



To Samuel Uff

Haringey Planning Services By email.

Date: 31st March 2026

Dear Samuel Uff ,

Re: HGY/2026/ 0338
MALLINSON SPORTS CENTRE

After three years of extensive consultation with residents and local amenity groups, further documentation has been submitted, and we conclude that no significant design changes have resulted in response to the many objections and comments submitted.

This application has started with a lack of appreciation of the values of this Conservation Area. Of particular interest is the Design and Access Statement by Ed Toovey Architects of August 2025, filed on 9th January 2026. In it is conceded the fact that

“The existing buildings [comprising the Mallinson Sports Centre] constitute a negative impact on the Conservation Area, so it is important that the character and appearance of the sports centre is radically changed. In response to this the new extensions wrap completely around all three publicly viewed sides of the existing building screening the original buildings.... [p.102]”

It is alleged that this will provide

“...effectively a new modern integrated and contextual appearance which will significantly benefit the locality and enhance the character of the Conservation Area.”

What is undisputable is that the new extensions will significantly enlarge the footprint of the existing buildings, already out of keeping with the architectural character of the surrounding parts of the Highgate Conservation Area, which as the Design and Access Statement confirms mainly comprises wide residential streets with brick Victorian villas of substantial scale.

However these villas do not present a continuous block of adjoining brick structures; they are detached buildings with considerable space between them, through which can be viewed extensive back gardens and many mature trees, as well as open sky. It is this openness which is characteristic of the Conservation Area.

It is therefore disingenuous of the architects to argue that the massive brick wall which would comprise the publicly viewed sides of the renewed Mallinson Sports Centre

“will significantly benefit the locality and enhance the character of the Conservation Area.” [p.102]

On the contrary, the Conservation Area would be significantly negatively impacted should this scheme go forward.

The applicant has failed to properly engage with local groups and has held onto the view that what this Conservation Area needs is a bloated, monolithic block of buildings that are entirely out of scale and character with the rest of the area. The same issues have been raised a number of times in the consultation workshops and as is evident, the concerns have never been addressed.

Environmental, Landscaping and Hydrology issues

Heritage – surviving ancient hedgerow

The L-shaped hedgerow in question, forming two borders of a former field, is undoubtedly an ancient one. It can be traced on the 1869 OS Map (see accompanying overlay map), and from its shape could have a pre-Enclosures date, i.e. prior to 1800. It is the last surviving pre-development hedgerow in Highgate and contains three veteran oaks, making it a unique survival in the area and of high Heritage importance.

In this connection, we would refer you to your Tree Officer's Initial concerns, submitted on 25th March, 2023, itemising a number of concerns including some of those covered here, and noting that until those concerns were addressed, he cannot support the application.

In our view, as detailed below, none of these concerns have been addressed.

Heritage – surviving ancient field or meadow

The field itself, known as "The Orchard"; (although it is unclear from earlier map evidence whether apple trees were grown there), has never been developed. It may therefore contain an ancient meadow seed-bank of ecological and heritage importance, which appropriate ecological management could restore - it is currently regularly mown. The proposed sunken arena scheduled to be dug in the field would destroy this without so much as a record.

No ecological survey has been carried out to assess (a) the current and (b) possible future ecological value of the area. No permission should be granted until this information is available, as no informed decision can be made until this is implemented.

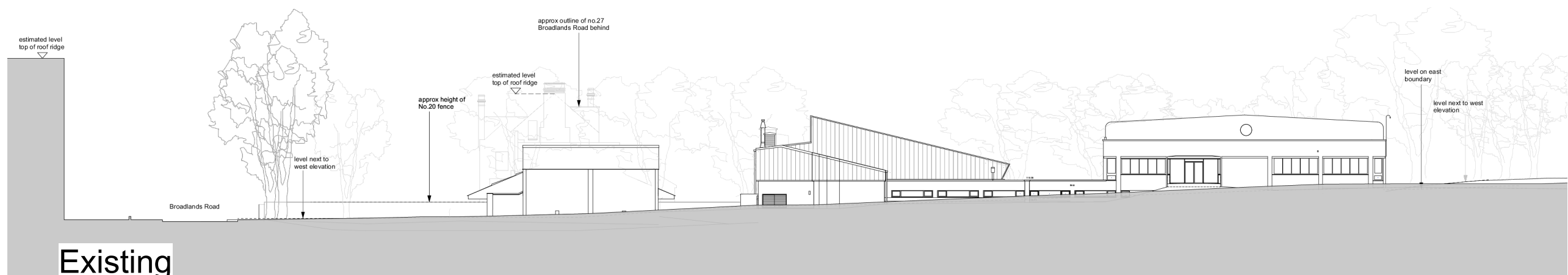
Hydrology- springs (see also accompanying photographs and map)

