

# **THE EAST END PRESERVATION SOCIETY**

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Dear Mr Fraser-Lim

## **Objection to application ref: 2014/ 0323 (Nos 48-76 Dalston Lane E8 3AH)**

We would like to register our objection to this application for the complete demolition of 48-76 Dalston Lane. These early nineteenth-century buildings all fall within the Dalston Lane West Conservation Area and are identified as buildings of townscape merit within your own Conservation Area Appraisal.

### **Neglect**

The long-term, deliberate, neglect of these buildings has resulted in their current poor condition. The NPPF is clear that their deteriorated state should not be considered in deciding an application for the demolition, as it says in paragraph 126:

*Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of or damage to a heritage asset the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.*

### **Policy**

In addition to your Core Strategy which promotes the preservation of historic buildings and especially buildings of townscape merit in conservation areas, your Council published Planning and Design Guidance for Dalston Lane Terrace in 2009. This document very specifically detailed the value of these buildings to Dalston and the additional value their restoration would bring to the area.

### **The Application**

The scheme proposed in 2012 (ref: 2012/1739) was drawn up without a full

understanding of the structural condition of this terrace. We are concerned the recent structural assessment, which has concluded that the facades could not be retained, is predicated on the demanding structural requirements of this previous scheme.

It is surprising that five years ago the buildings were considered repairable but now are not. The findings in the structural report do not note any very recent change to their condition and generally attribute the failings to the long-term neglect and the construction methods and materials of the early nineteenth-century. Their criticisms of the quality of the materials (the use of non-hydraulic lime mortars for example) used in the buildings' construction and the method of their construction are common to many historic buildings surviving throughout the capital and as such should not in themselves be reasons that count against the terrace's repair and re-use.

It appears that the structural report condemning the terrace has been carried out subsequent to the development of the scheme. As a result the heritage statement makes no attempt to justify the complete demolition and instead emphasises the aesthetic value of the buildings and the case for the repair of their facades:

*'The remaining properties are in a very poor condition, but they are of sufficient intrinsic interest and group value to justify their rescue.'*

The structural engineer's statement that the retail floor space of the buildings needs to be opened up in order to attract tenants, necessitating a steel frame and the demolition of the shops' pilasters and piers, is not, in our view, a relevant consideration. Small retail units would not only be consistent with the historic character of the buildings but have been proven elsewhere in London (Soho, Covent Garden or Broadway Market) to be hugely successful and flexible.

The application includes proposals for adding a storey to existing buildings - something that is clearly inappropriate for a terrace in this fragile condition. This all suggests that the proposals are wrong and need revision.

### **Historic and Aesthetic Value**

Dalston Lane is an important survival from the early nineteenth century which, despite years of neglect, retains its cohesive character and contributes positively to the surrounding conservation area. Its restoration would enhance and revive this historic thoroughfare and is long overdue. The replication of these buildings is no substitute for their retention and it is your Council's duty to carry out the necessarily work of restoring as much fabric as is physically possible. It is our experience that, despite the doubts of many structural engineers, almost any building can be repaired and rehabilitated and, therefore, complete demolition should not in this case be considered an option.

In light of the above concerns we urge you to **refuse** this application.

Yours sincerely,  
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cc The Georgian Group  
Hackney Society  
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