

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee

HGY/2023/0317 & HGY/2023/0390: Science Block

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee (HCAAC) continues to object to these applications on the grounds already submitted. We address below the new information submitted by Highgate School and our considerable continuing concerns about this application.

- Impact of the atrium on both the south and west facades of the Science Block destroys the architectural integrity of the quadrangle (Science Quad)
- The importance of the West facade to the Science Quad has not been recognised. The proposed relationship between the Atrium and the existing facade is very far from being resolved.
- The jumble of glass boxes at roof level as submitted result in an appalling mess which is unacceptable.
- HCAAC considers, taking these unresolved aspects of the proposed atrium together, Highgate School needs to obtain a better balance between their needs and the harm to the Highgate Conservation Area.
- The existing fire escape from the Staff Room could be reconfigured to provide egress (secondary means of escape) directly to Southwood Lane including for people with disabilities.
- The level of harm to the Science block, the Science Quad, the setting of the many listed buildings in the immediate vicinity and to the Conservation Area falls under the highest level of 'less than substantial harm'. Offset of harm to the Highgate Conservation Area cannot be weighed against public benefits but there are no public benefits in this case.
- Because this application is so flawed, HCAAC considers Haringey must refuse this application.

Highgate School does not appreciate the architectural quality of the building of which it is the Guardian and its importance to the street scene in Southwood Lane.

The demolition drawings do not show as they should the removal of the architectural features from the south elevation [1177_DEM_001 to 006; ground floor to roof]. These features are part of the south elevation within the Science Quad, the west elevation, south elevation as seen prominently from Southwood Lane and the east elevation. All of these elements form a coherent architectural programme of references to classical buildings.

It is the case that those features would be removed from the west elevation and must be shown on the Demolition drawings. It is also the case that key sections and what would become internal elevations showing all of this damage have not been provided but which must be submitted. We have tried to explain these concerns to Highgate School staff. However, it is clear Highgate School is putting 'Need' ahead of sympathetic architectural solutions and it possibly does not understand or appreciate that denuding forever one façade of the consistent programme of classical architecture is close to vandalism. Through this objection we once again urge Highgate School to be good guardians of their buildings, green spaces and trees.

We note that Highgate School have now submitted some extra visual material:

1177_GE_021 Elevation North existing in context

1177_GE_022 Elevation South existing in context

1177_GE_023 Elevation East existing in context

1177_GE_031 Elevation North proposed in context

1177_GE_032 Elevation South proposed in context

1177_GE_033 Elevation East proposed in context

What is missing are the existing and proposed West Elevations in context and which must be provided.

Design & Access Statement August 2025 Final (loaded on Haringey website 18 Feb 2026) states:

"Proposed works affecting heritage assets include:

- Extension in Science Quad to west side of the east Science wing, comprising a 4-storey high building with basement and glazed roof, to include the new entrance Foyer, main new lift and general access and fire escape stairs.
- Replacement of existing windows and doors. To match period style and details
- Extension into Science Quad
- Extension into Garner Quad
-new extensions (for) dedicated science labs to be increased from 15 to 19
- New Observatory module
- Roof top plant

These proposals should be seen in conjunction with the associated "Island site" proposals [a separate planning application] just to the south of the Science Building. Together they represent a major enhancement of the Science Quad and the aspect of the School seen from Southwood Lane."

HCAAC considers this statement is not supported by the drawings or any other evidence.

HCAAC notes the increase in science labs is around 25%. The labs are larger than the existing labs. This is a 'Needs' issue to be evaluated against harm to heritage assets and neighbours' amenity as are the Observatory and roof top plant.

HCAAC wishes to draw the following statement in the Design and Access Statement (DAS) to the Planning Sub-Committee's attention. It accurately and emphatically emphasises the integrity of all the elevations of the East Wing of the Science block; and also the 'key public elevation to the south prominent on Southwood Lane'. The DAS states:

"2.2.2 East Wing

The east wing was constructed immediately after Centre Block, designed to complement and match it in all its exterior detail. In this case however the building was clearly seen as having two facades of equal importance, on to the Science Quad to the west, and to Southwood Lane to the east. Both elevations have a near equal sense of importance, use of Portland stone, composition and detail in the same Edwardian classical style." [page 16]

"A key public elevation is to the south, where the east wing has a significant gable façade facing back towards Highgate Village, prominent on Southwood Lane seen from the south. Here the classical composition is completed with an arched pediment, with stone mouldings." [page 16].

