

STAGG ARCHITECTS – Our Contribution to the Smithfield Market Public Inquiry, 2014

On behalf of Cathedral Group we prepared and submitted evidence to the 2014 Smithfield Market public inquiry, demonstrating the potential for a viable and exciting re-use of the existing historic building.

We were proud to be asked by Cathedral Group to be part of their professional team to help prevent the demolition of Smithfield General Market and Fishmarket after a planning application by Henderson Global Investors was called in by the Secretary of State in 2013. The proposal, designed by John McAslan & Partners, had received planning consent from the City of London Corporation on the basis that there was no viable alternative. SAVE Britain's Heritage, the Victorian Society, and many high profile public figures disagreed, and Eric Reynolds of the successful market operator Urban Space Management provided evidence that the market could be retained and put to excellent use as a unique historic food market in much the same way that it was originally intended.

Pioneering developers Cathedral Group also disagreed, running their own independent figures to demonstrate that the proposal to retain the market would not only be viable, but highly profitable - potentially even more so than the corporate office scheme proposed by Henderson. Our role was to provide evidence to the Inquiry in three key areas;

- 1) To analyse the existing building and the areas used by Henderson in their viability assessment.
- 2) To work up a proposed design with detailed area schedules to enable analysis of the retention scheme.
- 3) To analyse the claim by Henderson that their scheme would retain 75% of the building fabric.



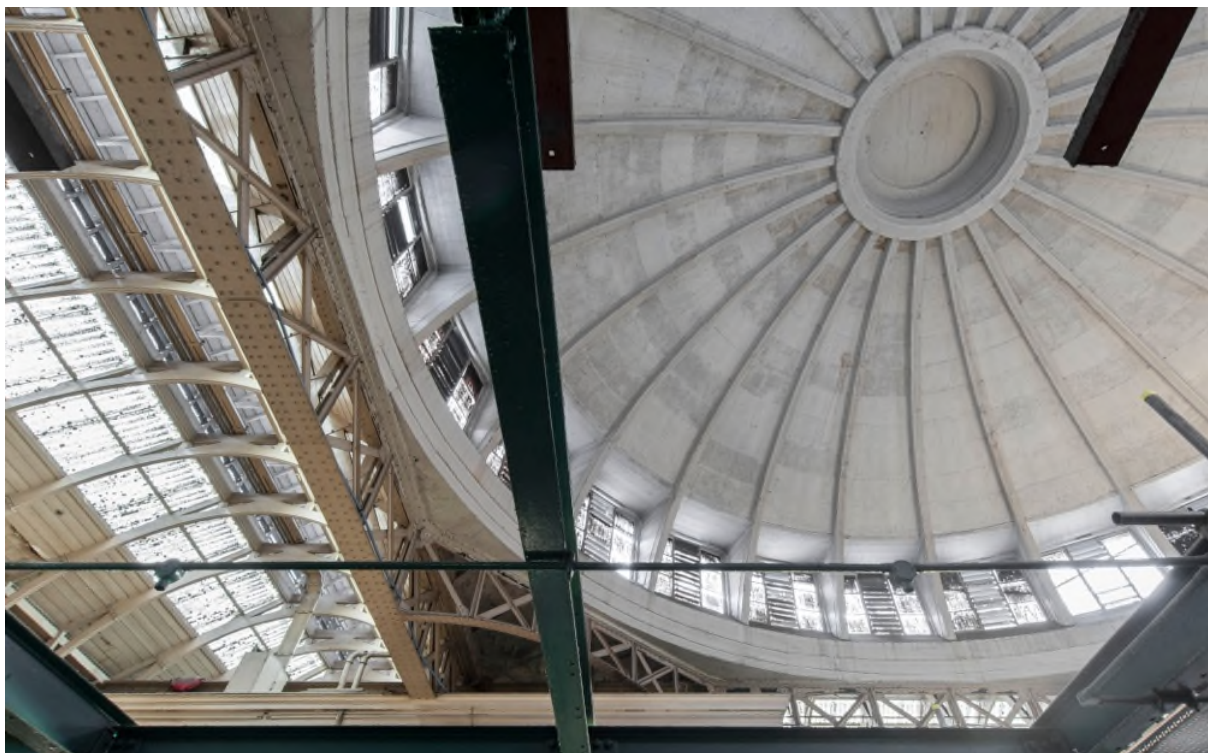
01 - The 'phoenix columns', an ornate and innovative detail supporting the light and airy roof

Our work enabled Cathedral Group to run accurately measured appraisals on both the Henderson scheme and the retention scheme, giving them confidence to make the strong and convincing arguments that they put before the Inspector at the Inquiry. Our analysis also highlighted significant discrepancies in the submitted planning application drawings and through computer modelling we calculated that of the buildings seen above ground, almost 75% would in fact be demolished.

Our evidence was submitted to the Inquiry and presented with integrity and conviction by Cathedral Group's CEO Richard Upton.

As contemporary architects we look forward and we welcome change, but we also recognise something that is worth saving, the loss of which would be irreversibly damaging to a fantastic and enchanting part of London.

In July 2014 the Secretary of State published the Inspector's report and we were delighted that our arguments had been persuasive, and the application to demolish the market was refused. The Inspector wrote that the proposals were 'wholly unacceptable' and would be extremely harmful to the building and to the great detriment of the surrounding area. The Secretary of State agreed that the retention and re-use of the building is 'possible, viable, and deliverable', and we now hope this can be demonstrated by getting the buildings back into public use as soon as possible.

