

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee

1 MAY 2023 HGY/2023/0338 : Mallinson Sports Centre

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee objects to HGY/2023/0338.
Mallinson Sports Centre

1. Introduction

These are the objections Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee (“HCAAC”) to the above application for proposed works to the Mallinson Sports Centre, Highgate School, Bishopswood Road, Hornsey, London, N6 4NY, namely:

"Redevelopment of Mallinson Sport Centre, to include: 1) Partial demolition of existing structure, squash and fives buildings; 2) Refurbishment and extension of the remaining facilities, comprising new part single basement, new double height sports hall and new entrances, new teaching classrooms, offices, gym and exercise studios, circulation and ancillary accommodation; 3) New basement level outdoor covered fives courts; 4) External sunken oval sports pitch; and 5) Associated landscaping and improved provision for emergency services and servicing."

2. Background and policies (applicable to each of Highgate School's applications)

This is one of the series of planning applications for major building works by Highgate School. These are set out in the Highgate School SPD agreed between Haringey Council, the school and the local community. The application numbers are:

HGY/2023/0313:	Junior Field
HGY/2023/0315:	Richards Centre
HGY/2023/0316:	Far Field
HGY/2023/0317:	Science Block
HGY/2023/0328:	Dyne House
HGY/2023/0331:	Formal Screening Opinion re. EIA
HGY/2023/0338:	Mallinson Sports Centre
HGY/2023/0390:	Science Block listed building application
HGY/2023/0697:	Dyne House listed building application

3. HCAAC's generic overarching objections to each of applications

These are Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee generic overarching objections to each of the applicant's applications listed in the background and policies section above. Each of those applications should be refused for the reasons set out in this section alone.

All applications in this series are expected to follow the planning principles and guidance in the Highgate School SPD. One of the most important of these is that each application must be considered not only on its own merits, but in relation to its effect on the Conservation Area as a whole.

The Highgate Conservation Area is unusual in that it covers more or less the whole of Highgate not just one particular area. It also extends into Camden and developments in the Haringey "section" impact directly on the Camden "section" of the Conservation Area.

Part of the Conservation Area's importance derives from this fact as it allows the development of Highgate, from a late medieval hilltop village to a modern semi-rural enclave within a major conurbation, to be clearly seen and understood by today's residents and visitors. One factor in this unique survival is the delicate balance between Highgate Village and the school. If the school buildings become too dominant and threaten the frequently lauded leafy semi-rural character of the village this will be destroyed and the Conservation Area will suffer great damage.

It is also the case that when development has taken place in Highgate it has frequently been of notable architectural excellence, another factor in the importance of the Conservation Area. There are not many Conservation Areas which can boast of including work of architects of the standing of both Robert Adam and Lubetkin along with work by Walter Segal and that of the Hornsey Borough Engineer on the notable Gaskell Estate of 1913.

Equally, given the wide extent of all the works proposed it is essential that particular care is taken over tree work and other landscape features. What may be acceptable in a small one-off application can have disastrous consequences for the atmosphere, bio-diversity and ecological status of a wider area.

Other planning documents whose guidance must be followed contain similar policies with the same aim and are as follows:

- NPPF paragraph 95
- NPPF paragraphs 148 & 149
- Haringey site allocation SA 41; note also *"the school facilities can be enhanced BUT only when simultaneously benefiting the local communities."*
- Haringey Local Plan; policies SP13 OPEN SPACES
- Highgate Neighbourhood plan policy DH2
- The London Plan (2021)

All these policy documents emphasise that ONLY development proposals which preserve or enhance the character of appearance of Highgate's Conservation Area, and respect the settings of listed buildings, other heritage assets and Metropolitan Land should be permitted.

HCAAC believes that that proposals for the Mallinson Sports Centre building are NOT in accordance with these policies and must, therefore must be refused.

4. 'Need' for accommodation not provided

Sub-section 1 of Section B of Policy S3 (Education and childcare facilities) in the London Plan (2021) states that: *"Development proposals for education and childcare facilities should:*

1) locate facilities in areas of identified need".

Changes In Gross External and Internal Areas of Buildings

Name of Site	Site Area (sqm)	Existing Total Gross External Area (sqm)	Proposed Total Gross External Area (sqm)	Existing Total Gross Internal Area (sqm)	Proposed Total Gross Internal Area (sqm)	Increase in Total Gross External Area (%)	Increase in Total Gross Internal Area (%)
Dyne House & Island	5,835	3,422	7,380	3,019	6,216	116	106
Science	1,500	2,996	3,424	2,720	3,124	14	15
Richards Music Centre	2,011	0	2,025	604	1,784	189	186
Mallinson Sports Centre	13,745	3,353	6,495	3,014	5,873	94	96
The Docant	4,140	0	2,473	0	2,460	-	-
Total areas and changes as percent	27,231	10,471	21,107	9,355	19,457	108	107

Sources of figures

Area measurements: Applicant's table in HG/2023/0328, file: 01/2/2023 230124 Site Wide Area Schedule
Totals and % increases: Calculated by HCAAC.

