



29 April 2015

PRESS RELEASE: SAVE THE STRAND BUILDINGS

SAVE launches petition calling on King's College to stop demolition of 152-158 the Strand.

SAVE has launched a petition calling upon Edward Byrne, President and Principal of King's College London, Jamie Ritblat, the Chairman Of The Estates Strategy Committee, and members of the King's College Council to stop the demolition of 152-158 the Strand. It picked up 500 signatures overnight, and the number is rising steadily – an indication of the great interest in saving these buildings.

Sign the petition here: <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/don-t-demolish-152-158-the-strand-london>

King's College received planning permission to demolish 154-158 and façade 152-153 the Strand at a Westminster planning committee meeting on the 21st April. SAVE submitted strong objections to the planning application, along with the Victorian Society, The Ancient Monument Society, LAMAS, the Courtauld Institute and the Somerset House Trust, as well as many individuals, but these objections were ignored.

Historic England acknowledged that the proposals would cause harm to the conservation area, but that this harm would not be substantial when considering the public benefits of the scheme. We strongly disagree and consider the demolition unjustified and unacceptable. One of Historic England's central justifications is erroneous since it hinges on the fact that these buildings have been internally altered. However, conservation areas are not designated primarily for their interiors and works to interiors do not require permission. SAVE considers that the public benefits of the King's College scheme can be substantially delivered without demolishing these buildings. Equally it is vital to remember that this cityscape is shared with all Londoners and visitors to the city.

These are buildings of great charm on one of London's most historic and central thoroughfares: the procession route from St Paul's Cathedral to Buckingham Palace. They are recognised as unlisted buildings of merit in the Strand Conservation Area, contributing significantly to the setting of surrounding listed buildings, including the Grade I listed Somerset House and St Mary-Le-Strand. According to local policy, the presumption is against demolition for unlisted buildings of merit. SAVE is in no doubt that the demolition of 154-158 will have a visibly adverse effect on the area's recognised special character and appearance.

This streetscape has already been damaged by King's College's Brutalist building to the east of Somerset House. No further encroachment of this kind should be allowed. The character of central London depends on a balance between large institutional and commercial buildings and smaller scale buildings on narrow plots.

The proposed design does not respect Westminster's heritage and local distinctiveness - it replaces a group of buildings with distinctive façades with something terrifically bland.

This case has triggered national interest and struck a nerve with all who love London. SAVE has been overwhelmed by messages of support for our position, and anger and disappointment at the decision to grant planning permission. This petition aims to demonstrate this strength of feeling.

In the petition we call on King's College London to lead the way in respecting heritage and planning law. These proposals fail on both accounts. We call upon King's College London to shelve the plans for demolition, and reconsider their proposals. Historic buildings are an asset to a historic campus, and should be celebrated as such. Britain is respected worldwide for its sensitive approach to historic buildings, indeed the social thinker and proponent of preservation John Ruskin himself is an alumnus of King's College London.

Please sign the petition here: <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/don-t-demolish-152-158-the-strand-london> and don't forget to share it with your friends and contacts.



The Strand, prior to the construction of the Brutalist King's College building



152-158 the Strand today



The King's College approved proposals

For more information and images, please contact the SAVE Office on 0207 253 3500 or office@savebritainsheritage.org, or Clem Cecil on 07968 003 595

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.

SAVE Britain's Heritage, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ

Registered Charity 269129

Tel. 020 7253 3500 Email office@savebritainsheritage.org

www.savebritainsheritage.org

Follow SAVE on Twitter: [@SAVEBrit](https://twitter.com/SAVEBrit)