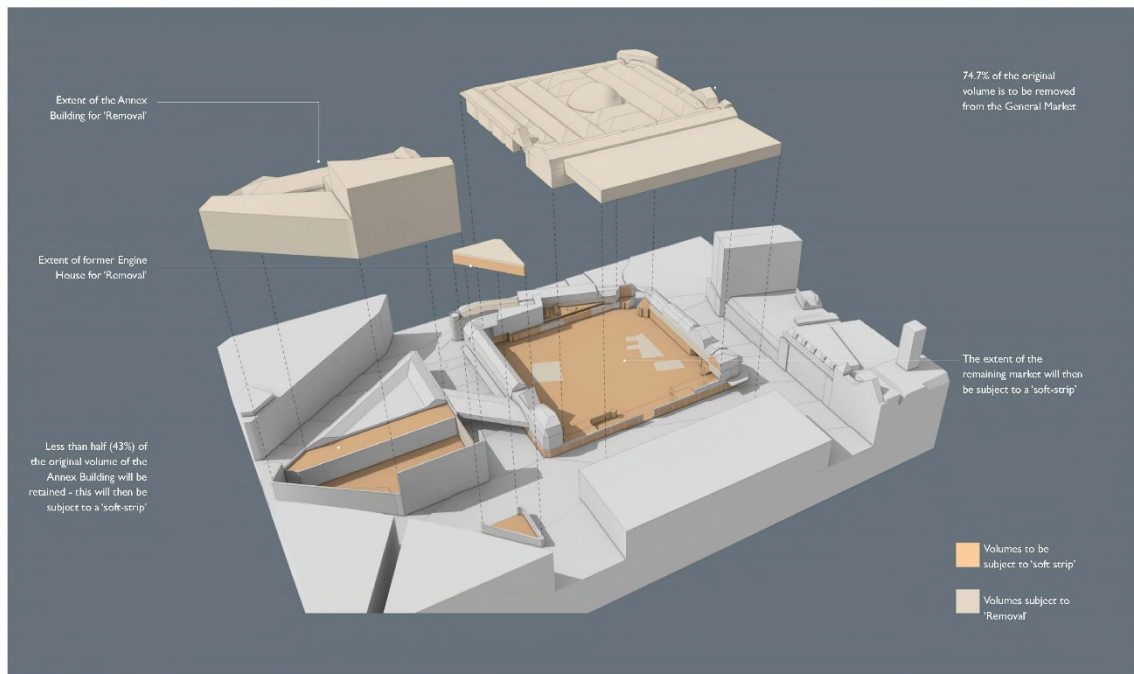


02 - Few people were aware of the delightful cathedral-like space inside the General Market



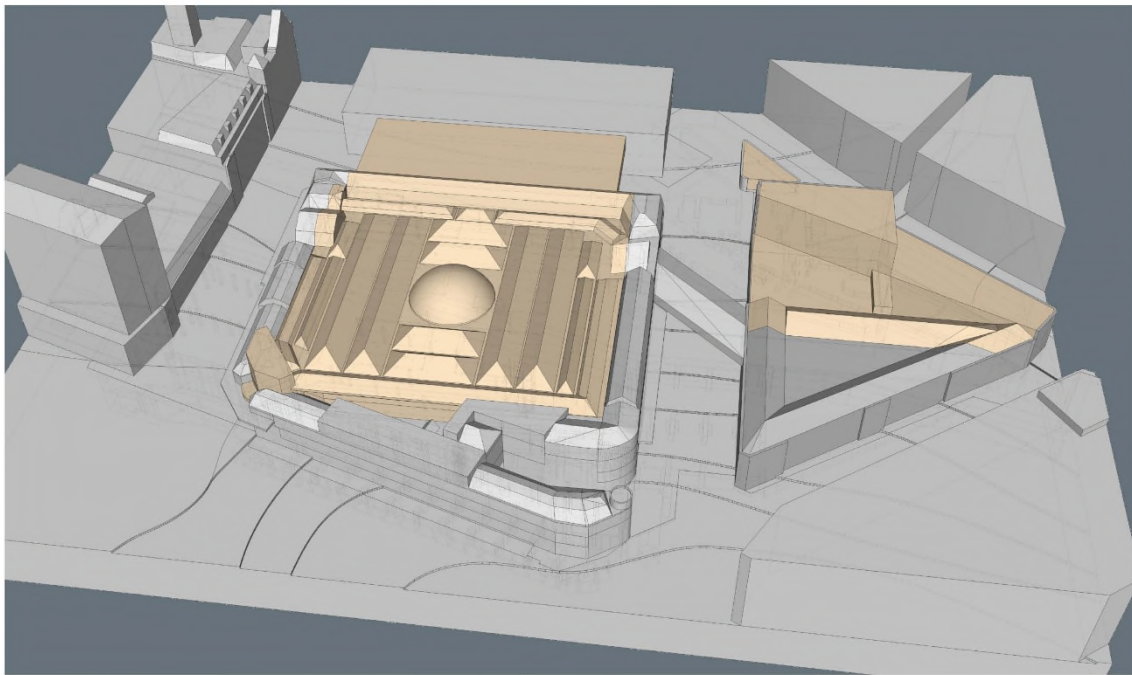
03 - The Fishmarket facade, which English Heritage did not believe merited listed status.

FIGURE 1 - THREE-DIMENSIONAL CAD ANALYSIS OF VOLUMES FOR 'REMOVAL' IN THE HENDERSON APPLICATION



04 - Our detailed computer analysis revealed that three quarters of the building would be demolished (shown floating in beige)

FIGURE 2 - ELEVATED VIEW FROM THE SOUTH SHOWING THE FABRIC LABELLED 'REMOVAL' IN THE HENDERSON APPLICATION IN BEIGE, AND RETAINED FABRIC SHOWN IN GREY



05 - The heart of the scheme, the market hall and dome would be lost (shown beige), to be replaced by glass offices above a mall.



06 - Our proposal provided 200 stalls in the original market hall with a ring of restaurants and shops around the edge and offices above.