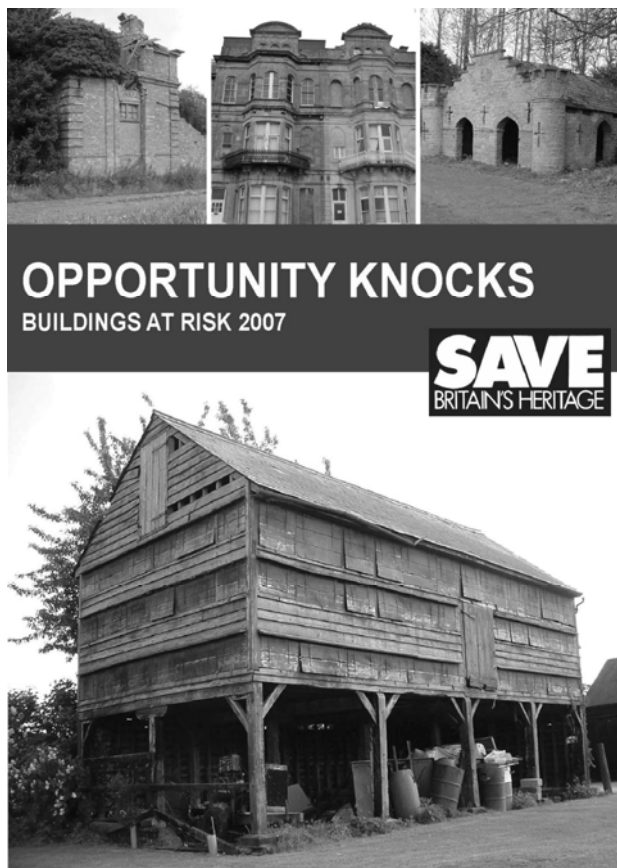


compiled visual and written information. However, the many problems in the field were startlingly clear. Lack of time and resources together with the feeling of being almost totally marginalised by other sections of a given planning department were constant themes.



The stunning publication features nearly 130 buildings of all types from all over England and Wales. All-colour double-page spreads have been devoted to some of the decaying heritage that can be found in many of our cities including Bristol, Liverpool and Plymouth.

Our buildings at risk research also picked up on the many chapels that are standing derelict. Sumptuous examples include the Philips Park Cemetery Chapel in Manchester and the Hartshill Cemetery Chapel in Stoke-on-Trent. The sad line-up of abandoned rural properties also leaves much to be desired. Councils are often struggling to use their enforcement powers because owners quite literally disappear. Also problematic are well-intentioned and often approved renovation plans that come to nothing, leaving the building to suffer as a result.

This year, as in previous editions SAVE has been delighted to include some insightful contributions from those who have first-hand experience of historic buildings at risk and their successful restoration. Birmingham Conservation Officer, Andrew Rudge, conservation builder Gervase Webb of Horgan and Webb, together with husband and wife team Karen and Francis Shaw (of recent Channel 4 'Grand Designs' fame), all take time to share their views.

The SAVE Buildings at Risk Register and Catalogue are currently the only methods to find out about some of the many thousands of buildings that do not have Grade I or II * listing that lie unloved and forgotten across the country. SAVE hopes that this year's colourful and eclectic edition will inspire determined professionals and enthused conservation novices alike.

The publication is priced at £12.00 and £10.00 for Friends of SAVE.

To order a copy of *OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS: The 2007 Buildings at Risk Catalogue* please send a cheque or credit card order to the SAVE Office.

This report represents Buildings at Risk officer David Plaisant's swansong for SAVE – he is heading off to the RIBA to work in its public affairs department. We would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his hard work and commitment over the last year and wish him well in his future.

Middlesex Guildhall, London

In the last newsletter we reported on the proposals to place the new UK Supreme Court within the Grade II* listed Middlesex Guildhall on Parliament Square, one of the finest gothic revival buildings of the twentieth century, with spectacular interiors designed by the leading sculptors and cabinet makers of the day. Shortly after this we launched our report *The Guildhall Testimonial*, which is available from SAVE for £5 (£4 for Friends).

The proposals for the UK Supreme Court would see this furniture ripped out and replaced with modern designs, while one of the three principal court rooms would lose its floor to create a triple height library, and its rear wall would be replaced with a glass sheet facing the building's entrance.

To get an idea of what is proposed, have a look at the Government's web site

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/whatwedo/supremecourt.htm>

In spite of the massive damage the proposals would inflict on the building, and a superb letter writing campaign by SAVE's friends (one of whom proposed to apply to ruin his Grade II* listed building in a similar manner to test the system), Westminster City Council passed the application.

