



2 August 2016

Press release: Destruction of Liverpool's global heritage set to continue as Court of Appeal rejects SAVE's call to save Lime Street

The reprieve granted for the demolition of the 1912 Futurist Cinema and neighbouring historic buildings has been ended by the Court of Appeal.

Despite the very recent decision by UNESCO to keep Liverpool on the global heritage 'at risk list', and the threat that the city could lose its World Heritage status due to harmful new development, the Court of Appeal rejected our appeal in a judgment issued on Tuesday 2 August.

We are now considering our options for appealing to the Supreme Court.

SAVE has been fiercely opposing plans to demolish an entire row of historic buildings – including the 1912 façade of the Futurist Cinema. The buildings lie between two listed Victorian pubs and together frame the view of the grand portico of one of Britain's finest neo-classical buildings, St George's Hall, from the buffer zone of the World Heritage Site.

SAVE considers the major demolition and large-scale repetitive replacement façade, overlaid with a ghost image of the lost Futurist façade to be inappropriate and harmful. The bulk of the 11 storey student accommodation immediately behind will be highly intrusive.

We have written to Karen Bradley, the new Secretary of State for the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), to request she call a summit meeting to address the serious issue of Liverpool's World Heritage Site.

SAVE has also drawn up plans showing how these buildings could be refurbished and adapted to provide a hotel, student accommodation and shops – as proposed by the developers wishing to clear the site. Our campaign to save Lime Street is supported by the Merseyside Civic Society, the Cinema Theatres Association and the Victorian Society, and a public petition to Save the Futurist Cinema gathered over 4,000 signatures.

Henrietta Billings, Director of SAVE says: "This case raises matters of national importance about the treatment of our heritage sites and the role of the UK government and its heritage advisers, as well as local councils in that process – which is why we are calling on the Secretary of State to act.

“We are pleased that through our actions so far we have been able to draw national and international attention to what is happening in Liverpool – a debate that is long overdue. Now we are currently assessing our options for appealing the decision in the Supreme Court.”

Marcus Binney, President of SAVE says: “The proposals are just not worthy of such an important location – one of the main gateways to the World Heritage site.

“We recognize the good work done in Liverpool on buildings at risk recently, including the repair and conversion of Jesse Hartley's north warehouse at Stanley Dock to a hotel and conference centre; the conversion of the Royal Insurance Building and the White Star Line Building, both long vacant, as hotels; the restoration and conversion of St Andrew's Church, Rodney Street as student accommodation and the repair and conversion of the former Conservative Club on Dale Street as a hotel. Yet we continue to believe that the major demolition of Lime Street and a new dull 11 storey tower will be a gross intrusion into the historic townscape.”

At the UNESCO World Heritage Committee on 22 July when Liverpool was discussed, strong concerns were expressed about the threats caused by overdevelopment to Liverpool's heritage status:

The Polish representative said: “Unfortunately, after 4 years since 2012 Committee Decision [to put Liverpool on the List of World Heritage in Danger] we hardly see any progress made by the State Party in this regard...In such a situation we have no other choice like to come back to the discussion of removing this property from the World Heritage List in the near future.”

The Portuguese representative said: "there does not seem to be a clear and serious commitment from the State Party [the UK] to preserve the Outstanding Universal Value of this World Heritage property already recognized to be in serious danger..."

Management of each UNESCO World Heritage Site is ultimately the responsibility of the respective national government. In the case of the UK, it is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for the Department of Culture Media and Sport, Karen Bradley.

SAVE is a national organisation with a long standing and firm commitment to heritage and the growth of Liverpool. For over 40 years SAVE has been involved in championing the rescue and reuse of numerous Liverpool landmarks, including the Albert docks, North Western Hotel on Lime Street, the churches of St Francis Xavier and St Mary of the Angels (Everton) and St Andrew's Rodney Street, the Littlewoods building, the Granby Streets and the Welsh Streets and most recently Andrew Gibson House.

SAVE campaigns for historic buildings of all ages and all types, listed or otherwise, in a variety of different ways – engaging in the planning process, working with local authorities and statutory consultees, developing alternative schemes, drawing media attention and going to law. For over 40 years we have shown that demolition is almost never the only option available, even in cases where it is presented as such, and that solutions can be found to even the most complex historic buildings.

Note to editors:

1. For more information please contact Henrietta Billings, Director at SAVE on 0207 253 3500 or office@savebritainsheritage.org
2. SAVE Britain's Heritage has been campaigning for historic buildings since its formation in 1975 by a group of architectural historians, writers, journalists and planners. It is a strong, independent voice in conservation, free to respond rapidly to emergencies and to speak out loud for the historic built environment.

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