

HGY/2023/0331: HIGHGATE SCHOOL Formal Screening Opinion re EAI
Final 17 July 2023

APPENDIX 2: Stewardship, Sustainability and Archaeology

The project applications covered by the Formal Screening Opinion re. EIA will have a significant effect on the environment of Highgate. The Conservation Area Appraisal Statement of Significance states:

“The character of the Highgate Conservation Area 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.”

Stewardship

Highgate School is the largest landowner in Highgate with large areas of open green spaces contiguous with Hampstead Heath, Kenwood Garden and Park both of which connect via Far Field and the large gardens of Courtenay, Compton and Sheldon Avenues to Highgate Golf Course and Highgate Allotments.

The fact that certain areas can be described as ecologically insignificant in Highgate School's submitted documents as having poor bio-diversity, is more a reflection of ongoing management, than an indication of potential. The base point described in the submitted documents is dismally low.

Sustainability

The landscaping analysis of Far Field makes no mention of the proposed artificial turf. That in itself will have a significant effect to the detriment of biodiversity, soils and sustainability.

We do not find it credible that no evidence for bats (Mallinson) has been found and we would expect to have sightings of rather more birds and varieties of birds than mentioned. Of course the taller trees are home to forest songbirds. They will disappear when smaller, 'garden' trees are planted as replacements.

There is no mention of whether the new sports area will be grass or artificial grass. Although the existing grass surface is of low quality, scoring 0.4 for Urban Greening Factor, this could easily be improved by better management rather than reduced to 0.1 for a 'permeable surface'.

The old field boundaries, with their trees, that can be seen on the 1870 OS 25 inch map, can still be seen today. The proposal for yet another artificial sports field, will destroy that historical link. The proposed Sports Pitch Flood Basin cuts through these old boundaries with an oval structure, totally altering the current landscape and water flows.

Information on recycling is covered in the application but there is nothing about reduction in waste.

This application states the intention to use standard materials but surely Highgate School should be aiming to use more sustainable materials.

The emphasis seems to be on minimum compliance with recent or out-of-date regulatory frameworks but not to achieve compliance with the Environment Act 2021 and guidance, The London Plan 2021 and guidance, and the emerging Haringey Local Plan.

It is difficult to see how these projects, taking many years to implement, would 'future proof' the school for decades to come as there is no ambition to achieve Zero Carbon by 2030 let alone 2050.

Archaeology

From the 'fields to the North of Hampstead Lane', where Far Field was set in a wood to the '19th century development of Highgate', there is little or no reference to the history of Highgate from mediaeval times until the 19th century. Far field was a field set within the woods, clearly shown on the Roque map of 1746. It is intriguing why this clearing should be there and there could well be archaeological remains of interest.