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21 September 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

**APPLICATION REF: S62A/2023/0022**

**SITE: Stansted Airport Terminal, Bassingbourn Road, Essex**

**OUR REF: 187450**

The Twentieth Century Society have been alerted to this application and offer the following comments. The Society objects to this application to alter an internationally significant building, which the Society believes, merits listing at a high grade. The case was presented to the Society's expert Casework Committee and the members agreed not only that this application causes harm to the terminal building, but that the Society should prepare an application requesting that the building be added to the National Heritage List.

We therefore consider this building should be identified as a non-designated heritage asset on account of its clear national architectural significance and considered in these terms for this application. As a result, the relevant clauses of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) should be taken into account by PINS when determining the outcome of the application. Paragraph 189 of the NPPF describes 'heritage assets', as 'an irreplaceable resource [...] [which] should be

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conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations'. Paragraph 197 states that 'in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of: a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; b) the positive contribution that the conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness'.

Paragraph 203 of the NPPF relates to NDHAs and asks that 'The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.' In addition the exhortation that 'great weight should be given to the asset's conservation' (para. 199) should be heeded as should paragraph 200: 'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.'

Stansted Airport Terminal (1981-1991) is of very high architectural significance not only by virtue of its connection with the international acclaimed practice of Foster & Partners, but also because it pioneered a new approach using high-tech architecture to 'challenge the rules of terminal design'. That the terminal was an outstanding contribution to airport design was recognised at the time of construction, and it was garlanded as a multi-award winning project, claiming the European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture Award in 1990 and 21 other awards subsequently, including the RIBA Architecture Award 1992; Civic Trust Award 1992 and the Aluminium Imagination Architectural Award 1991. The press was also enthusiastic, and the Terminal was written up in all major national and international architectural and engineering journals. A typical commentary was that in the Architectural Review which concluded that it was 'highly sophisticated constructionally'. Stansted Airport Terminal is internationally pioneering and has set a precedent for several terminal buildings since. The concepts which originated at Stansted would be further developed in subsequent airports designed by the firm, such as the Hong Kong Chek Lap Kok International Airport (1997) and Beijing Capital International Airport (2008), two of the world's current largest and most advanced airports, as well as influencing other airport planners worldwide.



The significance of this building, outwith its prize-winning status and its influence on high-tech and international air terminal design, is its structural simplicity which belies its sophisticated concept. The principal building was conceived as a large rectangular ground plan divided in two longitudinal strips: a landing-reception area and a runway-embarkation area. Public access and airfield side are signified by open canopies running continuously along the elevations; the front for general access, the rear, for the Terminal Transit System. The structural 'trees' which root the building to its 18metre square grid are elegant forms but serve the dual purpose as the service distribution system which runs through the 'trunks' both externally under the canopies and rise from the undercroft through the concourse floor. Most strikingly, the trees supported the roof canopy that floats over the entire terminal building letting in the maximum amount of light. Being daylight in this way gives the concourse significant energy and economic advantages, and Fosters claimed at its completion this led to running costs that were 'half those of any other British terminal'. Foster's interior design was based on ease of use, so that passengers progressed in a 'fluid movement' through the different airport functions until they reached air-side, where they could see the planes. From there, an automated Tracked Transit System took them to the aircraft located by the satellite buildings. This degree of clarity was achieved by turning the building 'upside down', banishing the heavy environmental services usually found at roof level to an undercroft that runs beneath the concourse, with the baggage handling.

It is acknowledged that the terminal has been altered since construction. The main changes have been to the interior flow of the passenger route with a more tortuous route being introduced which interrupts the clarity of the original circulation as designed. However, such changes are theoretically reversible and the interiors of airport terminals will always be adapting to changing commercial and security pressures. It was always foreseen that Stansted may expand and the introduction of new terminals have affected this original building with the construction of a walkway to the third. It was also intended that the terminal building itself would be capable of extension, its modular nature allowing for ease of addition allowing for expansion to the sides without detracting from its symmetrical form and maintaining the external expression of the structural tree columns in the canopies.

The proposals currently under consideration in this application, however, do not take the original principles for extension into account. The proposed extension by two bays on the airside elevation

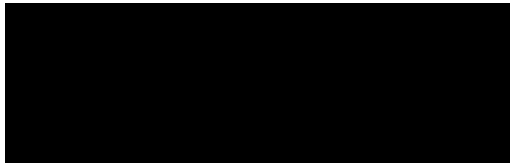


will be detrimental to this heritage asset, involving the enclosure of the balancing external canopy and the removal of the Terminal Transport System. The effect of these alterations will be to unbalance the architectural conception of the terminal losing the external expression of the structural trees under the canopy on one elevation is unnecessary and hugely detrimental to the appearance of the building. The loss of the TTS will destroy a significant element of the original circulation. The Society objects strongly to these elements of the application, not the least because the terminal has the capability of extension without the need to destroy major architectural concepts of the original design. The principle of extension is not disputed therefore, but the execution of it in these proposals, which the Society considers causes harm to the significance of the building and insufficiently justified.

We would urge PINS to refuse this application and encourage a reconsideration of the extension of the Terminal building in line with the original ethos of the design.

I trust that these comments are helpful in your determination of this application and the Society would be pleased to hear the decision in due course.

Yours sincerely



Clare Price

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**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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