



Monday 28 November 2016

CHARITY BID FOR CLERKENWELL FIRE STATION SNUBBED

A Charity's attempts to save the former Clerkenwell Fire Station and bring it back to life in the heart of the community are being snubbed by the London Mayor and Fire Brigade.

Water Incorporated has made numerous approaches to Mayor Sadiq Khan's office and to the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) in the past two months but has met a "brick wall" response and been refused access to the fire station site.

LFEPA even blocked a request by the charity to ask a public question at its meeting last week at City Hall on the grounds that it was "deemed frivolous"!

Clerkenwell is the only one of 10 fire stations closed by former Mayor Boris Johnson in early 2014 which remains unsold. It was taken off the market by LFEPA after Islington Council published a Planning Brief whose criteria are understood to have made the building unattractive to luxury residential developers.

Water Incorporated has brought forward proposals which satisfy all the planning requirements and meet the community's wishes for preservation of the Grade II listed building, public access to the site, a museum celebrating the history of Clerkenwell's firefighters and the provision of new affordable housing, but LFEPA will not discuss.

Clerkenwell has a special place in history as London's first operational fire station. It was originally built in 1871-73 and has a later Edwardian extension, and its future is being closely monitored by Historic England (English Heritage), the Victorian Society and other conservationists.

Water Incorporated has commissioned plans by architects specialising in historic buildings to ensure that refurbishment of the existing fire station will meet the requirements of its listed status, and the new-build residential to the rear of the site will be sensitive to its historic neighbour. The plans include space for the charity's planned water resources education centre. Most importantly, there will be no resale of any part of the property - no sell-off to the super rich.

The Trustees of Water Incorporated cannot understand why the fire station is being kept off-market by LFEPA, wasting public funds keeping it secure and insured, and risking deterioration of the building when there is a ready buyer. They are launching a high profile publicity campaign urging Mayor Sadiq Khan to get Clerkenwell Fire Station back on the market without delay and allow Water Incorporated to make a serious bid.

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