

HGY/2023/0390: Highgate School Science Block Listed building application

Listed Building Consent for: Refurbishment and extension of existing Science Block, to include:

- 1) Four storey plus basement extension to east wing to provide new entrance and improved circulation, lift and ancillary accommodation;
- 2) Three storey extension including ground level colonnade to central building;
- 3) Creation of additional plant space at roof level of the East Link Block, with extension of dormer, installation of louvres and internal strengthening/lining.;
- 4) Complete replacement of building systems/plant;
- 5) Rooftop observatory extension;
- 6) Replacement windows and restoration of existing facades; and
- 7) various internal alterations, including: stripping out, removal of internal walls/doors, removal of stairs and installation of new internal doors/walls.

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee objects to this application. The context of this application includes:

- Highgate School's Big School
- Highgate School's Central Hall
- Highgate School's Science Building
- Sir Roger Cholmeley's Almshouses
- Numerous listed buildings in Southwood Lane including Highgate School Museum
- Highgate Conservation Area
- The Science building, Science and Garner Quads

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.

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. Emblazoning this utilitarian structure with a row of armorials shields fails to make its form appropriate in this significant historical location and surrounded as it is with Heritage assets.

The extension across the face of the Central Hall 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 with the proposals for the Science Building. HCAAC considers the White Models are not appropriate for evaluating these architectural and spatial relationships.

HCAAC has major concerns about the impact of the proposed extension to the west façade and its impact on an important view from Southwood Lane. Their 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

As we have said, 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.

Whilst HCAAC acknowledges that removal of the Toilet Block would enhance the Highgate Conservation Area and the settings of the many listed building in the immediate vicinity, regrettably the proposed additions do not balance the harm.

HCAAC refutes the Applicant’s claim above in the last sentence and considers that 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 walkway extension and lift across the face of Central Hall which is considered to be a curtilage listed building, the locally listed view into the Science Quad from Southwood Lane which is a positive contributor to the Highgate Conservation Area and the new atrium to the Science Block would, taken together and individually, significantly harm:

- the setting of the Grade II listed Big School
- the elevation of Central Hall,
- the west elevation of the Science involving the removal of most if not all of the architectural features thereby destroying that façade in perpetuity. Moreover, we are far from convinced of the justification and need for the atrium extension.

Highgate School it appears does not appreciate the architectural quality of the buildings of which it is the Guardian and their 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 a continuation of not just the south and west elevations but all the elevations within the Science Quad, and as seen prominently from Southwood Lane. All of these elements form a coherent architectural programme of references to classical buildings. What is missing are the existing and proposed West Elevations in context and which must be provided.

As it is the case that those features would be removed from the west elevation, they 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. 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 the classical architecture of the Science building is close to vandalism.

This application, as with all Highgate School's applications, must be evaluated in terms of compliance with the NPPF:

*"215. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be **weighed against the public benefits** of the proposal including, where appropriate, **securing its optimum viable use.**"*

The Highgate School SPD states that the School's 'Needs' must be balanced against harm to heritage assets and neighbours' amenity. As there are no public benefits in this case and Highgate School accepted the wording in the SPD, it cannot possibly argue now that the optimum viable use is relevant or even at risk.

The proposal as a whole would require significant amendment in order to receive the support of HCAAC. We strongly recommend that the listed building application should be refused.