Why do Exemplar want to change the name of the Middlesex Hospital Chapel?

I trained at the Middlesex Hospital in the 1950’s and worked there for several years. The Chapel was a very important part of the place for staff and patients of the hospital, a place of peace and refuge. When I was working in the oncology ward in 1958 I used to accompany a terminal illness 17 year old organ scholar at Lancing College down to the chapel during my lunch break to play organ, a very moving experience which I still remember vividly. I have lived and worked around Fitzrovia since then and we have always felt some reassurance that the chapel was there for us if we needed it. It was open 24 hours a day and we could wander in and out at will. I was pleased when I heard that the developers were obliged by their S106 agreement to keep the chapel available for community use. However I am concerned that the charity is set up in a transparent way and it will be accountable to the local community which it serves. I think the change of name is crass and insensitive. The Chapel is the heart and soul of the hospital. The building has to be retained as it is still available for the community to use and it is not just a corporate venue available to those who can pay to hire it. Jill Hutchings, Curwen Library, Windmill Street

I was born in the Middlesex Hospital and have spent a considerable part of my working life in this hospital. I think it would be appropriate to keep the name of the Middlesex Hospital Chapel alive in keeping the spirit and history of this special location. This in turn would give respect to the developers and Fitzroy Place. Laurence Glime partner at LDG estate agents, Foley Street.

Why do the developers Exemplar want to change the name of the Chapel? They should stick to their job building the site. Eddie Duke Low, Cleveland Street

Exemplar seem to be hell bent on removing all historical reference to the hospital from the site.

We asked members of The Middlesex Hospital Facebook Group to comment on the plans to re-name The Middlesex Hospital Chapel. Here are some of the responses:

I trained at the Middlesex Hospital and know the chapel well. Exemplar seem to be hell bent on removing all historical reference to the hospital from the site — but not sure why the chapel; all the memorial plaques inside are to ex-hospital staff & people related to the hospital & it’s where Rutherford Kilping was laid to rest after he died. Harriet Griffey

I am appalled but not surprised. Exemplar — and, I suspect, certain elements of the council — have wanted to bury the history and heritage of the Middlesex Hospital all along. I organised a petition calling on Westminster City Council to commemorate the Middlesex in the name of the Square — despite support from thousands (including support from certain councillors) I was informed that the naming of Pearson Square was a done deal. I rather suspect that this will be true, but truly hope that I am wrong. This building is the Middlesex Hospital Chapel. Always was, always must be. David Marriot

It is sad to see the developers wanting to remove the traces of the Middlesex. I spent many hours taking patients to the chapel or sitting in there after a difficult shift. Jenny Hall

I understand that the chapel will be coming into ‘community use’. I really hope that the Chapel will be treated with dignity. For those who worked or were patients at the Middlesex the chapel was a refuge and place of calm in an uncertain and traumatic world. The aura of peace and tranquility that over whelmed you when you entered is memorable even now. Karen Kick

Oh for goodness sake Exemplar, please display some taste and a respect for history which also means respect for all the people who have been born, died and worked at the Middlesex. The hospital was a centre of excellence in both training, practice and research for years and it would be such a good example to other developers to show some sensitivity and intelligence in your treatment of this site. Your reputation (as Property Developers generally rather than your company specifically) is not good; here's a chance to redeem it and gain the respect of thousands of people. Phyllida Barnes

The chapel was a place of sanctuary for staff and patients alike. The tranquillity and beauty of the building has to be retained as it was including the name for the respect for those of us who saw it as a central part of our life at the Middlesex Hospital. The hospital pioneered treatments and we all have experience of caring for people who could only get the expertise at our hospital. To not retain the named link to the Middlesex Hospital would be an insult to staff who dedicated their lives at the hospital and the patients who trust ed us with their lives. Julie Haregraves

I sat in the beautiful hospital Chapel often and took patients there for church services and on special days like Christmas. As a part of a mark of respect to people who used that Chapel at a time when they were at their most vulnerable, and for the people who died at the hospital and who recovered from their illness then the Chapel should retain its name. Why is it that companies are so keen to change the names of things? I am sure it is a lack of understanding and ignorance on their part. Frances Barbour

Developers gone mad! Keep it up Fitzroy News. Sharon Peppard

Why is there such a desire to remove all memory of the Middlesex Hospital from the site? Are the developers afraid that it will become a magnet for old Middlesexers? Please let there be a small piece of care and humanity on this issue. Come on gentlemen... What harm can it do?

Sarah Price

Why would you want to rename the chapel which is The Middlesex Hospital Chapel...the building of which was begun in 1890 as a memorial to Major A H Ross MP a former chairman of the Board of Governors... “the surgeons Sir John bland Sutton and Lord Webb-Johnson paid for much of the decorations the chapel...” Sacred Spaces by Joan Crossly...a wonderful book about the London hospital chapels...“the eases of calm, places for reflection and prayer”

Sarah Hays

Why not just admit The Middlesex Hospital never existed and we never trained or worked there and I am appalled at the developers complete lack of sensitivity to our story. Their ability to roughshod over everyone is astounding. Frances Taylor

More comments at: bit.ly/middlesexchapel
Sign the petition: bit.ly/middlesextrust
Frances Barbour