As can be seen from this table the increase in the total gross area (GEA) amounts to:

$(22,807\text{sqm} - 10,471) = 11,336\text{ sqm}$, an increase overall of 108%, that is more than double the areas of Highgate School's existing buildings included in all of these applications. The increase for the Mallinson application is 94% more than the size of the GEA of the existing building. The internal area (GIA) would increase by 95%.

The Highgate School SPD stated the school's intention to provide two new classrooms within the pre-preparatory school of the same size as the existing classroom (39sqm). Having said that, in its pre-preparatory school application (HGY/2020/2980), the applicant changed its intent to three classrooms of a larger size (46sqm).

The Case Officer for HGY/2020/2980 noted, correctly, that this increased size far exceeded the DfE (Department for Education) minimum requirements for these type of classrooms.

Despite recognising the over-provision, he then went on to rely upon the London Plan (2016) Policy 3.18 (Education Facilities) which stated that "Development proposals which enhance education and skills provision will be supported, including new builds, expansion of existing or change of use to educational purposes."

The Case Officer should never have invoked that policy as it was not designed to permit three proposed classrooms (providing each pupil with 6.9sqm) when the DfE standard for this age group is a minimum of 2sqm per child.

Importantly, that policy has been discarded in the London Plan (2021). So, there can be no basis whatsoever in trying to invoke it in justification for the increased provision proposed in these latest applications.

The Council needs to assess each of the applicant's applications against Policy S3 (Education and childcare facilities) in the London Plan (2021). In doing so, the Council will be bound to conclude that the applicant's proposals are not in furtherance of Policy S3.

Also, sub-section 1 of Section B of Policy S3 (Education and childcare facilities) in the London Plan (2021) states that: "*Development proposals for education and childcare facilities should: 1) locate facilities in areas of identified need*". The applicant has simply failed to identify that the proposed Mallinson Sports Centre is in an area of need.

In addition, the Council is bound to refuse the applications on the basis that the proposed enhancement of space standards and ancillary provision would have a significant adverse impact on heritage assets, that is, listed buildings and the Highgate Conservation Area.

Highgate School needs to aim higher in reducing carbon emissions not just in the areas covered by the current applications, but across its whole estate. Fabric improvements will be required within the next 10 years. We suggest that serious consideration should be given now to forward-planning which could include a district heating system to serve the Dyne House, Island, Bishopswood Road and St. Michael's Primary School sites.

The amount of biodiversity found estate-wide is very disappointing. We would expect from such a low base that a significant and meaningful increase could and should be achieved. The various applications propose wide use of 'green roofs' which Highgate School admits are difficult to maintain and which are, presumably, extremely labour-intensive compared with maintaining grass and other planting including trees at ground level.

Each of the applications, should be refused for the reasons set out in this section 1 alone. Site-specific objections, which also require refusal by the Council, have been submitted in respect of each application and should be read in conjunction with the objections in this section. The site-specific objections to this application are set out in the sections below.

5. The design of the Mallinson Sports Centre building as proposed

The sheer scale of building, both the floor plan and the elevations, is very evident from the submitted drawings and is in complete contrast to the existing scale of surrounding development.

The long elevation to Bishopswood Road appears deliberately to have been given the overbearing and incongruous appearance of a curtain wall to a mediaeval castle. It encloses and obscures views to the Metropolitan Open Land ("MOL") behind and affects the setting of the Grade 1 listed Highpoint.

It dwarfs the Mills Centre, and the Pre-Prep even with the latest approved extension to that building and other surrounding development.

The extra section of classrooms which have been added to the existing building together with the extra sports hall result in the over-urbanisation of the corner of Bishopswood and Broadlands Roads. The existing building lines should be respected. The supporting documents do not acknowledge that the five courts are a low open structure with glazed roof and, thus, do not provide a precedent for a two-storey classroom block.

The architect has opted for a "circulation extension" which does not pay respect to the host buildings and which is aesthetically challenging. The whole new edifice needs to be of a much smaller, less dominant, scale. Separate entrances to each function could help.

6. The inclusion of ancillary uses in the Mallinson Sports Centre

The café and any other spaces extraneous to education should be omitted from this building.

7. The cumulative effect of the extension of both the Mallinson Sports Centre and the Richards Music Centre and the effect of this on MOL

The combined effect of the extension/rebuilding of these two buildings is to the detriment of MOL and increases the danger of over-development.

Significantly there are no drawings showing both proposed buildings in context. The only illustration showing how this will look and how it be to the detriment of the Conservation Area is labelled Original Illustration 2 taken from the junction of Broadlands Road and Bishopswood road. This shows only too well the resulting damage to the Conservation Area.

The London Plan 2021, at Policy G3, makes it clear that MOL is to be afforded the same status and level of protection as Green Belt, namely, that (1) MOL should be protected from inappropriate development in accordance with national planning policy tests that apply to the Green Belt; and (2) boroughs should work with partners to enhance the quality and range of uses of MOL."

