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Ms Tania Skelli
Haringey Planning Services
cc. Elisabetta Tonazzi, Conservation Officer 8th Maysent 9 may 20232023

Re: application; Highgate School (HGY/2023/0338)

The application involves the intensification of the school development within an already constrained site surrounded by residential properties.

There are a number of the aspects of the proposals that would negatively impact the neighbouring residents.

1. The proposal of a sports field and the addition of audience space exacerbates the noise nuisance in a space that impacts an area classed as Metropolitan Open space. The existing football field is well located in terms of noise pollution and is screened by trees. The proposal brings the noise and disturbance right next to the neighbouring houses whereas it is currently screened off by trees. The proposal brings crowds, noise and disturbance close to the neighbouring houses, removing some of the existing trees as a part of the proposal.



2. Hours of operation and types of use: eg weekends, evenings, possible future use of floodlights, public events should all be addressed at this stage. The “External Lighting” study does not detail any lighting around the proposed amphitheatre playing field and yet it seems unlikely that this would not be installed.
3. Some of the Plant is proposed very close to the houses...unnecessarily close and the calculations for the sound levels are based on the levels at the windows of the house at

No 27 not the sound levels in the garden nor the sound levels after the plant becomes a bit older and noisier. The plant could be positioned elsewhere on the site so it is screened by the school buildings, lessening the impact.

4. Transport: Although it is stated in the application that there is no intention to increase the staff or student numbers, considering the increase in the expansion of the school and its capacity it seems unlikely that there will not eventually be an intensification of use. The development is clearly intended to involve public events and more access to the premises by organisations that are not connected with the school. This would create further transport impact on the surrounding area. This impact might also be expected to extend well outside the school operation hours.

The report states that the area has a low level of service from Public transport (PTAL 1b) and yet concludes that the impact would be acceptable even though there is no parking provision on site. The transport statement makes no concession to the hilly terrain and general unsuitability of the local roads for young cyclists

The heavy reliance on cars of the families of the children who attend the school is well known in the area and has already resulted on restrictions of the access to the road by residents. This proposal invites even more people to the site with no provision to accommodate any of the additional traffic.

5. Basement Impact study and local hydrology:

From the basement impact study:

“An extensive Surface Water Modelling Report has been carried out by Edenvale Young Ltd., which concluded that the site is susceptible to surface water flooding, however mitigation measures were outlined, which will be incorporated. By incorporating these measures, the site will no longer be at risk from surface water flooding. This will be provided by a new dam and attenuation area in adjacent land to reduce downstream flooding adjacent to the sports hall basement.”

It is noted that this Flood risk Assessment includes recommendations for flood doors and tanked basements but fails to consider the wider impact on neighbouring properties, such as forming a sunken area that might act as a sump and actually attract water to an area backing onto neighbouring gardens.

The redevelopment proposed for the Mallinson Sports Centre of Highgate School includes, as well as the partial demolition of existing structures and the refurbishment and extension of the remaining facilities, the construction of two basements:

The first will form the new Fives Courts to the South (phase 2A) directly adjacent to the existing Sports Hall, with a maximum depth of approx. 4.0m deep. The second will form the new Sports Hall to the North (Phase 2B) directly adjacent to the Existing Pool Hall Block, with a maximum depth of approx. 5.5m deep from existing ground level.

Basement Impact Assessment (BIA), Pringuer-James Consulting Engineers (PJCE), 2.2 Characteristics of the Project

The two basements will be “underneath the large majority of the footprint of the proposed development.” (BIA, 2.3).

A site investigation was carried out by Soil Consultants Ltd. in 2016 with subsequent further investigations carried out in 2018. The results provide the basis for the PJCE analysis relied upon in the BIA, which considers

- I) Subterranean Flow
- II) Land Stability
- III) Surface Flow and Flooding

The BIA concedes that

As with any development involving the construction of a basement the proposed construction methods and programme of works must be chosen once appropriate levels of consideration are given to the inherent risks associated with excavation, and more specifically, in this case, excavation in close proximity to existing buildings and their foundations. (BIA, 2.4)

The authors make it clear that the BIA should be read in conjunction with the information submitted at this stage by all other consultants. (BIA Introduction 1.0), including the architects. It does not in itself provide evidence of the sufficiency of its claims, describing merely in outline the construction details.

