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Rachel Tyndall  
Chief Executive  
NHS Islington  
338 – 346 Goswell Road  
London EC1V 7LQ  
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Dear Rachel Tyndall

## **Finsbury Health Centre**

I am writing to you as the chairman of Architects for Health to express our opposition to your determination to close the Finsbury Health Centre and dispose of the building.

It is very sad that the sixtieth anniversary of the NHS was marked in Islington by the planned vacation of a building that anticipated its spirit so accurately in the services which it provided and the aspirations of its architecture. It is also ironic that months after the publication of Lord Darzi's report, this prototype for the polyclinics which he proposes should be abandoned, despite the Centre meeting with uncanny accuracy the current design agenda for public spaces, wayfinding, natural light and ventilation and long life/ loose fit flexibility.

We are not died in the wool conservationists. As architects with an expertise and an interest in health care design we are experienced in developing business cases and working within tight financial strictures to give our clients the buildings they deserve. We acknowledge the difficulties in restoring and refurbishing a Grade 1 listed building to meet current standards and the premium its historic status places on costs of construction. It is clear that a project of this nature is utterly unsuited to PFI or LIFT procurement and requires a carefully considered funding package and project vehicle, which will almost certainly be derived from more than one source. However, you appear to have dismissed the potential for such an approach.

It is unreasonable to demand the retention of a building which placed a prohibitively high burden on your capital and revenue budgets. Yet there is a widely held perception that there has been a long held desire on the part of NHS Islington and its predecessors to rid yourselves of this building. Little creative energy appears to have been expended in developing an innovative and cost effective solution for its improvement and retention. A recent cost plan that you have circulated, which sets out the comparative costs of refurbishing the existing centre and building a new facility elsewhere, applies a construction rate to the refurbishment option, which is at

least 50% more than the current costs of building a brand new state of the art specialist hospital.

The refurbishment of this building will undoubtedly require more effort and hard work on your part than vacating the premises. But surely public funding requires a level of public responsibility that extends beyond the balance sheet and encompasses the notion of public health and well being. The Finsbury Health Centre is unique. Like the Glasgow School of Art much of its importance lies in the continued use of the building for the purpose for which it was designed.

We believe that strategies have been identified which can not only achieve its conversion to a very high quality of clinical accommodation but also provide a permanent solution to the problems which you have experienced in maintaining this building and the revenue projections which you fear.

We urge you to reconsider your decision.

Yours sincerely

John Cooper

Chairman : Architects for Health

cc Paula Kahn

# ARCHITECTS *for* HEALTH

