbols of success is being challenged like never before. Manchester has an opportunity to lead the nation. As Mayor Burnham said: “Manchester has always been famous for facing up to the future and bringing on the new quite quickly. If we do this with net zero I believe we will reap a large economic dividend for the rest of this century.”

We have sent Mayor Burnham a copy of the report, and we hope our work will unlock a groundswell of support for these buildings from every quarter. **S**



Rochdale's Duke Street Mill
(Credit: Mark Watson)



Left: Oldham Industrial Co-Operative Society – gable detail (Credit: Mark Watson); Right: Theatre Royal, Peter Street, central Manchester (Credit: Mark Watson)

Below: Former Manchester & County Bank, corner of Middleton and Featherstall Roads, Oldham (Credit: Mark Watson)



‘Missed opportunity’: Inspector throws out controversial Manchester demolition plans

No stranger to public inquiries, SAVE recently gave evidence on why a series of characterful Victorian warehouses should be retained and reused as part of an imaginative new scheme. **Ben Dewfield-Oakley** reports

SAVE welcomed the decision by a planning inspector in November to support Manchester city council’s refusal of a massive development of towers up to 19 storeys in a conservation area.

The scheme, at Shudehill in the city’s famous Northern Quarter, would have seen four Victorian warehouses bulldozed and one partly demolished, including one that is grade II listed.

Manchester City Council rejected the high-rise proposals earlier this year but the developer appealed and the case was the focus of a major public inquiry at the end of October. SAVE spoke at the inquiry in support of the council’s position, arguing that retaining the character of this historic and atmospheric quarter is a key to successful regeneration.

The inspector, David Nicholson,

issued his decision just two weeks after the inquiry closed, rejecting the appeals on the grounds of poor design and unacceptable harm to listed and unlisted buildings, as well as the Shudehill Conservation Area.

The failure to meaningfully consider retention of the site’s existing historic buildings was also cited as a major flaw of the scheme. The decision found serious omissions in the design approach of the scheme, and that the architect, “might have looked to embrace the surviving heritage rather than simply consider it a depressing constraint to redevelopment.”

By choosing to demolish the existing warehouses which make up most of the site, the inspector concluded that the scheme represented “a missed opportunity”.

The inspector concluded that the scheme represented “a missed opportunity”.

Subject to particular criticism was the approach to the scale and massing of the new development. Nicholson found that the proposals would cause “considerable harm” both to the character and to the appearance of the area, due to the siting, scale, size, height, massing, architectural detailing, street scene and skyline when experienced from the nearby streets. He concluded that: “Cumulatively, the heritage and public benefits would not come close to outweighing the combination of harms to heritage assets.”

Henrietta Billings, director of SAVE Britain’s Heritage, said: “This is great news for Manchester and an opportunity for the developer to re-think their whole approach to this site and to work with the historic warehouses rather than discarding them. It is clear from the clarity of the inspector’s report that this was a straightforward decision, and that a massive tower and slab scheme



Opposite: Historic detailing and characterful features from rear façade of Rosenfield Building

Left: The Rosenfield Building at 18–20 Dantzic Street would be gutted under the scheme, with only the façade retained as the ‘footstool’ of the 19-storey apartment building behind it © Mark Watson



BESPOKE BRIDAL & PARTY
Designer Dressmaker
BY SEWING BOX



HIGHSTREET BOOKS & RECORDS

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isn't the right approach for this location in the Northern Quarter."

Ben Dewfield-Oakley, conservation officer at SAVE Britain's Heritage, said: "As SAVE told the public inquiry, these Victorian warehouses are an important reminder of the character and historic development of the

area, once bustling with a rich mix of businesses and activity at the heart of Manchester's fabric industry. We welcome the inspector's decision and salute the city council for acting so decisively in defending this case."



Elevation drawing from Dantzic Street showing the massive and overwhelming scale of the proposed tower behind the façaded skin of the Rosenfield Building towards the bottom left centre (Image: Planning documents)

View towards the application site with the grade II listed 29 Shudehill in the centre and the row of Victoria warehouses and shops looking down Shudehill to the left © Mark Watson



Background

SAVE first raised concerns about the scheme by developer Interland Holdings Ltd with Buttress Architects back in April 2019. The plans included a new high-rise tower block of up to 19 storeys and the proposed demolition of four fine unlisted Victorian warehouses between Shudehill and Dantzic Street, and the partial demolition of the grade II listed 29 Shudehill.

We also objected to the radically larger scale and overwhelming massing of the new tower block of 175 flats proposed, all within the supposedly protected Shudehill Conservation Area.

The Shudehill Conservation Area, designated in 1987, is an area of low- to mid-rise warehouse and commercial buildings set close together on sharply angled streets creating interesting views slicing through the blocks. The smaller scale and greater number of narrow-fronted buildings along Shudehill provide a welcome counterpoint to the larger 20th- and 21st-century buildings to the north and west.

SAVE's new report, *Boom not Bust – How Greater Manchester can build the future without destroying its past*, emphasises the opportunity the city's surviving Victorian warehouses offer for redevelopment. From successful conversions to sensitive adaptations and extensions – these buildings can be converted to a range of different uses – with fascinating 18th- and 19th-century social history to trade on. The Shudehill buildings have all of these ingredients and the Inspector's decision is a welcome opportunity to send the current plans back to the drawing board. **S**

SAVE PUBLICATIONS



BOOM NOT BUST

Central Manchester is experiencing an economic boom which is reshaping its skyline, with around 70 towers currently planned or under construction. It's an exciting time for the city, but such rapid growth comes with a risk of its remarkable built heritage being swept away, with many historic buildings facing decay or demolition.

This report focuses on three areas – central Manchester, Rochdale and Oldham – examining how Greater Manchester can build the future without destroying its past.

Copies available for purchase direct from SAVE
£12.99 Friends and Saviours | £14.99 general sale

THE BATTLE FOR M&S OXFORD STREET

Marks & Spencer's plan to demolish and rebuild their flagship store in London's West End ignited public indignation and quickly became one of SAVE's biggest cases.

