



ENGLISH HERITAGE

## **LANCASTER CANAL CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT, LANCASTER**

The historic city of Lancaster will be irreversibly damaged by a proposed development that, if implemented, will see the demolition of many historic buildings and their replacement with a scheme entirely alien to Lancaster's character.

In the light of this danger to one of England's major historic cities, English Heritage has written to the Government Office for the North West to recommend that the outline planning application for the scheme be called in for a decision by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

Henry Owen-John, North West Planning and Development Director for English Heritage, added: "Implementing this scheme would cause lasting harm to Lancaster and damage much of what makes the city such a distinctive and special place. There is no doubt that this part of Lancaster needs regenerating. We have negotiated at length with the developer but it was not possible to secure a scheme which responded to, and was inspired by, the distinctive historic character of this part of the city. There is every reason why Lancaster's heritage should play a part in the regeneration plans and help deliver a scheme with real identity and character."

The proposed Lancaster Canal Corridor development is by Centros Miller. Over 30 buildings, 18 of them within conservation areas, would be demolished to make way for the new retail development, which will be laid out in large blocks. Lancaster City Council's Planning Committee approved the outline planning application and referred the application to the Government Office for the North West.

This is the first time since 2001 English Heritage has asked the Secretary of State to formally call in an application in the North West. The fact that English Heritage has provided advice on several thousand applications since then, demonstrates the very serious level of concern we have with the current scheme.

The Centros Miller scheme is also opposed by SAVE, The Council for British Archaeology, The Victorian Society and The Georgian Group among others. In its design review of the scheme, CABE, the Government's advisor on architecture and urban design, stated that "the proposed masterplan represents a generic response to the specific site conditions. In addition, the inward looking scheme is not adequately permeable and shows evidence of problems common to failing shopping centres of the 1980's..."

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**For further information**, contact Michael Murray-Fennell, Corporate Communication, English Heritage on 020 7973 3372 or at [michael.murray-fennell@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:michael.murray-fennell@english-heritage.org.uk).

**English Heritage** is the Government's lead advisory body for the historic environment, also advising local authorities and other professionals through our statutory role in the planning system.

We also identify buildings, archaeology and landscapes for designation; give £26 million in conservation grants each year; run national outreach and education services; make our photography archives and unique research available to the public; and open more than 400 historic properties, spanning 5000 years of architecture, for the nation.

**Lancaster** is one of the north-west's foremost historic cities. Its townscape has evolved in response to a steeply undulating topography and the proximity of the River Lune. This has resulted in a largely irregular pattern of streets hosting a varied commercial and industrial built heritage in strong local vernacular style with intricate rooflines and punctuated by dramatic views across the town.

The city's origins date from the construction of a Roman Garrison fort in AD80 on high ground overlooking a major crossing of the River Lune. The Normans replaced this with an impressive castle which still dominates much of the city. St George's Quay built on the river provided such ease of access to the west coast that Lancaster was able to benefit from the growth of the colonies in North America and the West Indies, becoming one of the busiest ports in the UK slave trade. Despite the arrival of the canal, and later the railway and cotton industry, Lancaster's fortunes eventually declined in the face of competition from Preston, Liverpool and Manchester. Today it retains a rich legacy of historic buildings and areas, and a vernacular architecture which reflects both former prosperous times and a solid industrial past.