

## Help us Fight for the Future of the London Custom House



### WHAT IS IT?

The Custom House is one of the great Thames-side public buildings of the Georgian period and remains very largely unaltered. Designed by David Laing, one of Sir John Soane's pupils, and Robert Smirke, architect of the British Museum, it is a very rare survival of a purpose-built Georgian office, and in its heyday housed some 2,000 customs officials. Apart from its impressive façade to the Pool of London, its architectural glories include: the massive Long Room on the first floor, the (early) fireproof vaulted 'Queen's warehouse' on the floor below, a ceremonial Robing Room, a spectacular Tidewaiters' Room, grand staircases, and fine Regency details such as fireplaces and panelling. Successive customs houses on the site have been at the centre of Britain's story as a great maritime power and trading nation.

## WHY?

The building and its river quayside have been closed to visitors for many years. A stone's throw from the Tower of London, it is one of the city's best kept architectural secrets. A current planning application proposes conversion to a hotel. We at the Georgian Group believe this scheme will badly damage this wonderful building by:

- Subdividing the original office suites and inserting bathrooms
- Adding roof-top pavilions
- Restricting public access to the building and quay

The future of this precious asset will be decided at Public Inquiry in late January. The Georgian Group will demonstrate why the scheme is not the right one and will propose a viable alternative which will bring genuine heritage and public benefits.

## THE FUTURE

The Georgian Group envisions the building and quayside as a place where culture and commerce can come together and thrive in creative harmony. The spaces

will be used flexibly and imaginatively to create a vibrant environment in the heart of a forgotten part of London. These proposals, which would see a £60 million refurbishment, fit perfectly with the following forward-looking documents:

- *City Recharged: our vision for London in 2025*
- *The Square Mile: Future City*
- *Culture and Commerce: Fuelling Creative Renewal*

The scheme respects the very considerable architectural qualities of the building while allowing the revitalisation of its most important spaces:

- The Long Room, the former engine room of trade, will be an attractive public exhibition space.
- The extraordinary Queen's Warehouse below, used for the safe storage of contraband, will also be used for public events and will house a café.
- Other spaces will be used for creative enterprise and retail
- The quayside will be activated, and access will be provided to a museum which will tell the story of the building and its occupants.

The scheme, with its mixture of uses and public access, highlights how ideal a place the Custom House is to realise the City of London's ambitions of a post pandemic London in which heritage is respected and revitalised and creativity and commerce encouraged.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

If you too think that what is proposed is simply not good enough, we urge you to write to the Planning Inspectorate as soon as possible and to encourage your friends to do the same. Your voice and theirs will help ensure that this great building is treated respectfully and is made available for you and future generations to enjoy.

**Please see below for guidance on how to do this:**

- **Email your objections to [alison.dyson@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:alison.dyson@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)**
- **Quote the reference APP/K5030/W/21/3281630**
- **State you object to the proposed plans and support the proposals put forward by the Georgian Group.**
- **Or make a representation via this link <https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/> using the reference above.**