Our site visit with Haringey's Tree Officer Daniel Monk established that the uphill part of the field, and the secondary woodland immediately abutting its north side, contains three vigorous and active springs which, we were informed, makes the field unplayable during winter - we are given to understand that pupils are forbidden from using it - and can also make conditions difficult in summer in the event of heavy rain. These springs are:

- closer to the boundary with gardens of Broadlands Road (Map, Spring No. 1)
- a few yards down the slope from spring 1 (Map, Spring No. 2)
- close to the area currently used as an informal ecological education shelter (Map, spring no. 3)

There is also a stream, currently a drainage ditch, which runs actively during the winter months from the south-east boundary of Tatham's Field, and thence down the south-east and south-west face of the Orchard field towards Broadlands Road.

We believe that the upper part of the area is on the spring line between the Bagshot Sands and the Claygate beds. The three springs are directly uphill from The Orchard and feed



Existing

"Evolution ' of the scheme after consultation:
The initial scheme was criticised in the workshop sessions for transforming a collection of buildings into a continuous wall with far more mass making an overbearing impact on the Conservation area.
The existing buildings mitigate their scale by allowing a series of sightlines of sky and trees behind them.



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As can be seen , the scheme has never changed in a meaningful way and has certainly not addressed the criticisms that were raised continuouly about the scheme. It is still presenting a monolithic wall on the road in a way that harms the Conservation Area.

