Woodberry Down Children's Centre – planning application reference 2010/0100

Comments:

The John Scott Health Centre opened in 1952 was one of the first post-war health centres following the creation of the National Health Service in 1948. It is thus of seminal importance in the history of the modern health system and national significance. It is also an important building locally, as a recent article in the Hackney Society's magazine *Spaces* articulated. Remarkably, the Health Centre survives mostly unaltered and its original planning and design is clear and impressive. It was designed by London County Council Architects' Department in the period 1946 to 1952, and expresses innovative planning as well as high quality design of the period. Its minimalist styling relies on spare detailing, elegant proportions and the careful arrangement of the windows and doors for effect. Replacing the original windows here would thus have a greater impact on the building's character than it would on a grander, more ornate building. Therefore, the Hackney Society wishes to object to the proposal to replace the windows of the Children's Centre.

We believe that repair is preferable to restoration. The wholesale replacement of windows on the main facades of the Children's Centre does not represent a conservation-led approach to the building, which its Grade II listing warrants. We urge the owners to reconsider the option of repair rather than replacement. If replacement is deemed the only solution, and accepted by Hackney Council's Sustainability and Urban Design Team, however, we recommend that as close a match as possible to the originals in materials, glazing bar arrangement and profile is made. Replacement should only be considered on a like-for-like basis.

The John Scott Health Centre was built at a time of optimism, when the forces of architecture and social welfare joined hands to give the best to the people of Hackney. The Hackney Society believes that this building, and those who use it, deserve the best today too, even when it come to windows.