It was the first time heritage and sustainability have taken joint centre stage at a public inquiry and the outcome has had far-reaching consequences for development in the UK. This report tells the story of the campaign and why this landmark case matters.

Copies available for purchase direct from SAVE
£5.99 Friends and Saviours | £7.99 general sale

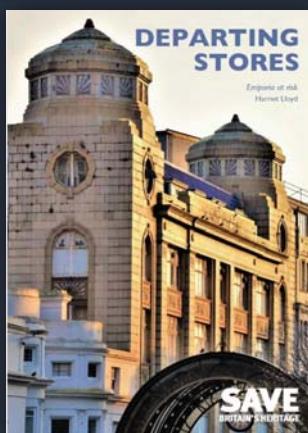


DEPARTING STORES

Britain's department stores are facing an existential crisis thanks to the pandemic and rapidly changing shopping patterns.

This up-to-the-minute report documents some of the country's finest examples, the threats they face – and what can be done to rescue and reinvent them for the 21st century.

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SAVE
BRITAIN'S HERITAGE

Casework Review

SAVED

Grimsby Ice Factory, NE Lincolnshire

We have written to support plans to repair and convert Grimsby's extraordinary Ice Factory. The grade II* listed building was once the largest ice factory in the world, but since closing in 1990, has fallen into a deleterious state. The plans, if approved, would see the buildings sensitively repaired and reused for office, events and conference space, including the retention of elements of the machinery, testifying to the unique scale and method of ice production in Grimsby.



(Credit: WMF)

New City Court Towers, Southwark, London

Following a recent public inquiry, Secretary of State Michael Gove has thrown out two concurrent proposals to replace New City Court, an 1980s office building on St Thomas' Street, Southwark, with a 37 and 26 storey tower respectively. SAVE objected to both proposals along with Historic England, which took part in the public inquiry earlier this year. The towers would have been within the protected Borough High Street Conservation Area, overshadowing

the settings of multiple listed buildings and protected local views.



(Credit: Planning Documents)

Congham Bridge, Norfolk

A retrospective planning application by government road authority National Highways for the burying of a 100-year-old former railway bridge near Congham, West Norfolk, was refused by the Local Planning Authority in October. SAVE had objected alongside campaigners the Historic Railway Estate Group on the basis the infilling was unlawful and would effectively render the historic bridge destroyed. The refusal is another blow for National Highways, which recently had to remove the illegal infill beneath another former railway bridge at Great Musgrave in Cumbria.



(Credit: HRE Group)

Garway Old School, Herefordshire

Following our three year campaign to rescue and repurpose a Victorian village school in rural Herefordshire,

we are delighted to report that the owner of Garway School has agreed to sell the building. This comes in spite of the fact he had secured permission for demolition following legal challenges led by SAVE in 2022 and 2023. The school is currently sold subject to contract with plans for conversion in the offing.



(Credit: Garway Heritage Group)

The Sandonia Cinema, Stafford

Plans for the total demolition of an unusual 1920s cinema in Stafford have been withdrawn in the face of a recommendation to refuse the scheme by Stafford Borough Council. SAVE has been supporting the campaign to save and reuse the faience-tiled foyer block as part of the redevelopment of the site. We understand the applicant has identified a possible buyer for the building who is keen to reuse the unlisted historic frontage as part of their plans.



(Credit: 28dayslater)

LOST

Selkirk House, Museum Street, London

Plans for a highly controversial commercial tower block overlooking London's famous Shaftesbury Avenue and just a few blocks from the grade I listed British Museum were approved by Camden Council's Planning Committee on 16th November 2023. The mega scheme, if built, would see the existing 1960s building known as Selkirk House demolished to make way for an even bigger new 20-storey tower. The proposals were heavily criticised by sustainability critics given the extreme carbon cost of demolition. SAVE objected to both iterations of the scheme since 2021.



(Credit: Planning Documents)

The Crooked House, Staffordshire

Once known as "Britain's wonkiest" inn, the Crooked House pub in the Staffordshire village of Himley was hit by a devastating fire on 5 August 2023, and demolished less than two days later. This came hot on the heels of the pub's sale just two months before to a private buyer. SAVE took to the airwaves following the fire and is

supporting ongoing enforcement action on the new owners by South Staffordshire Council. A strong local campaign has retained much of the fabric and the hope is the pub can rise again from the ashes.



(Credit: Wikipedia)

Former Turkish Bath House, Bishopsgate Churchyard, London

The City of London Corporation has approved divisive plans to replace a 1970s office building and podium at 55 Old Broad Street with an even larger new office tower. Just a stone's throw from Liverpool Street Station, the proposals would see the new 23 storey tower cantilevered over the kiosk-sized



(Credit: Planning Documents)

and grade II listed former Turkish Bath House at 8 Bishopsgate Churchyard. The plans had received objections from SAVE, the Victorian Society and Georgian Group, given the wider impact on the settings of four grade I listed churches.

The White House, Framlington

A rare surviving weatherboarded house dating from the 18th century in the village of Framlington near Woodbridge in Suffolk mysteriously burned down in August 2023. The news came following months of sustained pressure from East Suffolk Council, SAVE and other heritage groups which had seen previous demolition plans by owner Framlington College refused on three occasions since 2018.



(Credit: Reuben Higgins)

ONGOING

St Mary's Church, Somers Town, London

SAVE is looking into plans being considered by the Diocese of London involving the possible demolition of a grade II listed church in Somers Town in North London. Designed by Henry William Inwood in a paired back gothic style, St Mary's was built between 1824 and 1827 and has been in active use as a church and community space for almost 190 years. The building requires some structure repairs and is on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register.



St Mary's Church (Credit: Wikipedia)

Brighton & Hove Reform Synagogue, Hove, Sussex

We have written in support of a listing application submitted by the Twentieth Century Society for the Brighton and Hove Reform Synagogue in Hove. It is hoped that if listing is granted, the building will be protected from possible demolition and recognised for its architectural, artistic and historic significance. The synagogue was designed by Derek Sharp Associates and completed in 1968, and is unique in terms of its purpose and design, serving as both a Holocaust memorial and a place of worship.



Brighton & Hove Reform Synagogue (Credit: John East)

Bradley Lane Mills, Newton Abbot, Devon

Our long-running campaign to save an unlisted Mill complex in the Devon town of Newton Abbot continues. Following a public meeting held in the town with the Newton Abbot and District Civic Society and SAVE earlier in 2023, and multiple objections including from Teignbridge District

Council itself, the developer – Lovell Homes – is reworking its plans. The initial proposals would have involved demolishing the entire site for a new housing estate. We are campaigning to retain and convert key historic buildings on the site, as well as new development. The revised plans are expected by the end of 2023.



Bradley Lane Mills (Credit: NADCS)



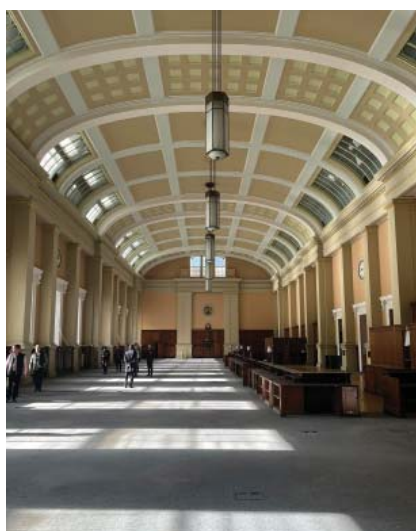
Trimley Station (Credit: SAVE)

Trimley Station, East Suffolk

We continue to work with long-standing local campaigners in the East Suffolk village of Trimley to avert the collapse of the 1890s station building. The building is now in a very poor condition, following a lack of any basic maintenance by leasehold owner and rail operator Greater Anglia. The Railway Heritage Trust and East Suffolk Council are now proactively involved, with plans for repairs now looking increasingly likely.

The Custom House, City of London

In October, we took part in a stakeholder engagement day organised by the new owners of London's Custom House in the City of London. The day focused on new plans to convert the former home of HMRC into a high-end hotel. The Georgian landmark is grade I listed and contains in its west wing the first purpose-built offices constructed in London, and



The Custom House (Credit: SAVE)

several other deeply historic internal rooms, including the famous Long Room. SAVE attended alongside the Georgian Group and Historic England, with further details on the plans due in 2024. SAVE supported the Georgian Group in the successful 2022 public inquiry against the exclusive hotel plans. Our priority remains ensuring meaningful public access to the state rooms and terraces.

15 Southwark Street, Southwark, London



15 Southwark Street (Credit: Ptolemy Dean)

Proposals to take down a historic Hop Warehouse building in Bermondsey were sadly approved by Southwark Council following strong objections from SAVE and community groups. SAVE gave evidence at the planning committee in early November stating the proposals should not be considered as a non-material change to previously approved plans for the wider Landmark Court site. We are now responding to a further application to rebuild the façade to new designs to fit a new larger building behind. **S**

Revolutionary force

Pioneering architect Yasmeeen Lari is leading the way in heritage conservation and zero-carbon design in Pakistan – 60 years after her career began. Professor **Susan Roaf** takes up the story

The highest honour in UK architecture – the Royal Gold Medal – was presented this year to 82-year-old Yasmeeen Lari, Pakistan’s first female architect and a “revolutionary force” in the nation of her birth.

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) which awards the medal on behalf of the monarch said in its citation: “She has shown us how architecture changes lives for the better... She has had immeasurable influence on the trajectory of architecture and humanitarian work in Pakistan.”

Yet it was only since she left her glittering commercial career behind that Dr Lari’s most revolutionary work in heritage and climate resilience began.

Yasmeeen Lari was born in Pakistan under the Raj in 1941, to a high-level Indian civil servant father and a deeply religious mother. Her childhood was one of privilege, based largely in Lahore and moving with the entire family and their entourage to the cooler mountain resorts to the north to avoid the scorching summer months. Yasmeeen went on to study architecture at the Oxford School of Architecture (now part of Oxford Brookes University), gaining her degree there in 1963, and becoming a full member of the RIBA in 1969. In England she immersed herself in Oxford life and the exciting developments around modern western architecture, seldom referencing the vernacular buildings of her own country.

She married Suhail Zaheer Lari, a distant cousin, who was studying PPE at Oxford. The couple moved to Karachi where he returned to work in his family’s insurance company. By 1980 she was immersed in the world of corporate architecture, with several large commissions kick-starting her stellar career. In 1978 she had become President of the Institute of Architects Pakistan and in 1983 she was elected as the first chair of Pakistan Council of Architects and Town Planners (PCATP).

What makes a highly successful commercial architect eventually turn their back on the money and the glamour associated with buildings designed in the international style? Perhaps they did not feel for her in

Yasmeeen Lari at the Women’s Centre in Sindh, a bamboo stilted community space she designed after floods in 2011
All pictures: © Heritage Foundation of Pakistan





Pakistan State Oil HQ, Karachi, one of Lari's early projects from the 1980s

Pakistan as comfortable or look as beautiful as the many extraordinary vernacular buildings she lived among in Lahore and Karachi. She began to understand that “good design” was not exclusively a Western attribute of buildings, or the sole right of the wealthy. The traditional master craftsmen of the different regions of Pakistan built beautiful structures made from local materials, and adapted to their local climates, often using sophisticated, passive systems to keep people comfortable, even during extremely hot and cold seasons.

Her “second career” saw her become a successful heritage architect, while still largely designing for elite clients. Drawing on family funds in 1980 she and Suhail established the Heritage Foundation of Pakistan to research and document Pakistan’s cultural heritage. Their seminal book on the *Traditional Architecture of Thatta* was written and illustrated by Yasmeen, Suhail and her architectural studio.