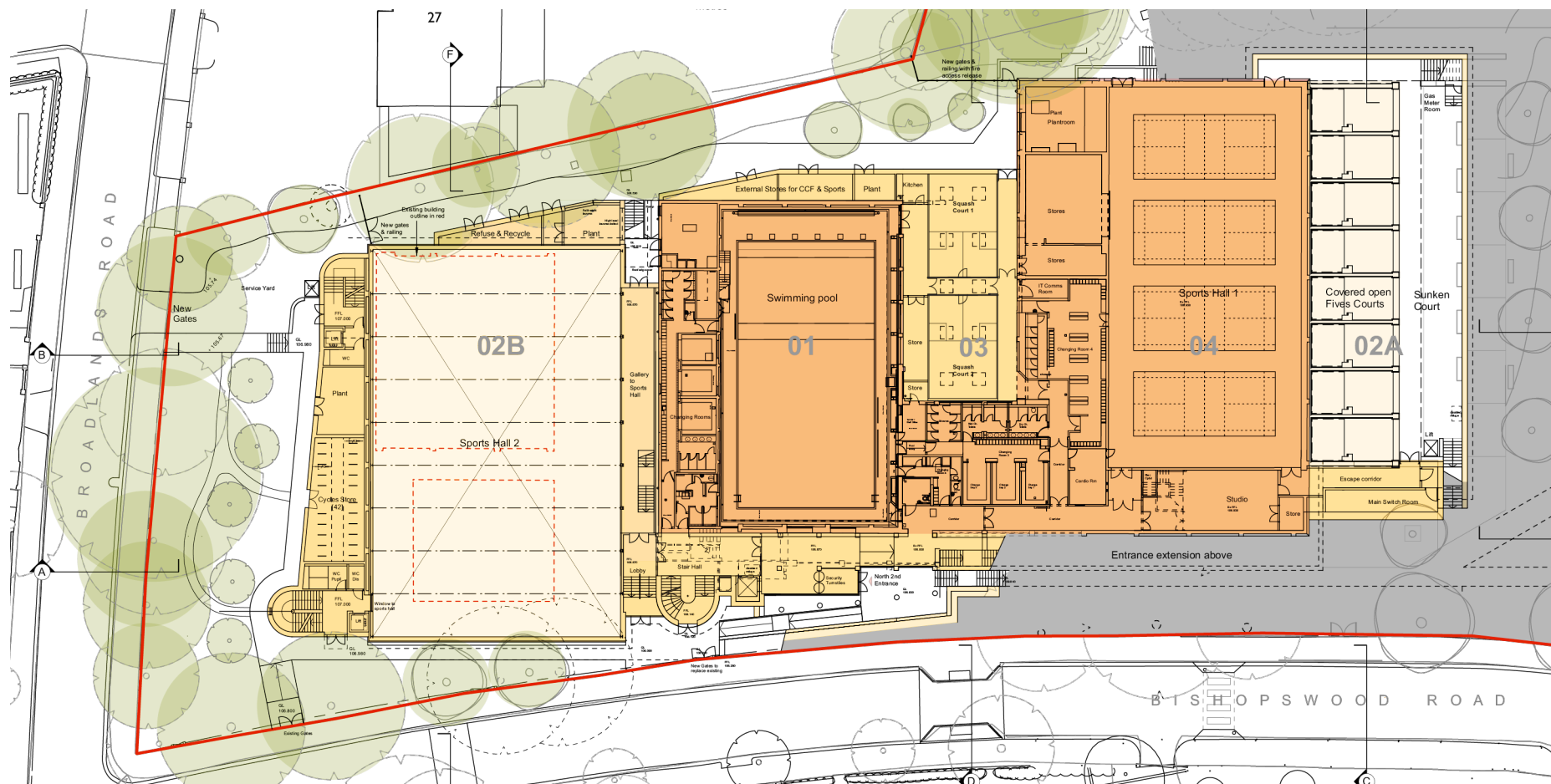


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[illegible]

The consultation exercise that involved interested groups from the area has remained largely unchanged with major planning issues regarding the massing and the buildings relationship in its context largely unaddressed.

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directly down into it, both apparently running quite strongly during the wet weather. The result is that the Orchard is a quagmire and, we are informed, unusable in winter as a playing field, the pupils bring forbidden to use it. Even in summer, we are informed, it can become swampy in the event of a heavy rainstorm.

We are therefore concerned that if the arena – intended to double as an attenuation tank for 1:100-year storm events - is dug, it will simply fill up with water from these springs, in all likelihood rendering it unusable for its intended purpose as a sports and events arena and neutralising its intended purposes as a storm-water reservoir. Conversely, if, as is proposed this sunken arena is provided with a waterproof lining, the water will divert round it, affecting neighbours' gardens and possibly creating wet conditions in the school property below. A further, major danger is that it will create swampy conditions resulting in the death of the three veteran oaks in the hedgerow. If these trees are not protected by a Tree Preservation Order, one must be applied.

Hydrology – more detailed aspects

To fully understand the complexity of the hydrology of the area, reference should also be made to the important evidence from the 1869 Ordnance Survey map for the area which includes Highgate School [see accompanying modern map of the area overlaid on the 1869 Ordnance Survey map]. This shows that what is now the whole area of the Junior School playing fields is occupied by a series of parallel lines denoting what we understand to have been watercress beds, which were traditionally grown in wet environments.

In addition, the map suggests that, at the southern corner of the field now occupied by the "Orchard"; (identified by the number 532) there was a substantial natural pond (marked 'P' on the map), and possibly another in the middle of the field. Though long since filled in, it is unlikely that the source for the water which once filled it has itself disappeared. Indeed, as mentioned above, there are currently three active springs adjoining the Orchard field, in the area now covered by recent woodland. Further, as your own records will doubtless show, recent development - particularly of basements - throughout the area, and particularly in Broadlands Road, has tended to cause ground water problems for neighbours as the natural flow or underground water nevertheless remains but is obstructed or diverted as a result of inadequate basement impact assessments.

