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Campaigners submit planning application for rival Smithfield scheme

11 December 2013 | By [Elizabeth Hopkirk](#)

Architect Burrell Foley Fischer goes head to head with McAslan & Partners



Illustration of Smithfield General Market reopened as a market hub. Illustration by Catherine Aldred

The Victorian Society and Save Britain's Heritage have submitted a full planning application for Smithfield Market in an unprecedented bid to pre-empt a planning inquiry.

Architect Burrell Foley Fischer has drawn up detailed plans for the covered market near Farringdon which was designed by Sir Horace Jones in the 19th century.

These have been submitted to the City of London Corporation by the two conservation bodies as part of a change of use application which would pave the way for a "rescue plan" designed by Eric Reynolds of Urban Space Management (USM).

The application is the latest move in a campaign by the Victorian Society and Save against a scheme by John McAslan & Partners to insert six storeys of office and retail behind the Victorian facades.

This won planning in July but was called in by communities secretary Eric Pickles just two months later. The subsequent planning inquiry is due to open on February 11.

Chris Costelloe, director of the Victorian Society, said: "This is exceptional. I'm not aware of the

Victorian Society ever having made a planning application, and it's quite unusual for a party that doesn't own a site to put in a planning application."



General Market Elevation facing Farringdon Road



General Market Elevation facing Charterhouse Street



General Market Elevation facing West Poultry Avenue



General Market Elevation facing West Smithfield

Burrell Foley Fischer's Smithfield plans

The public inquiry would hinge on the viability of alternative plans that don't involve demolition, he said, so it was necessary to demonstrate the viability of the USM scheme.

"This is one of the most important market complexes in the country and is an important part of the City of London yet the current plans would involve substantial demolition," he added.

He described the application, which could be heard in parallel with the public inquiry, as "extremely realistic".

"All we need is for the City of London to come to its senses and decide that rather than another office block something much more exciting could be done here. When Crossrail meets Thameslink, Farringdon is going to be the centre of London and it will need a heart. There will be massive demand for retail there."

Clem Cecil, director of Save, said: "We are saying loud and clear that this heritage is important for London and the nation and can be protected and bring economic benefit."

John McAslan, whose scheme was drawn up for developer Henderson Global Investors, declined to comment.



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Readers' comments (8)



[Robert Park](#) | 11 December 2013 9:25 am

This is an interesting move. I have often considered putting in alternative planning applications myself for atrocious schemes. And I wonder if funding for future applications of this sort might be crowd sourced? That would put the cat among the pigeons.



[Robert Park](#) | 11 December 2013 9:29 am

Though of course, if the practice become commonplace, I'm sure there would be moves to change the law so that planning applications can only be made by the landowner.

[Gil Gunderson](#) | 11 December 2013 9:51 am

What a gigantic waste of money.



[Munter Roe](#) | 11 December 2013 10:02 am

So architect continue to work for free?

[The Librarian](#) | 11 December 2013 11:02 am

Paris was worth a mass.

Smithfield is worth a 'guerilla' planning application.

There has been a market on this site for over 1,000 years.

The idea of keeping just the facades, like a frieze around some giant office blocks is just offensive – Like taking the head as trophy and dumping the carcass.

They are killing the place, and the heritage, for profit.

Burrell Foley Fischer should be applauded for the public service they are doing.

McAslan should hang their heads in shame for being part of scheme that sullies their good reputation.

[SoupDragon](#) | 11 December 2013 1:52 pm

Whats not 'commercially sensible' about it Zoe? Looks like a viable option to me.

Big practices often work for little or no fee and treat their staff with contempt, is that 'professional' or 'commercially sensible'?

Just churning out faceless office blocks is not what the profession should aspire to, it didn't save architects from the last commercial downturn.

[Alexandra Rook](#) | 11 December 2013 11:22 pm

Wow what vitriol! Great to see an alternative to ridiculous scheme of offices within a skirt of old buildings whether BFF have done it for free or not – that's entirely another debate. Architects should have a sense of civic responsibility & coming up with an alternative is a public good. Agree important to retain market at heart of Smithfield. City lacks retail – One Cheapside disappointingly ordinary chains taken space when it could have been more upmarket with the clientele in the City.

[The Librarian](#) | 13 December 2013 1:47 pm

@ZOE JONES – I was not suggesting that the architectural profession is a public service. I said that BFF are doing a public service in this instance – We don't know their financial arrangements with SAVE. It's for BFF to decide what they can afford to do to help. There are occasions when architects, just like other professionals (even lawyers), give their services

gratis or for token fees, because they wish to support a cause they believe in. They are helping give SAVE more ammunition. Without such acts, the side that wins the argument will always be the one with the most money, and that's a surefire way to ensure heritage and design quality continue to slip down the list of planning priorities. And then we all lose.

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