

Application Name: wanstead police station

Number: 466858
Type: New
Heritage Category: Listing

Address:

Spratt Hall Road,Wanstead,London

Metropolitan Police,Wanstead Police Station,Spratt Hall Road,London,London

County	District	District Type	Parish
Greater London Authority	Redbridge	London Borough	Non Civil Parish

Recommendation: Reject**Assessment**

Wanstead Police Station dates from 1886 and was designed by John Butler who was Surveyor to the Metropolitan Police from 1881 to 1895. The new station cost £2,366, was designed in the typical red brick style used for police stations at this date, and served the fast-expanding suburb of Wanstead. It originally housed four Inspectors, one sergeant and sixteen constables. The site comprises a detached station to its fore with accommodation for married couples above a stable block to the rear, overlooking a yard.

English Heritage inspected the building in March 2001 and reported as follows: 'Externally it survives in a little-altered state and retains its panelled door, sandstone keystones and lintels, its windows and slate hipped roof. The single storey cell block adjoins the building's return flank. The smaller building to the rear was built as onsite accommodation; the stables adjoining to the north have been replaced with a C20 equipment room. Internally the extent of survival of fittings is very high; the cells have undergone extensive alteration but otherwise most fittings remain in situ, a campaign of refurbishment of 1936 notwithstanding.' From the information we have been provided with, in this new application for listing, there appear to have been few major changes to the building in the last ten years.

In 2001, English Heritage recommended that Wanstead Police Station should not be added to the statutory list because: 'despite surviving in good condition and being a representative example of 1880s police station design, the Wanstead police station lacks special character and cannot be regarded as a building of national interest.' No new information has been presented that might lead us to reconsider this recommendation. It is not the case, as the applicants suggest, that this is the only intact purpose-built police station still in police use (Bow Station and Hampstead Stations are other examples, both listed at Grade II). Nor is this the earliest surviving purpose-built police station. Over 350 stations were built in London between 1842 and 1900 and several, including that on King's Cross Road in Islington built in 1869-70 and listed Grade II, predate Wanstead. Nor can the building be regarded as an exceptional example of a Victorian police station in terms of its design. John Butler's stations did not differ substantially from the brick, vaguely Italianate buildings designed by his predecessor surveyors, such as the former Kingston Station of 1864 and Walton Street, Chelsea of around the same date. A more pronounced change in the architecture of police stations came in the 1890s, when the Surveyorship passed to Butler's son, John Dixon Butler, whose red-brick-and-stone, free-style stations were inspired by Richard Norman Shaw, who built the Metropolitan Police Headquarters in the late 1880s (now listed Grade I). One police building by Butler Snr is currently listed, the river station at Blackwall. By contrast, around twenty stations by his son have statutory protection, a reflection of their superior architectural interest. Wanstead Police Station is neither a particularly early example of a London police station, nor does it have the clear architectural quality of the stations designed by John Dixon Butler. It is therefore not recommended that the station be added to the Heritage List.

Nonetheless, this is clearly a building of strong local interest. Its historic features survive well, externally and internally, it is handsomely built with good materials, and has local historic interest aplenty. For these reasons, its local listing is fully merited.