HCAAC considers this evaluation is sound and the building as proposed would controversially and adversely impact the Science Block as a whole; the setting of the many listed buildings in the immediate vicinity; and would cause harm to the Highgate Conservation Area based on Highgate School's own evaluation.

At last, on page 22, there is a photo of the west façade of the East Wing. We note that a drawing of the west elevation as existing was submitted on 31 January 2023 (1177_GW_001 Elevation West existing) however we repeat that existing and proposed 'West Elevations in context' must be provided.

Photos on pages 24 to 25 show the wealth of listed buildings in the immediate vicinity with several more close by.

The DAS states: "The whole site is comprised of a number of buildings constructed over time at different periods, all interconnecting, from the Chapel at the southern end to the Charter Building at the northern end. Each reflects the architecture of its own time, but is in harmony with its neighbours. Of these buildings, the Big School and the Chapel, built in 1865 and 1866 respectively, are Grade II listed and of particular historic, heritage, architectural and townscape significance. The other buildings,

notwithstanding age or quality, lie within the curtilage of the two listed buildings noted, and therefore must be accorded sensitive and careful treatment for any alterations, refurbishments or additions, as if they were themselves listed. This is the approach that has been taken in preparing these designs.” [Page 30].

The DAS states:

“8.2 Demolitions

In general the existing building is all being retained, however there are targeted demolitions to allow for the new extensions and improvements. These partial demolitions include:

- existing internal stair in the southern corner of centre and east block
- spiral stair at the south end of east block
- particular internal walls to allow re-planning of interior
- external ground surfaces for new landscaping proposals..... Concept plan for demolitions, refer to the project drawings for all final details” [P 48]

In this submission HCAAC has already pointed out: “The demolition drawings do not show as they should the removal of the architectural features from the south elevation [1177_DEM_001 to 006; ground floor to roof].”

This significant omission must be remedied before a Decision is made on this application.

HCAAC submitted a large number of photographs previously which showed the large number of listed buildings and key views where vistas would change. Interestingly, several of the recently submitted CGIs appear to be based on some of our photographs. The Highgate School’s CGIs amply demonstrate our concerns about the Observatory, the impact on the setting of the Almshouses from Southwood Lane, the impact of the extension to the science labs on the Highgate Conservation Area; the impact of the extension to the Science labs on the amenity of people living in the Almshouses. We do not find any evaluation of the impact on all the listed buildings in Southwood Lane.

HCAAC cautions the Planning Sub Committee and Officers on the use of White Models in Conservation Areas and for evaluating the impact on listed buildings. We consider they are not suitable for assessing harm to heritage assets.

The White Model submitted for both the Science and Dyne applications is however interesting. It appears to show a spatial relationship between the two buildings diagonally across Southwood Lane and with the piers and railings on the Science Block side of the road. It does also show however that the elevated walkway and lift is a very awkward and incoherent structure in its setting, surrounded as it is by listed buildings.

The Use of a White Model where the listed building behind the proposed walkway and lift is white and blank is unhelpful. The White model does however show the transparent dome set within the planting in front of Dyne House which would be an unacceptable beacon of light in winter months and at night.

HCAAC has since 2023 making the very same points but no revisions to the design have been made.

It therefore remains our view that this application must be refused and the level of harm is at the upper end of 'less than substantial'. Harm to Conservation Areas cannot be offset by public benefits. Please also refer to our objection regarding NEED once submitted.

There is no mention in the DAS of the series of glass and solid 'boxes' at the top of the proposed atrium accommodating the stairs and lift up to the 5th floor. The design team have not attempted to resolve or refine these incongruous elements architecturally. Taken together with the obliteration of all architectural and historic detail from the West Façade to a curtilage building, the impact on the many heritage assets close by and the evident harm to the Highgate Conservation Area and the lack of information about replacement windows and doors inevitably must mean this application must be refused.