

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee

22 February 2026

HGY/2023/0315: Richards Building

For the avoidance of doubt HCAAC's previous objections still stand.

HCAAC submits herewith our additional comments reflecting what we have learned about Highgate School's proposals since submitting our earlier objections.

1. The long façade facing the Junior Field suggests a grandiose plan for a Sports Pavilion, replacing the attractive sports pavilion which would be demolished. The scale of the existing pavilion is appropriate for that context. However, the proposed building is not a Sports Pavilion and it is considerably larger in scale
2. What we have realised is that the façade to the Sports Field is deceptive and entirely misleading.
3. Obviously, the use is entirely different from a Pavilion. As it would be seen from the Junior Field, it presents as two similar formal elements with a central, very large atrium full depth of the plan. This is not the case.
4. The plans reveal that the depth of the west 'wing' is in fact very shallow, in other words in jargon terms, the Junior Field elevation is, 'dishonest'. This shallow depth results from Rights of Light matters.
5. To the east the function of the building contains a Drama teaching spaces and a Theatre. These entail large volumes. To the west the functions include Staff Break Out space and ancillary accommodation.
6. The result of the shallow plan depth on the east elevation is that it presents as a small extension on plan and a tall narrow form on elevation. In 3 dimensions the resultant 'fake' form of the building becomes obvious. In consequence the facade to Bishopswood Road is inconsequential and volumetrically messy.
7. The Application of an oversized heraldic shield appears as an attempt to give this tall narrow form some sort of authentic architectural expression.
8. HCAAC concluded previously that the shield had the purpose of suggesting the entry to a "Highgate School Campus" as it is far larger than would seem appropriate and not used elsewhere on Highgate School buildings as far as we are aware.
9. HCAAC notes that the adjoining building at 2 Bishopswood Road is shown in the Application for the Mallinson Building to be at risk of flooding to a depth of more than 900mm. Bidwells' Planning Statement covers flood risk, paras 7.51 and following. 7.53 states:
"7.53 Whilst the site is situated in Flood Zone 1 and is less than 1Ha, a Flood Risk Note has been produced by Expedition (July 2022) to be read in conjunction with the Site Wide Flood Risk Assessment produced by Evendale Young (September 2019).

7.54 The Flood Risk Note concludes that: Highgate School: Richards Music Centre
Page 24 *"This note has been produced to accompany the Highgate School Campus
Development site wide FRA to address the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
requirements. No significant risk of flooding has been identified for the Site and the
site wide FRA concludes that the proposed developments within Richard Music Centre
have an acceptable level of flood risk within the terms and requirements of NPPF. A
surface water drainage strategy has been developed and sets out how surface water
will be managed to protect the proposed development from flooding and ensure
flood risk is not increased elsewhere. Emergency storage has been provided at the
basement pumping stations, to prevent flooding in the event of a failure of the
pumping station. The drainage strategy also sets out a maintenance schedule, to
minimise the risk of blockage and malfunction of the drainage system and minimise
residual risks of flooding. New hardstanding surfaces will fall away from entry
thresholds, in particular at any openings into the basement."*

For all the above reasons, taken together with our earlier objections, HCAAC considers flood risks for neighbours have not been evaluated; this building is disappointing in architectural terms; and the development would cause harm to the Highgate Conservation Area which cannot be offset against public benefits and therefore must be refused.

HCAAC's generic overarching objections to each of the applications

These are Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee's generic overarching objections to each of the applicant's applications listed in the background and policies section can now be found below. Each of those applications should be refused for the reasons set out in this section alone.

All applications in this series are expected to follow the planning principles and guidance in the SPD. One of the most important of these is that each application must be considered not only on its own merits, but in relation to its effect on the Conservation Area as a whole.

The Highgate Conservation Area is unusual in that it covers more or less the whole of Highgate not just one particular area. It also extends into Camden and developments in the Haringey "section" impact directly on the Camden "section" of the Conservation Area.

