

FOHLSH

OBJECTION

Friends of Highgate Library - Shepherds Hill (FOHL-SH) object in principle to the change of use of this land, The Highgate Library woodland copse, to a BMX bike track. FOHL-SH object to this planning application on the basis that a BMX bike track would be out-of-character with Highgate Library locally listed building and the conservation area.

Change of Use

FOHLSH object in principle to the change of use of this land to a BMX bike track. The very nature of a BMX bike track is inappropriate because the use of the land should remain as a green space open to the general public. When Highgate Library was built in 1902 the land to the side of Highgate Library was set out as a woodland copse. A historic photograph shows the first floor of Highgate Library overlooking the copse. (see attached) The site is identified in the Highgate Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan as a woodland copse that should be preserved.

Out-of-Character

Highgate Library is an important locally listed building within the Highgate Conservation Area. It appears on the Haringey Register Of Local Listed Buildings Of Merit - see page 13 in:

https://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/register_of_local_listed_buildings_of_merit.pdf) and in the Highgate Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan - see page 127 paragraph 8.4.6 in:

https://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/highgate_appraisal_web_part_2_chapters_7-12.pdf). FOHLSH object to this planning application on the basis that a BMX bike track would be out-of-character. The proposed development would severely damage the setting of locally listed Highgate Library and impact negatively on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Comments

1. The proposed change of use from green space open to the public to a BMX bike track is unacceptable. The site is important Metropolitan Open Land and has been part of Transport for London's Capital Ring since it was established. .
2. The current terrible state of the land beside Highgate Library is the result of vandalism years ago by those who unlawfully took it into their hands to destroy greenery and build earthworks on this site. Approving the application would be tantamount to giving retrospective planning permission for that vandalism.
3. Maria Kramer of *Room 102* appears to be the architect behind this disproportionately expensive, elaborate, and unnecessary scheme. On her website www.room102.com/bmx-trail she states: 'We are pleased to announce that the BMX track and Wildlife Area Project, supported by Haringey Council and the Highgate Neighbourhood Forum, is getting underway.' How can it be getting underway if

planning permission has not been given? Why are Haringey Council supporting it when public consultation has not yet been completed?

4. In the Heritage Statement produced by Room 102 it states that this area of Highgate, Haringey has a lack of formal play areas. This is not correct: Highgate Wood which is a few minutes' walk away from the site has a well used dedicated children's playground, and sports pitches. (See link <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/assets/Green-Spaces/highgate-wood-map.pdf>) The Heritage Statement references "Highgate Stories: The Track in the Woods" as though this was a reference to this land. Careful reading of this article reveals that this is a reference to Highgate Wood. The Heritage Statement omitted the important information found in The Highgate Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan and it is as though the existence of this important document was unknown. The Heritage statement fails to make reference to the locally listed Highgate Library.

5. In the section Social and Community Need it is stated that 'This area is getting an upgrade which will benefit both the library as well as Jackson Lane's Theatre.' No evidence is provided to substantiate this claim. On the contrary FOHL-SH do not consider this scheme to be of any benefit to Highgate Library, a locally listed building: it will detract from the character of the library – its historic setting and its views over the adjoining woodland. (see photo). It will cause noise and disturbance to library users.

6. This project looks like an attempt by the Highgate Neighbourhood Forum establishment to bulldoze through an unnecessary, over-designed and over-engineered vanity project using precious CIL funds while ignoring the vandalism carried out in the previously beautiful copse.

7. The project would effectively destroy the copse - with hard surfaces and obstructive permanent infrastructure – making it difficult if not impossible to restore it to its original state. An attractive piece of open green space enjoyed by the general public for a hundred years and more before the unauthorised earthworks were started would be wiped out, thereby depriving our children and our children's children of a unique part of their woodland heritage.

Conclusion

FOHLSH consider that this application should be refused as being destructive of a green space that should be conserved and restored to its former state as a special contributor to the character of the Shepherds Hill sub-area of Highgate Conservation Area.