Policy G3 goes on to provide as follows:

- "8.3.1 Metropolitan Open Land is strategic open land within the urban area. It plays an important role in London's green infrastructure – the network of green spaces, features and places around and within urban areas. **MOL protects and enhances the open environment and improves Londoners' quality of life by providing localities which offer sporting and leisure use, heritage value, biodiversity, food growing, and health benefits through encouraging walking, running and other physical activity***
- 8.3.2 Metropolitan Open Land is afforded the same status and protection as Green Belt land. Any proposed **changes to existing MOL boundaries** must be accompanied by thorough evidence which demonstrates that there are exceptional circumstances consistent with the requirements of national policy."*

The emphasis in bold in the plan, not added by HCAAC, underlines the significant protections for MOL.

148. When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. **'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.**

149. A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;

b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;

c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;

d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;

e) limited infilling in villages;

f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and

g) **limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land**, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:

– **not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or**

– **not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.** (Emphasis added by HCAAC)

It follows that the proposed reduction by the applicant in the MOL does not protect and enhance the open environment, quite the opposite, it detracts and diminishes the very quality of life benefits which the MOL is there to provide.

Further, the applicant has simply failed to provide evidence to demonstrate the exceptional circumstances to justify changes to the MOL boundary. The removal of part of the MOL for the benefit of the applicant is not an exceptional circumstance.

8. DAS and Heritage Statements assessments of settings are erroneous

It is true the Junior School takes its scale from the large Victorian villas in Hampstead Lane, and that section of Bishopswood Road including the retained Victorian Villa which forms a part of the Junior School. There is, however, a clear transition to openness/MOL on the other side of the road with views over open land extending to that of Highpoint. These views are part of the setting of a Grade 1 listed building and are also important elements in the overall character of the Conservation Area. Moreover, encroachment into MOL of the five courts and the projecting balcony at first floor level are unacceptable and unnecessary.

9. The development does not respect the amenities or building line of 27 Broadlands Road with regard to increased noise and light pollution

Application HGY/2023/0331: Formal Screening Opinion re. EIA highlights that sound from ASHPs could affect the amenity of the neighbours in Broadlands Road. What is not mentioned is that, because the angle of the

boundary between 27 Broadlands Road and the Mallinson building is very close to their boundary, the proposed building envelope extends directly into their views from windows and from the garden unacceptably. We believe the applicant's drawings have not included a window in the part of no. 27 closest to the application site.

Further the proposal is to incorporate extensive external lighting all round the buildings and along the back of pavement line. No doubt the cycle stores will be well-lit for security reasons. This external lighting would alter the character of Broadlands and Bishopswood Road and adversely impact the setting no. 27 Broadlands Road. The external lighting adjacent to the rear garden of no. 27 Broadlands Road would adversely impact those neighbours and probably not just immediate neighbours.

Two floors of classrooms have been added to the proposal supposedly justified by the small squash court building. HCAAC considers there should be no development forward of either the existing building line of no. 27 Broadlands Road or forward of the existing building.

10. Supposed community benefits of the new sports centre

Sub-sections 5 and 6 of Section B of Policy S3 (Education and childcare facilities) in the London Plan (2021) states that:

“Development proposals for education and childcare facilities should:

- 5) maximise the extended or multiple use of educational facilities for community or recreational use, through appropriate design measures*
- 6) encourage the shared use of services between schools, colleges, universities, sports providers, and community facilities, and between early years and health and social care providers”*

Community benefits are regarded as an essential element in any development by the school by the policy documents already cited.

The school itself claims that such benefits already exist. However, use of the sports facilities is very restricted (for example three quarters of an hour at 4 p.m. on Sunday afternoons for swimming) and expensive. Further, the extensive array of affordable classes offered to the community for years, (such as circuit training, pilates, yoga etc.) were never re-instated after the pandemic.

The use of the facilities by the community in the future MUST be secured by a s106 agreement which should include details of the time to be made available, which should be generous, and the level of any charges, which should be affordable. Otherwise, the claim that community use of the facilities can be counted as part of the “Olympic legacy” is unsustainable. That legacy is not just to produce elite athletes of the future, but also to maintain the health and well-being of all in the community irrespective of age or ability.

As the application stands, it does not fulfil the aims of the London Plan (2021).

11. Landscaping and sustainability

The loss of trees, which is quite apparent in the plans (the most important of which are full-grown specimens along Broadlands Road) is not compensated by the planting of young trees largely in the Orchard area.

The effect on the streetscape along with such features as ranks of parked bicycles along the side of the new building will hardly be to the enhancement of the Conservation Area. The same can be said about the provision of security lighting, all round this large and bulky building by a combination of lighting columns and fixed wall lights. This is more suitable for a business park than a residential area where subdued street lighting allows wildlife to flourish.

12. Concluding remarks

It is patently obvious that the development will be to the detriment of Highgate Conservation Area, Metropolitan Open Land and the setting and significance of Highpoint for all the above reasons. The applicant's consultants, of course, say otherwise, but the facts are the facts and they speak for themselves.

In all the circumstances, the application must be refused.