

Highgate CAAC objection to application HGY/2023/0441 for 11 and 11A View Road

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee objects to the proposed demolish and rebuild of 11 and 11A View Road.

The former detached house, built in the 1920s by local firm Slatfords, was remodelled in the 1950s and converted into two dwellings. The current proposals suggest building a larger modern version of the original house rather than refurbishing and reuniting the two halves of the original property.

The heritage impact of these proposals must be viewed in terms of the impact on both the conservation area in general and on the setting of the Grade II listed building (No. 9) next door. Does a new house preserve the CA or detract from it? Clearly, building a more massive reproduction of the original house will not improve the setting of No 9 View Road.

As the Planning Inspector said about the more general issue of “whether the character or appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area would be preserved or enhanced” in their report of 29th March 2023, dismissing appeals APP/Y5420/W/22/3301777 and APP/Y5420/Y/22/3301838 in relation to 15 View Road:

*“11. ... Overall, the View Road area is a well preserved example of high quality residential development of the period. Houses tend to sit in generous plots and have gaps between them, which adds a characteristic sense of greenery and spaciousness to the CA. The style and detailing of the appeal dwelling within its spacious, verdant plot contributes positively to the special interest and thereby significance of the CA as a whole.”*

In that case the Inspector also said of No 15 that:

*“19. Through diminishing the architectural integrity of No. 15, the contribution it makes to the well-preserved nature of the View Road would be weakened. So too would there be undermining the spaciousness of the plot and relationship between the building and its neighbour that underpins part of the significance of the CA.*

*Consequently, proposals would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA as a whole but rather, albeit in a small way, cause harm. Conflict therefore also arises with section 72(1) of the Act.*

*20. In the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and considering the scale and nature of the proposals, I consider the degree of harm to the significance of the listed building and the CA separately as a designated heritage assets would, in each case, be less than substantial. In these circumstances, paragraph 202 of the Framework requires the less than substantial harm be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing [the asset's] optimum viable use."*

We regret the cumulative attrition of the character of this area resulting from perfectly sound authentic buildings and leafy gardens being replaced by more massive pastiches of only a broadly similar style. While 11 and 11A are not notable listed buildings like Nos 15 and 9 View Road, neither are they negative contributors to the area. The new house is unlikely to enhance the conservation area.

This would be of even more concern if this application is intended merely to establish the principle of demolition and rebuild on this site, and the applicant then reverts with proposals for a quite different or more massive house plus basement(s), taking up far more of the site, disrupting groundwater flows, nature and so-on and further damaging the setting of No 9 and View Road more generally.

We do not accept that there is any net public benefit as a result of this demolish and rebuild proposal.

There are clearly costs, in that one dwelling would be lost in replacing 11 and 11A by one single more massive house, reducing Haringey's ability to achieve its housing target.

The applicant does not make the case for any sustainability benefit. The whole life carbon assessment presented with the application does not compare the impact of refurbishing the existing building with demolishing it and building a new one.

Instead, it compares the carbon impact of demolishing all but the facade and building a new building behind it with demolishing the entire building and starting from scratch. This is a false comparison which does not reflect the true impact of the proposals relative to the current situation and so should not be presented as a “benefit”.

Further, we find the idea of digging up trees and other plants and storing them at the bottom of the garden during the building works rather questionable.

It is notable, viewed from Highgate Allotments, that the tree cover in this garden has already been reduced substantially over the last year or so. The characterisation in the Tree Protection Plan of the remaining greenery in the north eastern part of the garden as a “Leyland hedge” and “Privet hedge” is also potentially misleading.

Also, bats live in the gardens of these properties alongside the allotments. There should be a bat report and measures proposed to ensure they are not adversely affected by the building works, the new property itself or the garden design. One HCAAC member has an allotment on the Yeatman Road site and has seen these bats in recent months flying within feet of the gardens of 11 and 11A. People who have had allotments on the site for longer talk about how there used to be far more bats before recent development and tree felling. Bats are protected in law. Those bats which remain should be protected.

For all of the above reasons we do not think a case has been made which justifies the demolish and rebuild proposals and think this application should be refused.