Part of the Conservation Area's importance derives from this fact as it allows the development of Highgate, from a late medieval hilltop village to a modern semi-rural enclave within a major conurbation, to be clearly seen and understood by today's residents and visitors. One factor in this unique survival is the delicate balance between Highgate Village and the school. If the school buildings become too dominant and threaten the frequently lauded leafy semi-rural character of the village, this will be destroyed and the Conservation Area will suffer great damage.

It is also the case that when development has taken place in Highgate it has frequently been of notable architectural excellence, another factor in the importance of the Conservation Area. There are not many Conservation Areas which include work of architects of the standing of both Robert Adam and Lubetkin along with work by Walter Segal and that of the Hornsey Borough Engineer on the notable Gaskell Estate of 1913.

Equally, given the wide extent of all the works proposed it is essential that particular care is taken over tree work and other landscape features. What may be acceptable in a small one-off application can have disastrous consequences for the atmosphere, bio-diversity and ecological status of a wider area.

Other planning documents whose guidance must be followed contain similar policies with the same aim and are as follows:

- NPPF paragraph 95
- NPPF paragraph 148 & 149
- Haringey site allocation SA 41; note also *“the school facilities can be enhanced BUT only when simultaneously benefiting the local communities.”*
- Haringey Local Plan; policies SP13 OPEN SPACES
- Highgate Neighbourhood plan policy DH2
- The London Plan (2021)

All these policy documents emphasise that ONLY development proposals which preserve or enhance the character of appearance of Highgate’s Conservation Area, respect the settings of listed buildings and other heritage assets and Metropolitan Open Land should be permitted.

HCAAC believes that that proposals for the Richards Centre are NOT in accordance with these policies and must, therefore must be refused.

4. 'Need' for accommodation not provided

Sub-section 1 of Section B of Policy S3 (Education and childcare facilities) in the London Plan (2021) states that: *“Development proposals for education and childcare facilities should: 1) locate facilities in areas of identified need”*.

Changes in Gross External and Internal Areas of Buildings

Name of Site	Site Area (sqm)	Existing Total Gross External Area (sqm)	Proposed Total Gross External Area (sqm)	Existing Total Gross Internal Area (sqm)	Proposed Total Gross Internal Area (sqm)	Increase in Total Gross External Area (%)	Increase in Total Gross Internal Area (%)
Dyne House & Island	5,835	3,422	7,390	3,019	6,216	116	106
Science	1,500	2,996	3,424	2,728	3,124	14	15
Richards Music Centre	2,011	700	2,025	624	1,784	189	186
Mallinson Sports Centre	13,745	3,353	6,495	3,014	5,873	94	95
The Decant	4,140	0	2,473	0	2,460	-	-
Total areas and changes as percent	27,231	10,471	21,807	9,385	19,457	108	107

Sources of figures

Area measurements: Applicant's table in HGY/2023/0328, file: 01/2/2023 230124 Site Wide Area Schedule

Totals and % increases: Calculated by HCAAC.

The average increase in area is over 100% with Richards close to 200%. These increases are not required other than to enhance Highgate School’s ‘offer’.

In the Headmaster's Statement he notes that the school population has doubled in the last twenty years. Staff numbers would have increased as well. Even with those increased pupil numbers, the Department for Education has allowed that increase in numbers based on the ability of Highgate School to deliver the curriculum. Our Conservation Area must not be harmed because of Highgate School's desire to enhance its offer to keep up or even get ahead of its competitors.

The Highgate Community is all too aware of the increase in the number of pupils. At the public meeting in the summer of 2023, most of the aggrieved comments were about the drop-off and collection of pupils causing congestion on Highgate and the impact on buses. When entry exams are taking place the situation is even worse. Highgate School has simply failed to improve the behaviour of parents who triple park on North Road carriageway every school day and to persuade them to reduce car usage with a widening catchment area. The justification for the café at the Mallinson Centre is: *"given the extended sporting day (pre- and post-school indoor training sessions to support fitness and skills development), parents will benefit from a warm and welcoming venue to await their children and reduce the tendency to sit in cars 'with the engine running' "*. Car parking for extra-curricular events must be controlled.

HCAAC must expect design excellence; elimination of flood risks to all including neighbours; and elimination of traffic chaos, none of which are achieved in this application. HCAAC will be disappointed if Haringey approves this application.