



HIGHGATE
SOCIETY

10A South Grove, Highgate, London N6 6BS

Haringey Planning Services
18 May 2023

Dear Tania Skelli,

RE: Highgate School Far Field, Hampstead Lane (HGY/2023/0316): further objection to letter of March 2nd, 2023

Further to our letter of March 2nd, the Highgate Society is adding to its objection to the proposal to cover Highgate School's Far Field with astroturf-style synthetic grass. In every way it is ill-advised and unsustainable: it is made from material derived from fossil fuels and unable to be recycled.

1. It has been established that no biodiversity, including earthworms and other invertebrates and essential organisms living within the soil, can survive beneath Astroturf. This would cause a significant loss in overall biodiversity which will not be offset by the proposed biodiversity margins; there is already grass and other wild native plants on these margins, and a meadow or grass habitat has been confirmed by the Council for the Protection of Rural England as being as valuable for carbon capture as woodland. Therefore, the existing field margins only need protecting and managing as meadowland; merely creating a new "biodiversity" habitat, without any consideration as to its role within the wider local ecological corridor (including Hampstead Heath and the Kenwood SSSI, immediately opposite), will not compensate for the loss of soil organisms beneath the astroturf.
2. The School Estate is of substantial acreage and contains a wide range of ecological habitats, much of it on Metropolitan Open Lane and some of them of considerable importance (e.g. the ancient hedgerow, with its veteran oaks, likely to be adversely affected by the Mallinson Centre proposals, and the adjoining "Orchard", also proposed to be destroyed by the creation of an ill-advised sunken "amphitheatre" sports field; and, of course, the adjoining Junior Field was resurfaced several years ago with astroturf. The proposals for the Far Field would therefore result in a significant proportion of the school's open land being surfaced with an artificial pitch. We therefore consider that the full programme as currently designed will have a highly negative impact on local and regional biodiversity. The school must be required to produce an overall biodiversity enhancement programme for its entire estate to maximise its contribution to the local and regional ecological biosystem, from a firm with wide experience in this area of expertise.

3. Since the plastic and other chemical substances will break down over the course of time, there is significant potential for microfibre and petrochemical leakage into the soil and thence into the local ground water systems, affecting other nearby habitats, including the Kenwood Site of Special Scientific Interest.
4. It is inconsistent with the School and Haringey's climate commitments.
5. As noted above, the School already has, or proposes, a number of artificial pitches located between the Mallinson and the Richards Music Centre. An additional artificial pitch will therefore only exacerbate the problem of biodiversity loss and petrochemical contamination, for which a mere "biodiversity margin" on the Far Field cannot compensate.
6. Although not included in the planning applications, the drawings suggest that it is also proposed to replace the pitch on the Tatham's Field (below Highpoint] with Astroturf. This would further exacerbate the abovementioned disadvantages.
7. There are also harmful effects for human health, particularly reproductive health, of phthalates (a component of plastics) in artificial turf.
8. Current waterlogging can be addressed by repairing and upgrading drainage.

The Highgate Society therefore strongly objects to this proposal for the reasons stated above.

We hereby request that this objection be considered by the Planning Committee.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Budgett-Meakin

On behalf of the Highgate Society's Planning Group

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