

Portland House Tower

Here is the comment I have sent to Westminster Council

James Dunnett, 30th April 2013

I am an architect and writer about architecture and was for twenty years a member of the Twentieth Century Society Casework Committee and for ten years Chair or Co-Chair of DOCOMOMO-UK, the UK Branch of the international association for the Conservation of significant examples of Modern architecture. In 1986 I mounted an exhibition at the RIBA Drawings Collection entitled 'London: Images from the Modern City' devoted mainly to the 'heritage' of post-war commercial architecture in London, and showing its intellectual and architectural pedigree, about which I have also written a lot.

I regard Portland House as a notable example, its lozenge shape deriving from buildings such as Gropius and Belluschi's PanAm building in New York and Le Corbusier's Quartier de la Marine skyscraper project for Algiers of 1938 before that. The expressed concrete is crucial to the effect of weight and dignity, as well as the continuous verticals - the piers running up the facade from the arcade. The faceted form allows the sun to catch it well, one facet catching the light or sun while its neighbour does not. Its comparative slenderness is important too to its architectural effect, as is the definitive square end.

All this will be destroyed by the proposed works, which will replace the facets with a curve, the slenderness with fatness, the square end with a pointed end and the expressed verticals with emphatic horizontals only. The dignity and elegance of the present structure - even though marred by the clumsy and random additions at ground level - will be destroyed, and its clear single form broken down into a medley. But this is a dominant structure in this very important part of the Capital and therefore it is appropriate that such architectural considerations should be taken into account. The canopies and other structures applied near ground level not so long ago spoiled its relationship to the ground level open space - a crucial factor - but could be removed. Please refuse consent.

James Dunnett

On 30 Apr 2013, at 18:35, Jidunnett@aol.com wrote:

