

Response of Highgate CAAC to HGY/2023/0331 (Bidwells) Formal Screening Opinion re EIA.

Highgate CAAC considers that the screening opinion listed above is faulty in several major respects and must be rejected by Haringey.

The problems are set out below.

After much discussion between the Council, the School and representatives of local groups including HCAAC, the Highgate Society and Highgate Neighbourhood Forum, a SPD was agreed for the building projects desired by the school. This document set out clearly the principles which were to guide these projects and which should be clearly embodied in each individual application for planning permission. The requirement to follow these principles was one of the reasons for ALL the application to be made AT THE SAME TIME.

These principles are as follows:

Individual development projects will:

1. be highly sustainable;
2. be integrated within a coherent landscape setting;
3. have no adverse visual impact on townscape and historically significant views;
4. improve connections, routes, flow and movement within the site, with pedestrians as a priority;
5. make a positive contribution to the setting of the School through excellent contextual design;
6. recognise the history and culture of Highgate School whilst bringing it forward into the 21st century;
7. relate positively to existing buildings and to other possible future buildings;
8. provide good quality accommodation which meets the brief, and which is futureproofed (SPD)

Furthermore :

The Council recognises that Highgate School is an integral part of the overall character of Highgate, with an established global profile that promotes and enhances the image and community infrastructure of the Highgate neighbourhood and the wider North London area as a whole. And :

1. that development should preserve or enhance the appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area;
2. that development should preserve the setting of the statutorily and locally listed buildings on the site and neighbouring the school, having regard to their significance;
3. to have regard to Historic England's identification for potential significant archaeology
4. have regard to the objectives of the Highgate Bowl site on any properties that fall into this site allocation;

Unfortunately these principles have not informed the projects set out in HGY/20123/0331 Formal Screening Opinion and for this reason this must be rejected.

The Opinion does not take into account the nature of Highgate and the Conservation Area. This set out in the CA Appraisal and Management Plan 2013. It states that the character of the CA . “ is formed by the relationship of its historic pattern of development, its high percentage of buildings of architectural merit, its topography, its green open spaces and distant views”. (1.3.1)

The amount of development proposed by the School disrupts this relationship of which it seems completely unaware. Regarding the Landscape and Visual aspects of the scheme as a whole the opinion merely states:

LANDSCAPE & VISUAL (5.69 - 5.82)

5.82 Once the Proposed Development is complete and fully operational, the visual qualities of the school will be considerably improved from the current situation, specifically the Chapel Quad which is a public facing front of the school. The Proposed Development will also provide screening to sensitive receptors, namely those on Bishopswood Road and Hampstead Lane. Overall, significant landscape and visual impacts once the Proposed Development is operational are not anticipated and, therefore, would not warrant consideration within an EIA.

Only the effect on the School itself is mentioned. The effect on the CA as a whole is dismissed as not needing any discussion. This a clear breach of the SPD requirements listed above.

When individual aspects of the overall project are described there is a similar inadequate consideration of the wider effects on the CA.

For example Mallinson: (5.89) the new building is said to be “an enhancement to the CA’s “ character and appearance” despite its greatly increased bulk and the relationship of this to the new Richards Music Centre. This building is hardly an example of the “contextual design” , of “ modest scale”claimed . Rather than being ‘neutral’ as stated in the Heritage Statement the cumulative effect of these two buildings and the hard boundary linking them is to greatly increase the urbanization of Bishopswood Road the gently rural formerly character of which has already been much damaged by the overdevelopment of the Mills Centre, the new Junior School and the pre prep department. The CA appraisal describes how “the view over the playing fields or from between the buildings give the road an open and leafy feeling” despite the “somewhat industrial appearance” of the existing sports centre. The proposed changes despite the claims in the Formal Screening document do nothing to alleviate this harm and in fact have the potential to cause more harm to the CA.

The same can be said in regard to the proposals for the area known as the Orchard which have great significance in relation to damage to the bio diversity of the CA and the need for the wider area well beyond the CA itself to benefit from the existing green corridor .

This whole area , that belonging to the school to the north of Hamstead lane extending as far east as Far Field, seems to be regarded largely in respect of its potential for development with little understanding of its value to the wider community both as establishing the ‘village’ character of Highgate and its widely acclaimed ‘leafiness’. What began as a modest school for local children has now become something of a ‘cuckoo in the nest’ which threatens to change the CA for the worse by overdevelopment and the consequent urbanization.

The projects proposed for the island site in the village core present a different problem but are equally not fully compliant with the principles in the SPD. The screening document claims that the proposals for the science block and for Dyne House “will be consistent with the existing hierarchy and character of the existing site and will form a sympathetic addition to the setting of the surrounding heritage assets.” It further states that “the overall impact to the Conservation Area is considered to be neutral while the impact to the setting and significance of the listed buildings is also considered to be neutral.”

Futhermore, it is suggested “the sensitively designed proposals which respond to views from the junction to the south, as well as north south views towards the Highgate Bowl, are considered to be sympathetic and complementary. The proposals have considered to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and have taken opportunities to enhance it where possible. The overall heritage impact of the proposals is considered to be neutral and would preserve the significance of all heritage assets identified.”

In fact the Almshouses, the least changed group of buildings in the whole Conservation Area, will be adversely impacted by the increase in the height of the Science block and the number of items on its roof and by the extension to the rear. These plans are not sympathetic to one of the most significant group of listed buildings in the Village. The extension into the Science Block adversely affects the neo-Baroque façade as seen from the South. Similarly the almost casual mention of the Bowl is not an adequate response to the requirement to “have no adverse visual impact on townscape and historically significant views.”

In conclusion we do not find that these proposals obey the requirement that any ‘development should preserve or enhance the appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area’. Taken in their entirety the overall effect on the Highgate Conservation Area will be to the detriment of its essential character by overdevelopment and increased urbanization destroying the delicate balance between the various elements in the landscape a very important feature of the locality. The ‘sense of place’ has been nationally identified as an essential in any planning; by over-emphasising the demands of the school in relation to those of the village and its CA these proposals cause damage to both and must be resisted.

HCAAC has already submitted an objection to HGY/2023/0316 (Far Field) in which *inter alia* we state that the introduction of a synthetic surface on MOL fails to meet Sport England's policy and guidance. Our comments therein apply to the other synthetic pitches proposed.

We note that all the sites except the Science Block fall within ecological Corridors set out in Appendix 3 to the Highgate Neighbourhood Plan. Forty-eight mature trees are destined to be felled over and above the many trees felled over the last few years with consent. This would be a devastating loss not compensated for by the planting of some 'garden trees'.

We also note that across most of the sites information required under recent GLA policy that BRUKL calculations must be submitted. Some have been provided but one results in a 'fail' and there is missing or no information for most if not all the applications. None of these applications achieve compliance with Haringey's policy that requires "all new non-residential development shall be zero carbon from 2019."

Taking all the above together, Haringey must conclude that a Formal Screening Opinion re. EIA is required.

This document has been drawn up prematurely and in haste because the deadline for this application is not co-terminus with all the other planning applications submitted by Highgate School. HCAAC may therefore find that it needs to submit further evidence on this application.