

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee

12 May 2023

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee objects to HGY/2023/0679.

1. Introduction

These are the objections of the Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee ("HCAAC") to the above application for the proposed works to Dyne House, Highgate School, Southwood Lane, Hornsey, London, N6 5EE namely:

Proposal

Listed Building Consent for works to the Island Site including: demolition of existing service block and erection of a replacement part one and part two storey structure, together with associated works.

2. Background

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
- Haringey site allocation SA 41; note also *"the school facilities can be enhanced BUT only when simultaneously benefiting the local communities."*
- Haringey Local Plan
- 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 the proposals for Dyne House are NOT in accordance with these policies and must, therefore must be refused.

4. Detailed objections

4.1 Demolition of the service block

The HCAAC does not object to the principle of the loss of this block, a utilitarian one-storey brick structure added in 1899, which has no architectural or historic interest. CGIs in the DAS and Heritage Statement indicate that the two original Gothic windows on the northern return of the Big School (of which the stone apexes are visible above the flat roof of the toilet block) would be exposed/restored - potentially a major enhancement. Are these window arches known to survive in whole or part? If so, they may require careful repair/restoration and this should be explicit in the

application drawings and associated documents. However, this element of the scheme is otherwise given scant attention - no elevation is provided showing the reinstated windows.

4.2 Erection of part one-and two storey structure and associated works

The Central Hall was added in 1899 to the design of CP Leach. While accepting that the east elevation was afforded less architectural elaboration than those facing south and west, it is nonetheless a worthy component of the design and which figures prominently in views from Southwood Lane. We consider that it makes a positive contribution to the CA and to the setting of the Grade II listed Big School.

4.3 The HCAAC has major concerns about the impact of the proposed extension to the façade.

While the Heritage Statement claims: the use of a colonnade is an existing design feature of the Central Hall and reflects the elevation of the central block to the main entrance of the school we consider this to be misleading when applied in this particular context. We consider that the proposed structure lacks any architectural relationship with the existing building, and would be an incongruous addition that would spoil the integrity of the façade, losing the attractive stone first-floor window which would be converted to an entrance. It would also, surely, significantly reduce daylighting to the classrooms behind? We strongly question whether this is the only solution to achieving the circulation route objectives and whether the access and circulation requirements could not be met within the existing building.

4.4 The extension would also impinge on the view looking north-west towards the Science Quad from Southwood Lane.

It is important to note that this view would also be compromised by the proposed extension to the Science Block, to which the HCAAC has also strongly objected (HGY/2023/0317). There are no CGIs showing the two proposed extensions together, although this information has been requested. It is therefore essential that the cumulative impact of both these proposals be considered together, and we have commented accordingly in our response to the associated planning application.

4.5 Impact on existing foundations

We are also concerned about the impact of a basement so close to the foundations of the Big School.

4.6 Confusing drawings

We also comment that it is difficult even for professionals to comprehend the drawings fully, given the complexities of the existing and proposed arrangements. The levels shown on the drawings are confusing and appear to relate to Dyne House. For this reason, it is disappointing that our requests for a site visit, which we consider to be reasonable coming from a CAAC, have received no response.

Conclusion

While the removal of the toilet block (subject to the careful restoration of the north return façade of the Big School), would be beneficial, the extension would significantly harm the elevation of the Central Hall, considered to be a curtilage listed building, and the setting of the Grade II listed Big School. Moreover, we are far from convinced of the justification for the extension. The proposal as a whole would require significant amendment in order to receive the support of HCAAC.

We therefore strongly recommend that the listed building consent should be refused.