
THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY
The champion for Victorian and Edwardian architecture

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Our reference: 2011/06/009

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Dear Mr Holt

RE: Hornsey Gasholder no. 1, Land at Haringey Heartlands (1892); variation of conditions, including specific permission for demolition of gasholders prior to redevelopment

Thank you for consulting the Victorian Society on this application. The Society **strongly objects** to the demolition of Hornsey no. 1 gasholder. This is a reiteration of our objection submitted to the outline planning application which was granted in 2011, but additional note must be taken of the newly unique status of this structure.

The current application is to vary the conditions to allow demolition of the gasholders prior to sale of the site to developers. Hornsey no. 1 gasholder should not be demolished; it has real historical and aesthetic significance which has recently increased due to the demolition of an earlier example of this type. The gasholder must be considered to be a non-designated heritage asset, and thus its loss must be weighed against the benefits of development. Without a detailed proposal for the site, loss of the gasholder would cause harm to the heritage of Haringey, without any guarantee of public benefits which could be argued to outweigh that harm.

The gasholder, as acknowledged in the application documentation, is an early example of Samuel Cutler's patented helical guide frame, developed in 1888. It is extremely important as an innovative engineered structure, the geodesic principles of which have subsequently been developed and used in construction throughout the twentieth century. The principle is a lattice of equilateral triangles, all equally strong, forming a lightweight, rigid 3D structure. Hornsey no. 1 has a claim to being one of the first fully developed structures of this type.

Particularly crucial to the assessment of this gasholder's significance at this stage is the new status of this structure, as the only known remaining example of this innovative gasholder design. An earlier, if smaller and less elegant, example of this design at Tunbridge Wells has been demolished in recent months, leaving Hornsey no. 1 gasholder as the only known surviving example of this type. This now places the gasholder in a unique position, as an important surviving piece of engineering history.

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The aesthetic quality of the gasholder's design is the other aspect of its significance. It is simple and elegant and the geometrical pattern made by its helices is very striking; the tailoring of the gusset plates and the way the guide rails are carried above the top of the girder like finials make this a refined and elegant structure. The form is determined by engineering rather than architectural style, but its aesthetic value on this basis is not reduced, when considered in the context of its originality and as an example of a beautiful, functional design.

We recommend that this application is **refused**. The demolition of Hornsey no. 1 would be a serious loss to the area and to our national industrial heritage. Its demolition should certainly not be permitted without defined plans for the site. The opportunity should be seized to retain the structure as a characterful centrepiece for any new development.

Yours sincerely

Kathy Clark
Conservation Adviser