

ADDRESS

Former Adult Training Centre, 205A MORNING LANE, HACKNEY

Parish HACKNEY
District HACKNEY
County GREATER LONDON

Case UID: 170219

Date First Listed:

Formerly Listed As:

RECOMMENDATION

Outcome: No, do not list

Recommended Grade: NL

24-MAY-2010

BACKGROUND:

After examining all the papers on this file and other relevant information and having carefully considered the architectural and historic interest of this case, the criteria for listing are not fulfilled.

CONTEXT

On 15 April 2010 we received separate applications from two heritage groups to consider no. 205a Morning Lane for listing. The building was at that time understood to be threatened with demolition, having been identified - along with the large inter-war buildings at no. 205 - for redevelopment as part of Hackney Council's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, although no planning application had yet been submitted for the site. We notified the local authority's planning and education staff by letter and email, and followed this up with a number of phone calls in an attempt to arrange to visit the building. However on 10 May, before a visit could take place, we learned from one of the applicants that demolition work had begun on site. This was confirmed by observation later that day, and at a site meeting on 13 May. On the latter occasion it was explained that news of the listing application had not reached Hackney's BSF department, and that the recent works had been precipitated by the expiry of a demolition notice on no. 205a, originally filed on 24 March.

HISTORY

No. 205a Morning Lane was built in 1964 by the London Borough of Hackney as a training centre for mentally handicapped adults. The Mental Health Act of 1959, which sought to normalise psychiatric treatment by bringing it into line with National Health Service procedures, had given local health authorities responsibility for the care and rehabilitation of out-patients suffering from mental illness and disability. These responsibilities included the provision of practical and therapeutic 'training', both for children deemed incapable of receiving a normal education and for some adults. Following the Act, networks of Junior and Adult Training Centres were established by health authorities across the country; the former were merged back into the mainstream education system in 1970, but the latter remain as a separate tier of institutions.

The training centre closed in 1970, but the building continued to be used by the council. In 1999 it was leased to the arts charity SPACE as a series of temporary artists' studios. A decade later the site had been identified for redevelopment as a new school campus, and demolition work began in May 2010.

The architects for the 1964 building were Stillman & Eastwick-Field (SEM), a practice formed in London in 1949 by three young graduates of the Bartlett School of Architecture, John Stillman and the recently-married John and Elizabeth Eastwick-Field. SEM specialised in buildings for social

housing, education and health, contracts of a kind that proliferated during the years of post-war reconstruction and the creation of the welfare state. Much of the firm's output displays a restrained 'New Brutalist' manner with robust detailing in brick and exposed concrete. Surviving works include a number of blocks of flats (e.g. Lister House on Vallance Road in Tower Hamlets, 1956; Hide Tower on Regency Street in Westminster, 1959-61), schools (the West of England School for the Partially Sighted in Exeter, 1966; Stoke Newington School in Hackney, 1967-70), university buildings (Keele University Students' Union, 1966; Trevelyan College at Durham, 1968) and hospitals (Marborough Children's Convalescent Hospital, 1958; Princess Marina Psychiatric Hospital at Northampton, 1977). John and Elizabeth Eastwick-Field both died in 2003.

DESCRIPTION

As built in 1964, the training centre comprised two main buildings: a three-storey block at the corner of Morning Lane and Flanders Way, and behind it a single-storey workshop block, the two joined by a short link corridor. By the time of the recent site visit on 13 May, the workshop and link had largely been demolished, as had part of the second floor of the front block. The following text describes the structure as it was prior to the demolition work, making reference where appropriate to its condition as observed during the site visit.

The front block has a structural frame of reinforced concrete, the board-marked floor slabs and beam ends exposed externally. The fully glazed west elevation to Morning Lane elevation is of five bays' width, with a cantilevered concrete canopy above the off-centre main entrance; on the south side is a glazed projecting stair-tower, and to the north an external fire-escape stair in solid concrete. The glazing is in rectangular panels set horizontally within a metal grid, the lower panels being opaque and coloured bright yellow. On the ground floor and to the rear the infill is mainly in red brick. A brick perimeter wall encloses a small triangular area around the fire escape stair, and a service yard to the east is bounded by low barrel-shaped brick curbs.

The configuration of the internal spaces follows that of the concrete frame. The ground-floor interior comprises a series of classrooms with toilets and other ancillary spaces opening off a broad central corridor; the internal walls are of red brick, the floor of red quarry tiles and the exposed metalwork of doors and window frames painted bright yellow. The main staircase with its solid board-marked concrete balustrades and soffits and tiled treads gives access to the two upper floors, each comprising a large glass-fronted workshop space at the front with smaller workshops and toilet blocks behind the main spine beam to the rear. By 13 May, the north-eastern corner of the second floor had been largely reduced to rubble, with the roof and the rear and side walls broken up as far back as the spine beam.

