

HGY/2023/0679: Dyne House Listed Building application

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee here submits its additional objections.

Demolition of the service block: The HCAAC does not object to the principle of the loss of this block, a utilitarian one-storey brick structure added in 1899, which has no architectural or historic interest. CGIs in the DAS and Heritage Statement indicate that the two original Gothic windows on the northern return of the Big School (of which the stone apices are visible above the flat roof of the toilet block) would be exposed/restored - potentially a major enhancement. Are these window arches known to survive in whole or part? If so, they may require careful repair/restoration and this should be explicit in the application drawings and associated documents. However, this element of the scheme is otherwise given scant attention - no method statement or elevation is provided showing the reinstated windows.

Erection of part one-and two storey structure and associated works. The Central Hall was added in 1899 to the design of CP Leach. While accepting that the east elevation was afforded less architectural elaboration than those facing south and west, it is nonetheless a worthy component of the design and which figures prominently in views from Southwood Lane. We consider that it makes a positive contribution to the CA and to the setting of the Grade II listed Big School.

The HCAAC has major concerns about the impact of the proposed extension to the façade. While the Heritage Statement claims: the use of a colonnade is an existing design feature of the Central Hall and reflects the elevation of the central block to the main entrance of the school we consider this to be misleading when applied in this particular context. We consider that the proposed structure lacks any architectural relationship with the existing building, and would be an incongruous addition that would spoil the integrity of the façade, losing the attractive stone first-floor window which would be converted to an entrance. It would also, surely, significantly reduce daylighting to the classrooms behind? We strongly question whether this is the only solution to achieving the circulation route objectives and whether the access and circulation requirements could not be met within the existing building.

The extension would also impinge on the view looking north-west towards the Science Quad from Southwood Lane. It is important to note that this view would also be compromised by the proposed extension to the Science Block, to which the HCAAC has also strongly objected (HGY/2023/0317). There are no CGIs showing the two proposed extensions together, although this information has been requested. It is therefore essential that the cumulative impact of both these proposals be considered together, and we have commented accordingly in our response to the associated planning application.

Impact on existing foundations: We are also concerned about the impact of a basement so close to the foundations of the Big School.

Confusing drawings: We also comment that it is difficult even for professionals to comprehend the drawings fully, given the complexities of the existing and proposed arrangements. The levels shown on the drawings are confusing and appear to relate to Dyne House.

Conclusion: While the removal of the toilet block (subject to the careful restoration of the north return façade of the Big School), would be beneficial, the extension would significantly harm the elevation of the Central Hall, considered to be a curtilage listed building, and the setting of the Grade II listed Big School. Moreover, we are far from convinced of the justification for the extension. The proposal as a whole would require significant amendment in order to receive the support of HCAAC. We therefore strongly recommend that the listed building consent should be refused.