In 2000 Yasmeen closed her practice and “retired”, continuing

Right: Much of Lari's conservation work has been focused on the Makli Necropolis, a World Heritage Site near the southern city of Thatta which has more than half a million tombs, including the C15th tomb of Jam Nizam al Din (centre) and the C17th tomb of Sultan Ibrahim (top and bottom, showing installation of glazed Kashi tiles)

only as a consultant on conservation projects at Makli and the Lahore Fort, both World Heritage Sites. The foundation continued to record, catalogue and publish on many of the 19th- and 20th-century British colonial and post-colonial buildings of note in Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar with much of their work published in guide books. She was by then an international expert on Pakistani vernacular architecture and advisor to Unesco for the Lahore Fort. She also threw herself into lobbying to save many of the fast-disappearing historic buildings, leading to more than 600 buildings of the colonial period catalogued by the Heritage Foundation being listed under the 1994 Sindh Preservation Act.

The most recent phase of her extraordinary career followed the tragedy of the 2005 Kashmir earthquake in which an estimated 100,000 people died. Seeing first-hand the devastation across the region, she was able to leverage the 500,000 rupees (c. £1,500) from the Heritage Foundation Trust to enable a host of volunteers, students and young architects from Pakistan and abroad to help rebuild lives and communities there. Contributions in kind from well-wishers were used for this work and built on with donations from international organisations. However, growing wary about the pitfalls of depending too much on the international colonial charity model, she launched BASA (Barefoot Social Architecture), a field-based operating system involving the establishment of

centres focusing on training local artisans and what she dubs Barefoot Eco Entrepreneurs (BEE).

In 2020 Yasmeen’s Zero Carbon YouTube channel uploaded step-by-step video tutorials for local NGOs to inform and encourage self-building in rural communities. Since the devastating 2022 flood in Pakistan, she has worked tirelessly to develop and promote ideas of resilient building, educating as many as possible within the affected communities on how to protect themselves from the impacts of extreme climate events. Her current target is to rehabilitate one million flood-affected households by December 2024, building self-generated resilient settlements with climate-safer buildings. **S**



Sir Michael Hopkins

(1935 – 2023)

An appreciation by **Marcus Binney**

Michael Hopkins was a giant of high tech architecture, believing firmly that the structure should be visible so the design of the building could be grasped immediately, inside often as well as outside.

He produced buildings with brilliant festive and lively silhouettes which added excitement to their positions in both town and country.

Michael worked in close partnership with his architect wife Patty and together they created a formidable body of remarkable and beautiful work.

He was one of the great architects of his age and it is good increasingly to read of Foster, Rogers and Hopkins rather than Foster, Rogers and Stirling, as the trio of 20th-century architects, following on from Wright, Corbusier and Mies.

SAVE first encountered his thoughtful and meticulous 1950s approach with Bracken House, the *Financial Times* building. Standing opposite St Paul's it was a traditional composition paying homage to the cathedral.

When the *FT* moved out in the 1980s it became the first post-war building in England to be listed. Hopkins produced an ingenious solution, retaining the two classical facades as "bookends" for a steel and glass construction forming a new centrepiece with the main entrance in place of the old printing works that had stood in the middle of the previous building. (Fittingly, the *FT* returned in 2019.)

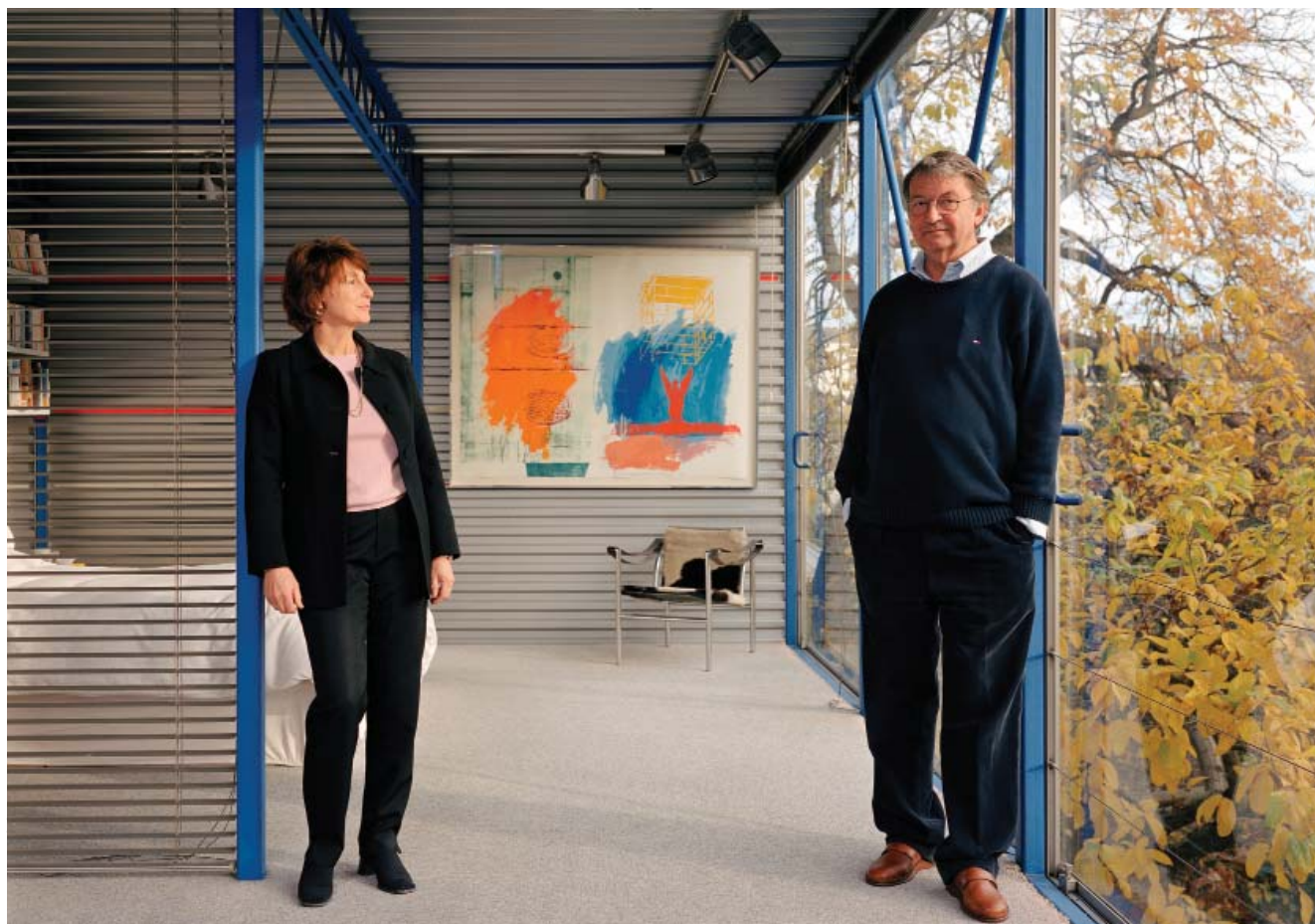
Hopkins was a modernist but could be a master of marrying the old with the new. So it was with the carefully