I) Subterranean Flow

The BIA claims that

An analysis of site investigation and additional supplementary investigation results together with the information obtained from various additional sources (British Geological Service, Environment Agency etc.) would indicate the presence of groundwater in the area is minimal and thus the potential impacts to the groundwater as a result of the development would safely be considered negligible. This is based on a number of factors, including site location, the regional geology of the site, groundwater flows and groundwater source zones (see Appendix A). (BIA 5.2.1, Subterranean Flow).

These conclusions are based on the BIA findings that

the boreholes and supplementary window samples from the soil investigation show that the predominant soil condition is found to be a London Clay to a minimum of 20m. underlying approx. 1.00m depth of made ground. There are no indications of a high water table or outcrops of permeable material in the immediate area, only localised shallow perched ground water. (BIA 2.6.1).

However both Alan Baxter (Structural and Civil Engineering) and Haycock Environmental Consultants Limited (hydrology and waterscape specialists) have recently carried out investigations in the area in connection with the proposed construction of a large basement at 15 Broadlands Road (HGY/2021/0048). 15 Broadlands Road is very near the proposed Mallinson site: the house immediately to the east of it is 27 Broadlands Road. Both Baxter and Haycock have previously advised on other properties in the neighbourhood, Haycock on 21 and 25 Broadlands Road and Baxter on property in Grange Road.

Michael Coombs of Baxter has stated:

The available evidence from our work in Grange Road and from the hydrology reports from Haycock Associates relating to planning applications at 21 Broadlands Road (HGY/2012/1421 and 1422) and 25 Broadlands Road, (HGY/2012/0556) shows that there are significant groundwater flows fairly close to the surface in this area. These groundwater flows are widely known about and are associated with springs that discharge water on high lying open ground very nearby. The water from these springs flows over and within the upper levels of subsoil in many directions. The ponds and open water features of Hampstead and Highgate are associated with these springs and water flows.

The Haycock report, dated 10th August 2012 and submitted to London Borough of Haringey in connection with planning applications HGY/2012/1421 and HGY/2012/1422) shows groundwater flooding within the basement/cellar of number 23 Broadlands Road. This cellar is shallow with its floor only 1.6 m below the existing ground level and it relies on a sump and pump to keep it dry.

(Alan Baxter letter to Roland Sheldon of Haringey re HGY/2021/0048, 5 February 2021).

The part of HGY/2021/0048 seeking to construct a new basement was subsequently abandoned by the applicant.

We believe that the very limited borehole evidence appended to the Highgate School BIA (two boreholes one commenced 5th January 2016 and completed January 6th, the second commenced and completed on 8th January 2016, and four window samples commenced and completed on 17th December 2018) are insufficient to displace the abundant evidence assembled by Baxter and Haycock about groundwater conditions in the very immediate neighbourhood of the Mallinson Sports Centre. The surveys on which the BIA relies are not localized enough to be meaningful.

II) Slope Stability

The BIA states:

The history of the seasonal shrink-swell ground movements in the local area is not readily known, although the clay-based nature of the underlying soil does point to the need to consider the cause and effects of shrink-swell movement in the proposed design (BIA 3.1.2.1).

It also concedes that

The proposed excavation levels for the project will encounter varying levels of foundation between adjacent properties and a maximum differential level of 5.0m is expected between the new Sports Hall (Phase 2B) and the existing Pool Hall Block. The slope stability and soil condition within neighbouring sites and adjacent areas may be subject to various potential impacts as a result of the proposed redevelopment. (BIA, 3.1.2.2).

The BIA concludes that the scope of the proposed works may pose an increased risk of potential impacts during the construction process. However it maintains that the proposed construction methods and sequence of works for the site will deal adequately with any risk to the redevelopment itself and neighbouring properties. No adequate details are provided to support this assertion.

III) Surface Flow and Flooding

The BIA states that

Analysis of the available material in relation to flooding has indicated that the site is prone to flooding, however mitigation measures will be incorporated, which will completely de-risk the site, leading to the development not being in an area which is required to consider flooding as part of the basement construction. (BIA, 5.2.3).

It is also argued that

The existing site has large areas of permeable surfaces and the construction works are anticipated to have negligible effects on the volume and quality of surface water generated by the redeveloped site due to the incorporation of extensive SuDS and attenuation measures. (BIA, loc. cit.).

In view of the fact that most houses on the south side of Broadlands Road nearest the proposed redevelopment site have experienced flooding of their basements caused both by unusual ground water conditions and surface run-off, it is difficult to see how this rather glib assertion can be justified.

As the BIA accepts,

Potential impacts on the surface flow and flooding characteristics in an area as a result of excavation for a basement can vary dependent on a site location and the existing drainage infrastructure which is required to cater for any runoff from a site.

Excavating directly affects the volume of soil below ground and depending on the type of material can affect the natural groundwater storage capacity of the soil. If this is reduced significantly it can cause an increase in the proportion of surface water runoff which needs to be catered for by the local drainage network.

The BIA notes that should there be an increase in the volume of surface water runoff the local drainage network might be overwhelmed, in which case there might be flooding of lower lying properties. It continues,

As part of the planning and design of a project careful consideration should be given to the need to cater for any runoff generated by the development and if possible deal with it within the confines of the development site before finally letting any excess which cannot be catered for flow into the drainage network.

If a project causes an increase in the levels of runoff produced, and the increased volumes are not catered for, the possibility and frequency of flooding is increased. In areas which are already prone to flooding the effects of this must be examined and further analysis may need to be undertaken.
(BIA, 2.5.3).

According to Haycock (HGY/2021/0048, Hydrological Comments 6/5/21) the management of surface water is normally documented in an applicant's Water Management Plan, which we hope will be forthcoming. Haycock also points out that fluvial and pluvial flood risk maps do not review groundwater dynamics or the behaviour of groundwater to existing or proposed obstruction to flood pathways. In addition the proposed site may not be mapped as a flood risk by the local authority. In the case of the Highgate School Application we must conclude that the researches of PJCE have been inadequate in view of the groundwater characteristics noted by the engineering and hydrological experts who have dealt with nearby sites.

We cannot support the granting of planning permission for the Mallinson Sports Centre redevelopment on the basis of the BIA submitted. There is insufficient detail to support its assertions that the risk of flooding both from groundwater and surface runoff is negligible, and its remarks on land stability are at best tentative and without any factual basis. It must be considered at best preliminary to the provision of reliable technical information.

Conclusion:

The intensification on this site would have a negative impact on the neighbouring residential properties. Some of the proposals mentioned in the amplifies this negative impact.

Noise, transport and removal of tree screening between noisy areas and the residences are the main issues. The location of Plant next to neighbours is also not acceptable and could have been avoided. The format of the acoustic impact assessment does not take account of the impact on the amenity space of the houses and neither does it account for the impact of the proposed sports area with audience space next to the houses.

The impact on the hydrology of the site seems to be unresolved. The site of the new 'amphitheatre' playing space seems to acknowledge the flooding issues in the area and yet fails to account for any mitigation of impact to neighbouring properties. The two storey deep basement that is proposed can be expected to affect the hydrology and hence bearing strength of the soil in the locality and yet this is not accounted for. The proposal of contiguous piles for this deep basement, whilst stabilising the soil locally does not address the impact of the disturbed hydrology. The Basement Impact Study seems to have been largely a 'desk top' study that does not fully account for local conditions.

Constantine Koritsas
On behalf of the Planning Group
The Highgate Society