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Sent by email: [Laura.Hazelton@camden.gov.uk](mailto:Laura.Hazelton@camden.gov.uk)

02 August 2019

Our ref: 97 12 08

Dear Laura Hazelton,

**2019/2773/P & 2019/2790/L Space House, 1 Kemble Street and 43-59 Kingsway**

The Twentieth Century Society has been notified of the above applications. The applications seek planning permission and listed building consent for alterations and extensions to 45-59 Kingsway and 1 Kemble Street, a pair of buildings collectively known as Space House that are listed together at Grade II. The Society wishes to object to the above application owing to the potential harm to historic significance resulting from certain aspects of the proposals. The proposals were presented to the Society's Casework Committee, and the comments below reflect members' views.

**History**

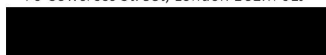
Space House was designed by George Marsh for Richard Seifert and Partners, and construction was carried out between 1964 and 1968. The speculative office development was commissioned by Harry Hyams, and comprised an eight-storey slab block on Kingsway housing offices and showrooms above retail units at street level, connected via a bridge link to the taller cylindrical office tower on Kemble Street. A basement car park sat beneath the site, accessed via a circular ramp on Kemble Street which passed an integral filling station.

The ground floor areas have suffered several phases of insensitive remodelling in past decades, including the enclosure of the southern staircase, which was previously open to the street, the addition of fencing surrounding the former filling station and car park ramp, and the closure of the retail units and infilling of the former shopfronts. The northern entrance to 45-59 Kingsway still conforms to its original footprint, which curves away from the street to reveal the sculptural concrete piloti, a characteristic design feature of Seifert's buildings. A similar idea was used at the southern end of the same building, where the ground floor is recessed to leave the elegant star-shaped columns exposed, creating a visual link to the similarly shaped columns behind at 1 Kemble Street.

**Comments**

The Society wishes to object to two elements of the proposals, namely the size of the proposed rooftop extension to 1 Kemble Street, and to the enclosure of space at ground floor level.

The Twentieth Century Society  
70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ



The concrete façade decoration on 1 Kemble Street is reminiscent of the exterior detailing on Seifert's Centre Point, which was being constructed at the same time. It is a signature of the practice's style, and its geometric nature creates a strong modern and futuristic aesthetic that was a key architectural trend during the 1960s. We are concerned that the increased size of the recessed rooftop floor will detract from the uniformity of the tower's façade, and will obscure views of the decorative cornice that tops the external concrete grid. In our view, reducing the footprint of the rooftop extension would reduce the negative impact of this addition as this would limit its visibility.

Our principal objection is to the enclosure of ground floor space beneath both 45-59 Kingsway and 1 Kemble Street. The open space that originally included the southern staircase to 49-59 Kingsway is a key element of the composition of the two buildings and surrounding public space, as it creates the sense of the building floating above street level, and opens up views of 1 Kemble Street for pedestrians on Kingsway. The list description describes this unique moment as follows: "... the tower behind, whose cylindrical form is only glimpsed from Kingsway, and becomes fully apparent only on turning the corner into Kemble Street...". We consider this open space to be integral to the revealing action, and it is regrettable that its effect is currently greatly diminished by the previous enclosure of the southern stair.

The building's design creates a remarkable sense of drama within the streetscape, and the exposed piloti are key contributors to this effect. The Society considers the enclosure of the piloti behind glazed facades will cause harm to the building's architectural interest by removing a design feature that is characteristic of Seifert's style and of high-quality architecture from the period, as well as blocking views under and through from Kingsway to 1 Kemble Street and blocking close public access to the intricately detailed piloti. We recommend that this element of the design is reconsidered, protecting public access under the southern end of 45-59 Kingsway and removing the harmful later enclosure surrounding the southern staircase.

The Society is additionally opposed to the concept of glazing beneath the filling station canopy. The design of the enclosure is not sensitive to the high degree of geometric complexity seen across the two buildings, and will impede understanding of this element's original function. The canopy is remarkable as a large expanse of cantilevered pre-cast concrete that elegantly fans out across the open space surrounding 1 Kemble Street. The enclosure of space with glazed partitions will reduce the impact the canopy has as a large self-supporting element, which currently fulfils the original intention of adding to the building's sense of luxury and drama.

#### **Summary**

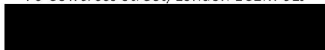
The Society considers this to be an excellent opportunity to reverse harmful additions and alterations of past decades, and in our view several elements of the proposals will be successful in sustaining the building's architectural interest. Despite other encouraging elements of the scheme, a number of aspects fall short of the conservation-focused approach that we consider to be necessary for proposals directly affecting a listed building. We therefore object to the above proposals and request that our recommendations are followed in a revision of the proposed scheme.

I trust that these comments are of use to you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,



The Twentieth Century Society  
70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ



**Grace Etherington**

Caseworker

Twentieth Century Society

**Remit:** The Twentieth Century Society was founded in 1979 and is the national amenity society concerned with the protection, appreciation, and study of post-1914 architecture, townscape and design. The Society is acknowledged in national planning guidance as the key organisation concerned with the modern period and is a constituent member of the Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies. Under the procedures set out in *ODPM Circular 09/2005*, all English local planning authorities must inform the Twentieth Century Society when an application for listed building consent involving partial or total demolition is received, and they must notify us of the decisions taken on these applications.

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