chosen warm Sussex brickwork for the new opera house at Glyndebourne which matched the red brick of the grand country house it stands next to. Inside he built a traditional horseshoe amphitheatre with tiers of balconies and boxes ringing the stalls below.

Acousticians by then realised that the ornament on the balcony fronts in 18th- and 19th-century opera houses were not mere decoration but actually had an important function in reflecting the voices of the singers. Hopkins was not willing to revert to cherubs and lamps to do this and instead, with the help of the engineers, sculpted each balcony front on a different vertical curve to best make use of the voices.

At Broughton Hall in Yorkshire he contributed to the extraordinary transformation of the estate buildings,

Patty and Michael Hopkins in the Hampstead house they designed for themselves (Credit: Tom Miller / NPG)



started by Roger Tempest the owner, into a highly popular centre for small enterprises. These were ranged round the old walled kitchen garden and Hopkins added a brilliant flourish in the form of a perfect modernist pavilion in the manner of Mies van der Rohe.

This was all sheet glass and a homage to the perfect symmetry of ancient temples owing much of its beauty to its exquisite proportions. While standing at the centre of the little village Tempest had created it nonetheless conformed to the scale of the vernacular buildings around.

At Norwich Hopkins carried out a thoughtful and inventive remodelling of the old Refectory, building on one side of the Medieval cloister. He retained the Gothic walls but introduced a new roof supported by an athletic series of flying ribs which was wholly modern in its appearance.

By marrying a masterful eye for proportion, and a sense of lightness as well as monumentality when he chose, Hopkins ennobled almost every site he worked on. His Portcullis House has a glass-roofed double atrium (see cover) which immediately made a gathering point for MPs on a far larger scale than other breakout spaces at Parliament, and Hopkins designed every aspect of the interior including desks, cupboards and woodwork.

Outside he crowned the building with a series of cotton reel chimneys which serve the purpose of air conditioning vents and were intended to be gilded, a flamboyant gesture appropriate to the richness of Parliament itself. The cavernous new Jubilee line station below has a drama worthy of Piranesi.

The most outstanding quality of Michael Hopkins buildings is their sheer beauty. Exquisite in detail and proportion and enthralling in their adventurous engineering. He gave such concentrated thought to all his projects refining them repeatedly to achieve the perfect result. **S**



Glyndebourne Opera House, completed 1994, viewed from the gardens. (Credit: Martin Charles / RIBA Collections)



Glyndebourne Opera House, auditorium interior (Credit: Martin Charles / RIBA Collections)



The two-storey atrium of Portcullis House, Westminster, as it was when completed in 1999 (Credit: Richard Davies)



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Photo: Ayr Railway Station, South Ayrshire

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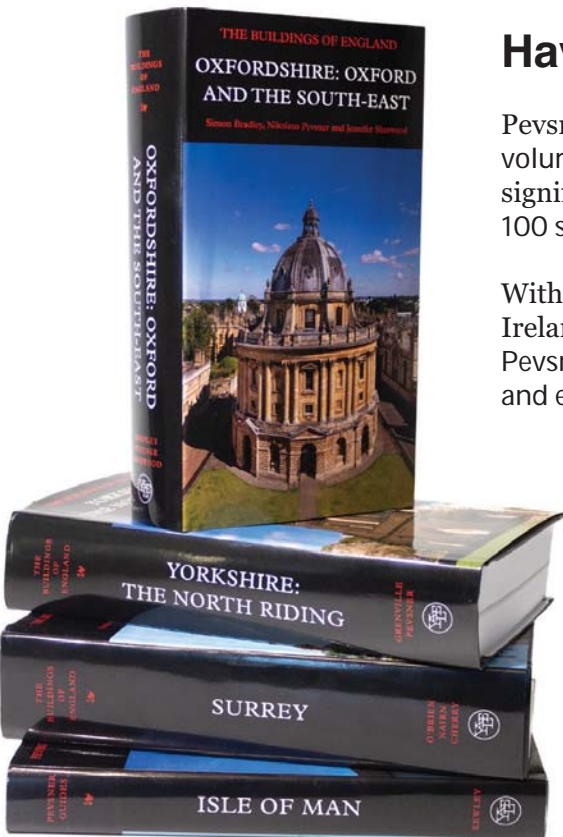


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Buildings at Risk

Furnishing a future on the High Street

For years Chatham House was at the heart of bustling Medway life before it fell into decline and was added to our Buildings at Risk register. Happily it has now been restored. **Liz Fuller** uncovers a story of regeneration and rediscovery

The rescue of Chatham House, a grade II*-listed house in Rochester, has been the work of many years, many hands and a combination of Historic England and private funding. Its most recent use was as the furniture department of a family-owned shop, but its revival has been part of a wider scheme which has revealed the history of this previously little-known corner of the Kent town.

Having stood empty for decades and despite receiving some grant support in the early 2000s, it was the inclusion of the house in a government-funded £1.6m High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) in 2020 that has proved truly transformative. Now substantially restored, Chatham House stands among a collection of other buildings which have also received funding to promote regeneration and to improve understanding of this fascinating area.

Built in around 1730 as a handsome residence for the owner of a brewing business, the house stands at 351 High Street, while the brewing premises were located immediately behind it on a lane running down to the Medway. Standing in the thin strip of development running between Rochester and Chatham – known as Chatham Intra – with the famous former Royal Naval dockyard in Chatham a short distance away, the brewery had no shortage of thirsty customers for its beer. It was clearly a

good arrangement as the house and brewery were in the same use for nearly 200 years until brewing ceased on site in 1912. After a short period during which the house and brewery buildings behind it were used as a furniture repository, they were taken on to be used as the furniture department of Featherstones Ltd, a local family business with multiple buildings housing different departments along the high street.

Sheila Featherstone, a member of the family and still involved in the business, has been closely involved in the project to restore the house. She explains how John Thomas Featherstone, who founded the business as a clothing club, brought it to the high street in 1904 and in the 1920s “took over Chatham House as his furnishings department due to the expansion of his business”. His business was based on making



Chatham House as it was in March 2008. (Credit: Medway Council)

credit available to all, being “providers to the thrifty” as Sheila puts it, thus enabling access to a range of goods that might otherwise be out of reach. However, by the 1980s out-of-town shopping was reducing customers on the high street and the closure of the dockyard in 1984 is described by Sheila as “a killer blow” which the shop could not survive.

Standing empty, the condition of the house required vigilance and work was done to try to hold off terminal decline. Sheila recalls that “buckets caught the leaks from the roof [and] panelling infested with dry rot was removed”. With the help of some grant

aid from the Townscape Heritage Initiative Scheme, the 1930s shop front, which had been wrapped around the frontage, was removed in 2003 and the roof was repaired in 2004. These were significant pieces of work but without a plan that would enable the building to be fully brought back into use, the building remained a diminished version of its former self with a huge amount of restoration work needing to be done. It was added to SAVE’s Buildings at Risk register in May 2009 and appeared in that year’s Buildings at Risk catalogue, *All We Need is Love*.

A decade later, in late 2019,

Medway Council approached the family to discuss including the house as part of the HSHAZ funding bid for the Old High Street Intra area. Work commenced on the restoration of the exterior in December 2021, and was completed in time for Heritage Open Days in September 2022, the speed dictated by the time-limited funding source. The project team, led by Sheila and supported by Peter Moorcraft and Christopher Griffin, worked closely with Historic England, Anthony Swaine Architecture and Carden & Godfrey, and a range of local specialist contractors.

The aim of the four-year £95m government-funded national HSHAZ project run by Historic England with local partners is to provide a social, economic and cultural stimulus to more than 60 high streets across the country. By tapping into the rich but dilapidated and disused stock of historic buildings on high streets, the idea is to bring them back into use and create public spaces with character which work as centres of community activity and interaction. While four years sounds a long time, the process of identifying the right sites, scoping, allocating funds, finding partners and overseeing the works must have been demanding. With projects nationwide completing next year, it will be interesting to take stock of what has been achieved and what lessons have been learnt.

The project to restore Chatham House is a useful case in point. It is one part of a wider project involving its neighbouring historic buildings. This includes The Ship Inn next door (grade II-listed), which sold beer from the brewery behind Chatham House. It is also considered to be one of the earliest LGBTQ+ venues in the country. Across the road is a rare Georgian Jewish burial ground (grade I-registered park and garden) which forms a group with the



Rear section of Chatham House adjoining brewery buildings, March 2007.
(Credit: Medway Council)

Chatham Memorial Synagogue (grade II*). Research into the shared history of all these buildings has been commemorated with a joint event on Holocaust Memorial Day, remembering those from both communities who were persecuted by the Nazis. A number of other nearby buildings have also received grant funding to reinstate architectural features and enable more substantial work to bring them back into use.

Historic England has also added to the historic record of what was acknowledged as an underappreciated area. The brewery buildings, Jewish cemetery and Cooks Cottage have been added to the National Heritage List for England with lengthy and interesting

entries. Images have been added to the listings and there are links to a video on the history of the area and the work of the High Street Heritage Action Zone – a very useful departure from usual listing practice. Elsewhere on Historic England’s site you will find information about the Chatham Intra HSHAZ and more detailed history of the area including a Historic Area Assessment giving even greater insight into this intriguing enclave.

What of the future? Work is almost complete at Chatham House and it will soon be ready to welcome new tenants. The aim of the Old High Street Intra HSHAZ was to regenerate the conservation area through a combination of capital works and

community-driven projects including cultural activities to enhance awareness of the area’s special heritage and to establish a sustainable destination of local independent businesses and creative industries. Accordingly, the prospective tenants at Chatham House will be arts or cultural organisations which work with the community. Opposite the house stands an area that was once its garden with a large Gothick-style folly (grade II). As part of the next steps of the area’s regeneration, both the folly and the garden will be restored and opened up, creating a public amenity and meeting point and reuniting house and garden. **S**



Chatham House after the restoration project was complete in September 2022. (Credit: Medway Council)



Yore Mill, Aysgarth, Yorkshire by Eveleigh Photography

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The Giant Cause

Northern Ireland has a fantastic built heritage but it has been severely neglected. It's time that changed, writes **Lydia Franklin**

Shockingly underfunded and undervalued, Northern Ireland's historic buildings fight the odds for their survival. At the forefront of the battle is the Ulster Architectural Heritage (UAH), an independent organisation which has campaigned for over 50 years for historic buildings in Northern Ireland and the nine counties of Ulster.

In conversation with the UAH's heritage projects officer, Sebastian

“If funding is the key to saving Northern Ireland's heritage, it is time to unlock the wealth of challenges that afflict the country's historic buildings.”

Graham, it became blazingly apparent just how disadvantaged historic buildings are in Northern Ireland. While funding for the historic environment hits 'an all-time low', as Graham observed, the value placed in historic buildings plummets with it.

If funding is the key to saving Northern Ireland's heritage, it is time to unlock the wealth of challenges that afflict the country's historic buildings.

Northern Ireland's capital boomed during the 19th century with fast-growing linen and shipbuilding industries, and the architectural survivals from this period are magnificent. These are handsome, sandstone buildings often with opulent carvings and arched windows.

Where these buildings are allowed

“Land banking in Belfast city centre is a major issue especially in North Street and Royal Avenue. Many of these key historic buildings are lying empty and their condition is deteriorating.”
*Sebastian Graham,
UAH heritage projects officer*

to shine, they do so brilliantly in Belfast. Like a richly ornamented chocolate box, the late 19th-century Italianate bank building, now known as the Merchant Hotel, has become a coveted spot for a luxurious night's stay in the city.

Just around the corner is Riddel's Warehouse, built in 1867 for the

The former Ulster Bank building (c.1857–60) which has been in use as a hotel since 2006. Credit: Howard Franklin



“Ulster Architectural Heritage reveal that the number of historic buildings on Northern Ireland’s Heritage at Risk register have almost doubled over the last three years, from 600 in 2020 to 1,098 in 2023.”

ironmongers John Riddel & Co, with a nearly untouched lofty and atmospheric interior that steps you right back in time. This rare survival is currently being carefully and thoughtfully restored by the Hearth Historic Buildings Trust who are working to secure a viable future for the building.

And yet these are anomalies for Belfast. The Old Town Hall occupies a prominent spot within the city and is a fine architectural specimen, and yet it has recently been highlighted on SAVE’s Buildings at Risk register.

A walk around Belfast’s city centre reveals many more vacant and visibly uncared for historic buildings. Take, for example, the neglected North Street just west of Belfast’s Cathedral Quarter which was once Belfast’s historic trading centre and has recently emerged as a thriving culture and arts hub. In 2016, three Victorian buildings from Nos 95 to 107 North Street were reduced to rubble, leaving the city’s impressive, art deco Bank of Ireland marooned and deprived of any

immediate urban context. The now demolished buildings were once pleasing additions to the street; mismatched but rhythmically in tune with one another. They were calling out for some care and attention but instead were served with demolition just days before their listing application was to be reviewed. Now, no amount of bright and eye-catching street art can distract from the gaping plot of land which has been left abandoned along with the plans to redevelop this part of Belfast after funding was withdrawn.

The future is not looking bright for those building that have managed to survive on North Street either. The once striking grade B1 listed art deco arcade, built in the 1930s, is now little more than a shell after an arson attack in 2004. It currently faces potential demolition and facadism as part of the contentious development plan for Belfast’s Cathedral Quarter, named “Tribeca Belfast”.

Why has so much of Northern Ireland’s architectural heritage been left shuttered and abandoned, poised for decay or demolition? Rita Harkin, an authority on conservation in Northern Ireland, said it best when she wrote, “In ... the post-conflict environment, a culture has emerged that prioritises short-term profit over long-term sustainable regeneration”. This, she stated, has been more damaging to Northern Ireland’s built



*The now lost 107 North Street in 2015.
Credit: William Murphy.*

environment than the Troubles themselves. In Belfast, as the city hurried to recover itself from the conflict, the door was flung wide open to any and all development.

Today, planners have struggled to shed this attitude that all development is good development, to the direct detriment of the area’s historic fabric. This attitude proliferated to Northern Ireland’s rural dwellings too, fostered by a government scheme run widely in the late 1990s and early 2000s known as the Replacement Dwelling Scheme. This granted owners a sum of £30,000 (VAT-free) to knock down an old rural dwelling, often a vernacular cottage, and build a brand new one on its grave.

In 2015, all funding from Northern Ireland’s central government through the listed building grant aid was suspended. When funding resumed in 2016-17 following departmental restructuring, it was cut from £4.6m to £500,000 for all listed buildings in Northern Ireland. Presently, funding

*Long gone – Metropole Building (c.1935)
needlessly demolished in 2015.
Credit: William Murphy,*





streams have been closed for 2023-24 until May, when it reopens for the following year. Even then, the funding which is available is vastly inadequate. The £6,000 available for restoring a historic roof is spent, as Graham highlighted, on scaffolding and “that’s before you even touch the building”.

This puts the financial burden of maintaining listed buildings heavily on the shoulders of owners. Those with a desire to restore a historic building are often priced out of doing so. Graham observes that this especially shuts the

door in the face of a younger generation who might be interested in beginning a heritage project.

The overriding problem across Northern Ireland is the lack of value that is placed in the country’s historic buildings. This goes hand in hand with a lack of funding, but it seems at times those lines get conveniently blurred.

The UAH, for example, have found that local councils are “reluctant” to serve Urgent Works Notices even when directly called on to do so. This follows

the devolution of planning powers from central government to the local councils in 2015. As a “discretionary power” now held by the councils, too much emphasis has been placed on “discretionary” as a get-out-of-jail-free card. However, as councils have rebutted, when they were granted these powers in 2015, they did not receive any funding to support them.

And so, we circle back again to the dearth of funding for the historic environment. An unwillingness to



Riddel's Warehouse (c.1867) in 2023. Credit: Howard Franklin.



Somehow still standing today, the Garfield Buildings (c.1895-1896) on 2-14 Lower Garfield Street and 56-60 North Street, Belfast City Centre. Credit: Howard Franklin.

serve Urgent Works Notices leaves vacant and deteriorating buildings in purgatory. Graham highlighted that these powers should be seen as positive forces to save vulnerable historic buildings and stimulate change. It is time this is seen more widely as a good and worthy cause.

As the number of listed buildings on Northern Ireland's Heritage at Risk register climbs upwards, this is a critical stage for Northern Ireland's built heritage. It is vital that the heritage sector receives greater funding to alleviate the financial strain placed on owners, to help free historic buildings from the perception of being a burden and to promote the now crucial message of sustainable reuse.

It is time to make some noise about the value of Northern Ireland's historic buildings and to champion what we have left – while there is still time. **S**



Interior of Riddell's Warehouse. The Hearth Historic Buildings Trust plans to sensitively transform this rare survival into a creative hub with performance space, exhibitions, café and co-working. (Credit: Gary Quigg Photography)



The Old Town Hall in Belfast City Centre (c.1869-71), currently vacant and deteriorating. (Credit: Howard Franklin)

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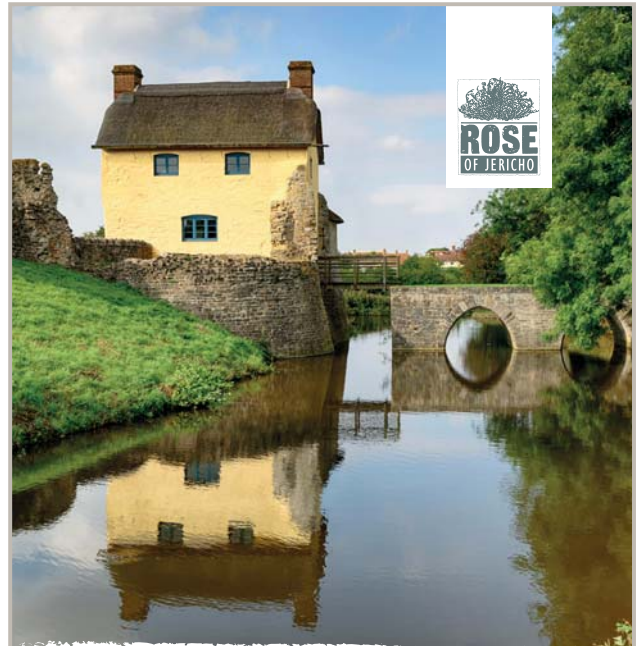
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Voices from the frontline

Spotlight on a local campaign: Seafield House, Ayr

Seafield House in south-west Scotland was derelict for years but after a dogged campaign and the resolve of a local developer it reopened as a hotel this year. SAVE talks to Patrick Lorimer, chair of the Friends of Seafield House which was dissolved in October after successfully bringing the Category B listed building back from the brink

Q: Tell us about the building and why a campaign was needed

Seafield House was the home of the engineer Sir William Arrol (1839–1913, pictured), best known for his innovative construction of the Forth Bridge and the steel superstructure of Tower Bridge in London. It was designed in the 1880s by Clarke & Bell with Sir William's hand evident. It was a hospital for many years but became surplus to the needs of its owner, NHS Ayrshire & Arran, which – disregarding the responsibilities that stewardship of a listed building entails – left it abandoned while making attempts to secure listed building consent (LBC) to demolish. A fire in 2008 caused significant damage. But with Sir William's steel superstructure at its core, the fabric was strong. Seafield House continued to stand as a poignant reminder of its illustrious past.

Q: How did the campaign get started?

Rosemary Paterson, a local resident, organised a petition of over 200 signatories. This led to listed building consent not being granted and to Friends of Seafield House (FoSH) being set up as a voluntary association by a group of Ayr, Ayrshire and Glasgow residents, all of whom had a personal connection to the building. We all shared the same aim: Seafield House must be saved. We called a steering group meeting, drew up a founding deed and made a site visit.

Q: How did SAVE help your campaign?

From the first meeting of the steering group on 15 October 2012 that led to FoSH being founded, SAVE was with us. Marcus Binney led the site visit that took place before the meeting,

which he opened, and has been constant throughout our campaign. Clem Cecil, former SAVE director, and now Henrietta Billings, the present director, have supported us strategically and by sharing SAVE's expertise, helping us in so many ways. Our campaign message was simple: Seafield House can be saved. In making Seafield House its Building of the Month in September 2013, our national profile was established early in the campaign.

Q: What are your favourite things about the building?

Its iconic nature in light of its ownership and its significance within the historic landscape of Ayr. I love that Sir William had a third tap on his bathtub for sea water, which he had pumped up from the shoreline for its health-giving properties.

Below: Seafield House has just opened as apartments (copyright Econstruct) after a comprehensive restoration following a devastating fire (opposite page, right); Opposite page left: The campaigners rally round



Q: How did you keep the momentum going?

We kept the momentum going through a mixture of high-visibility events and actions, locally and nationally. We secured meetings with the health board chair and CEO and worked positively to persuade and advocate. Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) picked up our case, with the late Chic Brodie MSP securing a members’ debate and John Scott MSP hosting an exhibition in the Scottish Parliament. Following local developer Econstruct’s purchase in October 2014, we worked to support its directors Robin Ghosh and Derek Shennan in their epic challenge to return Seafield House to residential use. Robin’s personal connection was that his late father had been a Seafield Hospital consultant. This was his inspiration throughout.

Q: What were the high points?

There were many. Econstruct’s purchase is number one followed by Sir William’s portrait being added to Tower Bridge’s gallery. Others include: assisting with Clydesdale Bank’s first polymer bank note in 2015 with images of Sir William and the Forth Bridge; the bridge’s inscription by Unesco as

Patrick Lorimer’s top tips for other campaigns

First up:

Agree on a memorable name (with crisp acronym if it has to be lengthy). Agree founding principles to set out your campaign aims (using a voluntary body template). Establish an entity (with help from a friendly lawyer if needed) that enables you to set up a bank account. Set up a website (ours on free-to-use WordPress) and email address – and get the word out!

Be:

- Visible
- Clear and consistent
- Fleet of foot
- Patient and persistent
- Resourceful
- Make friends wherever you can – public meetings, exhibitions
- Use social media to good end – it enables you to forge links in the likeliest and unlikeliest of places

a World Heritage Site; an exhibition co-curated with South Ayrshire Museums & Galleries, *Spanning the Centuries: Sir William Arrol’s Legacy in Steel, Stone and Culture*; and Econstruct’s work winning a Herald Property Award.

Q: Were there low points?

Yes. They stemmed in the main from health board intransigence. Their second failed attempt to sell the building left us in disbelief and conveniently gave a clear case for LBC to demolish. Our focus had to be on publicly and privately addressing the

board’s negative attitude. Its most recent chair warmed to the idea for saving Seafield, but we had to make the case repeatedly. **S**



Events

Over this last year, SAVE has held 16 events all over the country. The programme ranged from our annual lecture given by Simon Sturgis at the RA in March and the annual Buildings

at Risk launch to our walking tours in Greater Manchester when we launched our new report, *Boom not Bust*. We also visited Great Yarmouth, toured Norwich's best historic pubs, visited

some of London Underground's best stations and teamed up with the London Festival of Architecture to explore the West End. Here are some of the highlights. **S**





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