

# *THE* ISLINGTON SOCIETY

I'm Andrew Clayton a committee member of the Islington Society. The Society is a member organisation of people who live, work or have an interest in the borough. It was formed in 1960 at a time when the council and individual developers planned to demolish many of the now valued terraces and industrial buildings that make Islington what it is now. It has scored major successes in resisting unwelcome change and promoting higher standards of architecture and building quality. It is not opposed to change for its own sake and supports the need for the provision of affordable office space and housing.

In this case the society is concerned about the integrity of the Islington locally listed buildings on this site and on the effect the appellants success in this case might have on the broader integrity of the borough's locally listed buildings as a whole.

We accept that one of the problems about the local list is that it is out of date and flawed. For example, what were when the listing was made in 1979 two warehouses in Pembroke Dock next door to the east with gable ends to the canal have clearly been wholly or partly demolished and replaced with a reproduction. So, between 1979 and the publication of Cherry and Pevsner's London 4 North publication in 1992 the locally listed neighbours to the appellants site to the east were weakened and replaced with what Cherry and Pevsner call "a narrow building reproducing the form of a granary of c1860". This is clearly not what it was at the time of its local listing.

We also accept that since the original listing in 1979 the elevation of 10c has changed with extra windows inserted. Again, the local listing is frozen at a time which predates what must have been careful consideration by the council of the 1990s development. But we believe that even with the extra windows inserted the elevation maintains the spirit of the original listing.

There is also the oddity that the original listing does not mention 10a, the All Saints Street frontage of the Thorley complex. There are preparatory documents for the 1979 listing in the Islington History Centre which suggest that the original intention of the council officers at the time was to locally list 10a but at some stage in the process, (these were complicated buildings to assess even in 1979) that part of the listing got missed out.

Setting all that aside, we believe that the effective disappearance of what was listed as Pembroke Dock makes the survival of the Regents Wharf locally listed buildings in their present form all the more important. In their cross-examination of Mr. Bowring yesterday afternoon the appellants were clearly trying to make the case that there are lots of heritage assets in the Regents Canal West Conservation Area. But Pembroke Wharf as originally listed no longer exists and so makes the survival of Regents Wharf in its current form all the more important.

We understand the appellants point that these are robust buildings which have survived alteration, redevelopment and new neighbours over the years and so could survive what they propose, but we believe that is not the case. They are nearing the tipping point where their value will disappear and be subsumed in the extra height and mass of the new building proposed.

We believe that the new dormer windows proposed by the appellants for 10c would substantially alter the canal frontage as locally listed in 1979. Taken more broadly, and with relevance to the wider integrity of the local list, on a typical locally listed terrace close by in Hemingford Road for example you would have trouble getting permission to alter the dormer windows on your house in such a substantial way. The same should apply here. I don't think it matters if the existing dormers were inserted after the original building was erected. They are as listed in 1979 and that is what is important here. If the developers are allowed these dormers here, the rules will be hard to maintain elsewhere.

The same applies to the Thorley offices on All Saints Street. We think the development behind and above will diminish and overwhelm the existing building. It is a fine late Victorian Baroque building, in some ways the most distinguished of the whole complex and should survive without alteration.

On the subject of the Islington locally listed buildings, we believe that it is a resource for the people of Islington as a whole, not just a guide for planners and developers. Until recently it wasn't sufficiently publicised by the borough and people didn't realise what a remarkable achievement it was by the council's conservationists in the 1970s and 80s. It also needs updating, as this enquiry has seen. The Islington Society is part of a volunteer led review of the locally listed buildings which is now just about complete and will shortly be presented to the council. Volunteers have visited, photographed and assessed the condition and architectural and historical value of all these buildings and shopfronts. And there are a lot of them, over 1600 entries and a total of many more buildings. I personally reviewed these Regents Wharf buildings. Apart from the shopfronts, which are another story, it is remarkable how intact all the locally listed buildings are. The canal frontages of 12 and 10c and the All Saints Street frontage are splendid examples of those buildings at their finest. We believe they should be left as they are.