

SAVE

PRESS RELEASE

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NEW APPLICATION THREATENS TO WRECK BRITAIN'S FORGOTTEN GEORGIAN DOCKYARD

SAVE CALLS FOR COUNCIL TO REJECT DAMAGING PROPOSALS



Dockyard House and Regency Terrace, both Grade II* listed

National charity SAVE Britain's Heritage has joined forces with the World Monuments Fund Britain, the Georgian Group and other conservation bodies in calling for the rejection of a scheme which threatens one of the important historic sites in the South East. The area at risk is a spectacular Regency residential quarter hidden within Sheerness Dockyard in Kent. The enclave includes a Regency Terrace - five Grade II* listed houses, Dockyard House - an elegant mansion, and a series of other buildings all dating from the 1820s. It is believed to be the largest group of vacant II* listed domestic buildings in the south of England.

This site, which holds the key for the regeneration of the entire historic dockyard as well as the wider region, is subject to a massive development proposal, involving the breaching of the listed dockyard wall and the construction of 3 new blocks of flats. The entire dockyard hit the headlines in October 2009 when it was included in the World Monuments Fund 2010 Watch, an international call to action on behalf endangered heritage sites worldwide. The dockyard was nominated by SAVE with the backing of a number of leading heritage campaigners including Dan Cruickshank and Gavin Stamp.

In the words of SAVE's Secretary, William Palin 'this development would shatter the fragile landscape of this remarkable historic site. Given that the existing houses would be snapped up by restoring owners if put on the market SAVE can see no case for this scale of development. Sheerness Dockyard stands at a crossroads - with the backing of the World Monuments Fund Britain there is a real opportunity now to reverse many years of neglect and to heal one of the most important and overlooked late Georgian enclaves in the country. If this application is granted then Swale will be waving goodbye to one of its most valuable historic assets - and throwing away the key to the regeneration of the whole Isle of Sheppey and adjoining coast.

Marcus Binney, SAVE's President says, 'Before even considering granting planning permission, the council planning committee should look at the nearby houses in Naval Terrace just outside the dockyard and see how they have been

well restored as single houses by individual owners. No enabling development was necessary and both the back gardens and shared front lawn have been preserved as well as a large shared area of grass and mature trees which is open to all to walk in. The new blocks of flats proposed are so near to the houses in Regency Close that it will render them unsalable as single houses and devalue the whole site. This proposal is a monstrous case of garden grabbing.'

Robert Bargery, Secretary of the Georgian Group, says:

'It is critical we take decisions now that are in the long-term interests of the dockyard and Sheerness as a whole. There is always a risk of short-termism and opting for what look like quick fixes but that can wreck the prospects for lasting regeneration. The key asset that we have at Sheerness is the historic dockyard and it is essential we safeguard what survives and develop its potential in the most sensitive way possible. This is a watershed moment when the key national and international heritage agencies stand ready to help Swale create something of lasting social, economic and heritage value. Let's make sure we don't squander the opportunity.'

David Gundry, Project Director, World Monuments Fund Britain says:

'The extraordinary value of Sheerness Dockyard is displayed in the rare and collective survival of many elements of administrative, residential, industrial and architectural fabric. Sheerness's inclusion in the WMF 2010 Watch List both recognises this and acknowledges the threats to the integrity of the entire site. Inappropriate development such as this will destroy a fundamental part of the heritage value, and will likely hinder the sustainable development of the area in the long run.'

Notes to Editors

SAVE Britain's Heritage has been campaigning for historic buildings since its formation in 1975 by a group of architects, 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.

Tel: 020 7253 3500 Email: office@savebritainsheritage.org Web: www.savebritainsheritage.org

The Georgian Group is a statutory amenity society in England and Wales and must by law be consulted on any planning applications affecting listed Georgian buildings, monuments, parks and gardens. This consultee status gives the Group an opportunity to comment constructively on proposals and to help owners, architects and planning authorities towards better solutions.

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World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to saving the world's most treasured places. For over 40 years, working in more than 90 countries, our highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to preserve important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through partnerships with local communities, funders, and governments, we inspire an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York, WMF has offices and affiliates worldwide. Over 15 years, **WMF Britain** has secured the future of many significant UK-related sites. For more information see www.wmf.org.uk.

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