

SAVE submits 5,000 strong Foyles Petition to Secretary of State

SAVE Britain's Heritage has submitted a petition of over 5,000 names to Greg Clark MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, in support of the request for a call in.

The [petition](#), launched only three weeks ago, demonstrates the strong public interest in this case, and the need for it to be considered at an open public inquiry.



Panorama of the site from Charing Cross Road. The remains of the old Foyles sign can still be seen.

The petition asks the Secretary of State to:

'Stop the demolition of 111 – 119 Charing Cross Road, London, and call in the planning application for public inquiry. These handsome buildings make a positive contribution to the Soho Conservation Area, and their destruction and replacement with an oversized office building would result in substantial harm to this important part of London.'

SAVE wrote on the 15 June 2016, setting out why these buildings, which make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area, should be retained, and how the proposed office development would cause substantial harm.

The Victorian Society have also written to Mr Clark, adding their support to the campaign.

Mike Fox, Deputy Director of SAVE said: “The response to this petition has been really great, racing to over 5,000 signatures in just three weeks. A request for a public inquiry is not something undertaken lightly, but in this case we feel it is justified.

“These are attractive buildings capable of being reused, and ones which should be protected by the Conservation Area. Their demolition will further erode the character of Soho, already under threat, and the proposed replacement would cause substantial harm. We urge the Secretary of State to intervene.’

Note to editors:

1. For more information please contact Mike Fox, Deputy Director at SAVE on 0207 253 3500 or office@savebritainsheritage.org
2. The petition can be signed here <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/stop-the-demolition-of-soho-save-a-key-west-end-landmark>
3. Letters supporting a call in of the planning application should be sent to npcu@communities.gsi.gov.uk, and must include Westminster City Council planning application number 15/11234/FULL.
4. The proposals would see three unlisted buildings of merit, including the former Foyles store, demolished along with several other key buildings.

These are handsome buildings, Victorian, Edwardian, and twentieth century, in brick, stone and stucco with considerable charm. Foyles opened in 1929 at 113-119 Charing Cross Road and was the largest bookshop in the world. Together the buildings make a clear positive contribution to the Conservation Area and surrounding heritage assets, and should be retained, adapted and reused.

In their place a monolithic nine storey office led development is proposed, out of character with the Conservation Area. It is much higher and bulkier than its neighbours – in marked contrast to the fine grain of the surrounding streets and the prevailing domestic scale of the Soho Conservation Area.

The application was strongly opposed by Historic England, the Victorian Society, and the GLA when it was considered by Westminster Council’s planning committee.

The GLA subsequently withdrew their overall objection when it was considered by the Mayor of London, but continue to believe that the demolition of the existing buildings will cause substantial harm to the Conservation Area.

5. 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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