



Crouch End Neighbourhood Forum
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Comments by the Crouch End Neighbourhood Forum

Re. LBH ref. HGY/2023/1454

Hornsey Central Library Haringey Park, London N8 9JA

Refurbishment of the public realm areas, including removal of damaged concrete paving slabs to the LHS of the site and lifting and retention of remaining good condition slabs; removal of existing damaged concrete paving slabs to the front of the site around the main entrance and re-laying previously retained slabs; removal of existing mature trees and replacement with new smaller trees [completed]; refurbishment of the existing fountain structure and decorative wall; replacement of defective cobbled areas to front of site.

Dear Eunice Huang,

This application is most welcome. The public realm of the Hornsey Library concourse was left damaged and fenced off after the Library renewal project of 2018-20 and, despite the delay, Haringey should be congratulated on the restitution work currently nearing completion. We do note our surprise however that the application is published so late in the summer (August?) when the work it outlines is so well advanced.

Regardless, the attention to detail of those responsible deserves praise. It may be considered as like for like repair, but the 1960s inspired palette of materials and street furniture are clear improvements that confirm appropriate regard for the listed building, and the soft landscaping is a successful continuation of original intentions. Particularly welcome is the refurbishment of the fountain and TB Huxley-Jones' bronze figure, a richly rewarding public artwork of high heritage significance to the listing.

Request for further clarification

We note that this application is formed of a series of proposed works to the public realm. However, other

recent and planned changes to the concourse are absent from the presentation and deserve consideration and perhaps inclusion in this application. Three issues are identified:

1. New library fire escape ramping

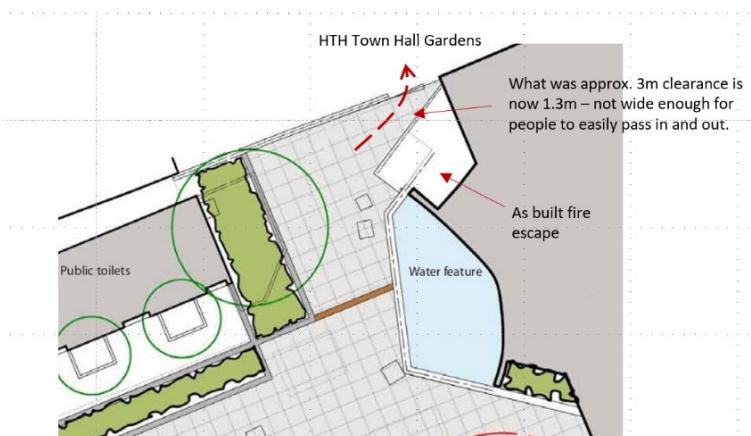
It appears that a new fire escape has been erected onto the library square presumably during the 2020 library renewal project (detailed at HGY/2018/2748 and LBC HGY/2018/2749) *without planning permission and listed building consent* (see image).

A fire exit route from the main hall was indeed proposed in the 2018 application, however the extensive and intrusive system of ramps as built is *not* that consented in that application (which was a much smaller arrangement wholly within the footprint of the existing building). The present structure does not therefore have listed building consent and requires resolution.

Why is this important? Unfortunately the unlawful new ramp partially blocks a publicly accessible gateway to the new event space and community amenity of 'Town Hall Gardens' which leads off from the square: this gateway access is not sufficiently identified in this application.

Part of the placemaking Hornsey Town Hall project, Town Hall Gardens are, according to the approved HTH DAS, "a new publicly accessible space" with "a mini amphitheatre for external performance", "café seating", "space for art installations", use for HTH events, and "for the annual Crouch End Festival". It is intended as a space which works together with the fountain square and Library events. The gateway also serves as a "primary pedestrian route" allowing daily continuous access (locked open during daylight hours) into the Gardens and the TH itself; and as residential access for the HTH estate. It is not inconceivable that on festival days the foot traffic through this narrow area may be considerable and a 2m wide corridor should be reserved.

Our concern at this stage is that this present application (ie. HGY/2023/1454) will in some way confer approval to the ramp structure (it appears in submitted drawings) – even if the issue is not explicitly identified. Clearly a redesign of the library fire exit is necessary, and either another application/LBC must be brought forward with a new design, or this application should be paused.



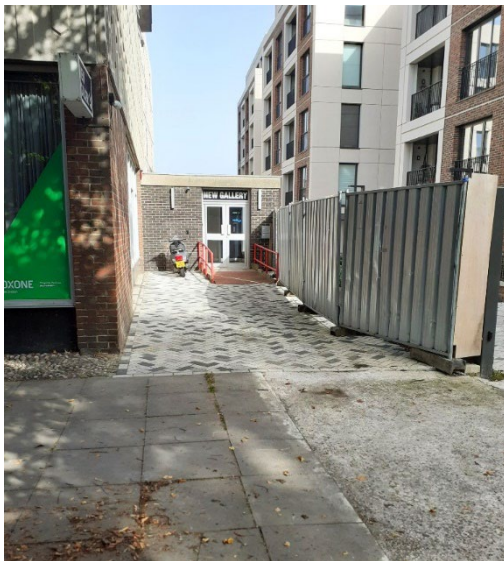
Right. New ramp and barrier.
Gate will be erected at temp door position.



2. Surfacing directly in front of the library porch entrance to the east of the building

Due to the complicated history of the adjacent Hornsey Town Hall disposal, a short strip of land was orphaned from the rest of the library concourse and placed under different ownership. As a consequence the strip has been resurfaced (following respective planning consent) in the chosen materials of the Town Hall project. However, it would be desirable from a conservation perspective to see this surface replaced with the aggregate-faced concrete tiles used for the rest of the library concourse.

We note that this application (/1454) does not identify or argue for a resurfacing of the strip. However, if this argument is made and appended to this application, then we would be happy to support the extension of the library-type surface and see the consented Town Hall-type bricks removed.



Left. Surface materials outside porch.

3. Hornsey Library project completion / concrete panels

This is admittedly beyond the scope of this application but, we understand, has been under discussion.

It was notable that one highly visible aspect of the Library renewal project was not carried through back in 2020. This was the repair of the main pre-cast concrete panels which form a striking decorative element of the main elevations. The panels are visually in bad shape with evident corrosion – a fact seemingly confirmed by extensive surveys of the time.

Reading through the available documentation, repairs were clearly intended until, and this is hinted at in an officer's report, there was a late intervention by the Twentieth Century Society arguing against the repair and repair methodology stating *"Spalling to the concrete panels may look unseemly, but was deemed not to harm the building's performance so has been left."**

(*see RIBA Journal 6th April 2021. <https://www.ribaj.com/buildings/curl-la-tourelle-head-frank-ley-jarvis-hornsey-library-crouch-end-refurbishment-1960s>).

Unfortunately neither the historic officer, project manager, nor the Society's Elain Harwood (who sadly died earlier this year) are available to speak to the change in plan, perhaps the architects Curl La Tourelle Head can help (?) – but it may be advisable not to rush into decision making.

Once again, in conclusion, the restitution work on the library concourse is to be fully supported, and we hope that our requests for further clarification will be helpful. If there are any clarifications necessary don't hesitate in contacting us.

Regards,

Mark Afford

Chair, Crouch End Neighbourhood Forum