As built, the rear block comprised a single-storey workshop space with concrete-framed brick walls and a glazed roof of saw-tooth profile, the end bay being divided off by a glazed partition. By the time of the site visit around three-quarters of this structure had been demolished, including the link corridor connecting it to the front block; only the end bay and parts of the side walls remained.

ASSESSMENT:

CONSULTATION

Consultation was carried out with the applicants and the local authority. No substantive representations were received.

ASSESSMENT

As the Government's Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings (2010) makes clear, age and rarity

are among the most important criteria in statutory designation; key watersheds are 1840 and 1945, with post-WWII buildings requiring 'particularly careful selection' in view of their comparative youth and the very large numbers that survive. The threshold for a building of the early 1960s is thus set relatively high in terms of other key criteria such as historic interest, architectural merit and, crucially, degree of intactness.

As a purpose-built adult training centre, no. 205a belongs to an unusual class of structures, sharing features both with specialist educational buildings such as manual instruction centres and special schools, and with welfare buildings such as health centres and psychiatric institutions. As such, and as an early response to the important 1959 reforms in mental health provision, it is of some historic importance. This alone is not sufficient for special interest, however. A comparable building, the Bridge School in Islington (a former Junior Training Centre by the architect London County Council architect F O Brown which opened in 1966), was turned down for listing in 2008: despite its relative intactness and a degree of architectural quality, it was not felt to be of sufficient interest to merit designation.

Likewise, the association with SEM, although it adds somewhat to the interest of the building, does not in itself greatly strengthen the case for listing. The range and quality of SEM's work in the 1960s and 70s is now increasingly acknowledged. However, the firm's dedication to relatively unglamorous public-sector projects has prevented it from achieving the reputation (or the influence) of more high-profile contemporary practices, and none of its other buildings has yet been listed. Nor, compared with far more ambitious projects such as Trevelyan College or the West of England School, can the present building be described as anything other than a minor work.

Nevertheless, and even in its present damaged state, it is clear that no. 205a was once a building of architectural merit. The unfussy integrity of the design, structurally and functionally honest without boasting about the fact, is manifest in the strong but subtle detailing of the front block and in its nicely-balanced formal relationship with the workshop behind. It shows the emerging Brutalist aesthetic used with a discipline and dignity reminiscent of contemporary work by architects such as James Stirling - see, for example, the latter's 1958 housing project at Ham Common near Richmond-upon-Thames. The careful choice of materials enhances the effect, the starkness of the exposed concrete softened by board-marking and the use of warm red brickwork, and enlivened by the vivid yellow of the well-proportioned infill panels. The interior palette matches that of the exterior, save that the warm red now predominates thanks to the use of quarry-tiled flooring, giving the internal spaces a reassuring and hospitable ambience that offsets the building's industrial character while reinforcing its therapeutic purpose.

The recent damage to the building cannot be ignored, however, and it is this above all else that undermines the case for designation. By the time of the 13 May site meeting, demolition work had already destroyed all but a fragment of the rear workshop and part of the front block, severely compromising both the functional and the aesthetic integrity of the complex. It is now no longer possible to read this pair of structures as the expression of their intended purpose - an important consideration given the contemporary stress on functionalism - and the balance of proportions between the two has likewise been lost. While a degree of attrition might be expected in the case of a much older building, for one belonging to the last half-century the intactness of the main fabric would nearly always be a pre-requisite for listing. In the case of no. 205a, whatever the merits of the original design, what now survives is altogether too fragmentary to be of special interest.

CONCLUSION

No. 205a has lost much of the interest it once possessed, and does not now merit designation.

SOURCES

James Stevens Curl, Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, entry on Stillman & Eastwick-Field (2000).

John Stillman, obituary of John and Elizabeth Eastwick-Field, The Guardian, 16 April 2003.

Entries on Stillman & Eastwick-Field in RIBA library index.

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION DECISION:

No. 205a Morning Lane, built in 1964 to designs by Stillman & Eastwick Field, is not recommended for designation for the following principal reason:

* Partial demolition: recent work has resulted in the loss of much of the principal fabric, compromising the integrity of the original design.

VISITS

10-MAY-2010 External only

13-MAY-2010 Full inspection

COUNTERSIGNING

Countersigning Comments: Agreed. Substantial demolition has taken place, which means that building does not meet the criteria for listing, regardless of any claims to special interest it may have possessed. 8-JUN-2010

Second Countersigning Comments: Agreed also. It is always regrettable on the rare occasions when partial demolition takes place during assessment. This building had formal claims to interest but these were not able to be fully considered and it is now much too changed to recommend for listing. 10.06.10

HP Director Comments: