

NEWS

Pimlico School architect dies at 82

Elizabeth Hopkirk

Senior architects have paid tribute to John Bancroft who has died aged 82.

Bancroft spent much of his career designing schools for the London County Council (LCC) architects' department.

His most significant project was Pimlico School, a building that sought to instill a sense of com-



John Bancroft: fought long campaign to save school.

munity among its pupils through the provision of a high level of internal transparency.

The concrete and glass comprehensive divided opinion and was demolished in 2008 to make way for an academy.

But Bancroft — along with the school's many admirers — fought a long campaign to save it, believing Westminster Council's decision to bulldoze it was ideological. Bancroft is believed to have remortgaged his home in a bid to save the building.

Film director Tom Cordell, who

interviewed Bancroft for his 2010 documentary *Utopia London*, said he was a "thoroughly nice human being" whose concern for others was evident in his work.

"He was a very polite man," he said, "but when we took him to watch the demolition he muttered, 'bloody fools' and said if he was a dog he would like to cock his leg on their hoarding. It was the rudest thing I heard him say. You couldn't get him to say a bad word about anyone."

"Because he believed in being totally involved in every stage of a project he didn't do that many buildings," said Cordell. "So the sad thing is there's not much of a legacy in that sense. I hope Pimlico will be the Euston Arch of modern architecture and people will realise you can't just pull down these buildings."

Michael Morris, who also joined the LCC in 1957, said Bancroft's buildings would be remembered even if they did not survive. And Colin Stansfield Smith recalled a talented architect with stamina and determination.

Kate Macintosh, described "trudging through the mud" with Bancroft and Architects for Peace at Greenham Common. And she said: "John did not allow his passionate commitment to modernism to narrow his appreciation of the achievements of other eras."

Bancroft also led Victorian Society campaigns to save St Pancras station booking hall and the Natural History Museum.

FIRST LOOK



The curved pitched rooftops and use of external circulation reference local Hakka houses.

Mole's luxury complex takes its cue from Taiwan's vernacular

Mole Architects, working with Gianni Botsford and landscape architect Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, has unveiled plans for a 71,000sq m development on the edge of Hsinchu City, the "Silicon Valley" of Taiwan.

The scheme comprises a spa hotel, serviced apartments and seven luxury villas, set across rolling forested hillside on the site of a former tea plantation.

Inspired by the form of a walled hillside village, the courtyard buildings frame narrow streets that culminate in views over a central planted ravine, which acts as the main north-south spine.

All of the buildings sit on steeply pitched brick plinths, with different treatment at the upper levels. The hotel blocks, framed in bronze-anodised aluminium, rise from expressive concrete vaults that contain reception and banquet rooms and enclose a series of stepped terraces with pools.

The serviced apartments reference the form of local vernacular Hakka houses, with pavilions enclosed in courtyard buildings, external



SITE PLAN

- 1 Hotel
- 2 Villas
- 3 Apartments
- 4 Clubhouse



Swimming pools are cantilevered out over the western edge.

circulation and curving pitched rooftops. Their facades are punctured with recessed balconies and clad with perforated fibre cement board.

The luxury 1,200sq m villas, designed for corporate entertainment use, are predominantly glazed, with south-facing gardens and swimming pools cantilevered out over the western edge.

Mole director Meredith Bowles said: "The Hakka

buildings have also influenced our environmental strategy, with open circulation encouraging cross ventilation and solar screening, as well as observations that many of the more recent entirely sealed buildings out there don't work well for that climate."

Work is scheduled to start on site next year, with a projected construction budget of £40 million.

K4 rethinks 30-storey Birmingham tower

Plans for a 30-storey tower above a grade II-listed fire station in Birmingham are being revised after the scheme was panned by heritage and design experts.

K4 Architects was appointed by developer Watkins Jones to bring the 1930s-built Central Fire Station back into use and design a tower above the building containing 826 student flats.

The scheme was submitted for planning permission in June but was criticised by several consultees for its scale and its impact on the listed building.

K4 director Bob Ghosh said that the number of student flats had been reduced but the final number was yet to be decided. Plans to demolish part of the listed building have been scrapped in favour of developing an adjacent courtyard area.

Diane Haigh, director of Design Council Cobe, said: "They will need to think quite carefully about



The scheme above a thirties fire station is being revised.

it but that might be a more successful approach."

The Twentieth Century Society objected to K4's original proposals on the grounds that the new development was too large.

Senior caseworker Jon Wright said: "If the tower were to come down five storeys in height it wouldn't make any difference to our concerns. But if there's a major change to the scale of the tower we would want to look at it again."

K4 hopes to re-submit plans by the end of September.

SOUTH-FACING ELEVATION