SAVE took this decision to a judicial review, with our solicitor David Cooper and QC Joe Harper leading the charge on the basis that the decision ran counter to national policy on listed buildings as well as local policy (which makes it clear that when altering listed buildings, the applicant should be seeking to reinstate lost features rather than rip out original work).

Mr Justice Collins gave his judgement on the spot – that it was in the national interest to have the Supreme Court in that location, and that this national interest over-rode listed buildings law. He promised us a transcript of the

judgement by the end of the week – however we only received it two weeks later, shortly before your Secretary was due to give evidence before the House of Commons Constitutional Affairs Committee. This was a worrying judgement with potentially wider implications.

In the meantime SAVE and the Friends of Middlesex Guildhall held, at very short notice, an evening at the Guildhall for members of the judiciary and conservation professionals and other interested individuals. The turnout was excellent, and the issues were debated in Court three, with the DCA's architects giving their reasoning. The debate proved that the existing layout works tremendously well.



Condemned? The interior of court 3 at Middlesex Guildhall

The oral evidence session with the Constitutional Affairs Committee was an interesting affair, with its chair Alan Beith seeming to steer the questioning towards the possibility of a compromise, if one were possible. SAVE and the Victorian Society's Kathryn Ferry made it clear that a compromise would be possible if the architect's brief was radically changed – but also drove home the points that the current proposals would probably prove to be inadequate after five years or so, leaving the building needlessly vandalised.

Lord Falconer, the Lord Chancellor arrived to give evidence to the committee after SAVE and the Victorian Society, and having missed our contribution then sallied forth, directly contradicting our submission and claiming that the proposals were the best conservation-based solution. Quite how he gets away with it is unclear. He was in no mood to compromise. The session was reported on Radio 4's *Yesterday in Parliament*.

Our only hope now is that the plan fades away with Lord Falconer, who has been replaced by Jack Straw as Justice Minister. There are alternative locations available such as County Hall, or the wing of Somerset House shortly to be vacated by Inland Revenue, or even a new building, which would probably cost less than the entire Middlesex Guildhall project (including the cost of relocating court business to Isleworth and extending the buildings there) – which now appears to be spiralling up, according to one source, to £100million (the original cost was £32million). £50million for a new building is small beer compared to the cost of a new Assembly building, a

big tent in east London or some temporary sports facilities for 2012.

Our legal action on the Guildhall was supported by a number of individuals, all of whom we would like to thank for their generosity, time and energy in running with the case.

The General Market buildings at Smithfield

The Smithfield Market circus rolls on. The last few months have seen the developer, Thornfield, put forward its third set of plan for the demolition and redevelopment of the General Market at Smithfield, but this time with the difference that the Grade II "Red House" cold store (1898) and the Annex building (1886) are to be included in the plans, in a façade retention scheme which would make even those completely desensitised to historic buildings and good architecture cringe. Oh and the proposed replacement building for the General Market is 'only' seven stories high, covered in spots with an odd angular glass roof. We can only assume that the plan is to make the previous plans look architecturally sane by comparison.

SAVE sees this third application for the site as an attempt to effectively bully ourselves, English Heritage, and even the City of London (who ostensibly support the proposals) into letting the plans through. However, thanks to sustained pressure from our lawyer, David Cooper, this third set of plans has been called in for consideration at a public inquiry. For a short while this left us with the prospect of two major inquiries into proposals for the same site (the second application having been called in last year), and given that three months had been booked in the diary for the first inquiry, the prospect of another was not welcome. We called for the inquiries to be conjoined and delayed.

Instead, Thornfield pulled its second set of plans, and consequently cancelled the inquiry (due to start in June), much to the annoyance of everyone, and a new inquiry is set to start in November. We asked Thornfield's lawyers for a donation towards the amount of time we've spent messing around with their pointless planning applications over the last couple of years, but for some strange reason they declined our offer.

We are currently preparing for the new inquiry and have a range of wonderful experts giving their time for free, in spite of the rather gruelling nature of modern public inquiries. Along with English Heritage we hope to put up a very solid defence of the buildings and conservation area, while showing that it is possible to repair and re-use them in a manner which complements the wider area while making a profit

In the meantime, Thornfield is still attempting to delist the "Red House" cold store, having served papers on the Secretary of State. SAVE has rebutted a great deal of the meat of the application, which even being charitable can only be described as speculative.