All this suggests that any obstruction to natural watercourses and ground water flow caused by the proposed new basement excavations, and particularly by the digging of the Arena / attenuation tank, is likely to cause significant groundwater problems for both the school and the neighbourhood. Development in recent decades has shown the hydrology of the whole area to be highly complex. The same 1869 map shows the existence in the immediate area of other ponds and streams - for example, there is a large pond immediately to the north, the memory of which is preserved in the name Springfield Cottages (now owned by Haringey). Despite development since the 1860s, the basic underlying hydrology will not have changed.

Further, as noted above, it is essential to note that the hedgerow between the Mallinson Centre and the Orchard is an important ancient one, identified on the 1869 map as the southern and western boundaries of field 532. It is hence of great heritage significance, increased by the fact that it is the last surviving pre-development ancient hedgerow in Highgate, with important veteran Oaks of considerable ecological importance. The future of this hedgerow must therefore be a primary consideration. Though it is not proposed to physically interfere with it in the course of the works, we have three major concerns, which must be weighed when considering this application:

(1) the excavation of a basement to accommodate the Mallinson Centre five courts will

divert the downhill flow of water, possibly depriving the hedgerow, and its veteran trees, of water necessary for its survival;

(2) the proposed excavation of an arena/reservoir in the Orchard will further substantially, possibly fatally, either reduce the flow of ground water to this hedgerow, or divert flood waters in the direction of the veteran oaks, in either case leading to their decline and death; therefore these two proposals, of a basement and ‘amphitheatre, will, in our view, present a major threat to the last historic ancient hedgerow in Highgate and should not be permitted

(3) As already indicated, the area immediately above the Orchard field includes three active springs, making the field waterlogged in winter. The excavation of the arena feature, purportedly to act as a sump for excess water in the event of a future major storm event, could, in our view, have exactly the opposite effect, causing the springs which may well have originally fed the lost pond shown on the 1869 map) to be diverted from their current natural flow off site and (1) to risk the Orchard “amphitheatre” becoming semi-permanently filled with water, rendering it of no value either for a playing field or as a “sump” for an unpredictable flood event perhaps long in the future and (2) to risk making adjacent gardens semi-permanently waterlogged.

Hydrology – Water Table issues

Although the excavated “arena” may not in itself impinge on the root zone of the hedgerow and its constituent trees, the works will nevertheless cause a significant change in the water table, either depriving the hedgerow of ground water to the extent that it will not survive, or creating such marshy conditions that the established trees will similarly not survive.

We therefore consider that the proposed sunken arena will cause unacceptable ecological, hydrological and heritage harm and must not be permitted.

Conclusion

(1) Inappropriate use of the “Orchard” field and secondary woodland -

The “Orchard” and its secondary woodland is currently an important local ecological area, particularly since it is also an integral element of the local and regional “ecological corridor” linking Hampstead Heath to Highgate Wood and the Parkland Walk. The present proposals make no recognition of this aspect, and risk not only destroying it, but actually achieving the complete opposite of what is desired by creating an unplayable semi-permanent lake or marsh. We therefore believe that the proposals are ill-conceived and potentially highly damaging in ecological and heritage terms. We strongly recommend that a detailed hydrological survey of the entire area should be commissioned by an independent specialist in the field, such as Alan Baxter’s or Haycock’s, and consider that it

would be extremely unwise to grant permission until this has been carried out.

It is clear to us that this relatively small area must not be used as a catchment area for surplus surface water, but that an improved drainage system must be installed, in liaison with Thames Water, which will carry off any surplus surface water effectively and efficiently. Indeed, we trust that the School have presented these proposals to Thames Water, who will ultimately bear responsibility for the dispersal of accumulated flood water created by the proposals, for their consideration.

Further, the proposal provides no appreciable community benefit, while it will result in a loss of biodiversity and destruction of a unique heritage asset. Neither, in our view, will it be in accordance with Highgate school’s environmental biodiversity and eco-friendly policies. The proposals are therefore likely to bring significant ecological disbenefits. We therefore ask that this proposal should on no account be permitted, not only on the

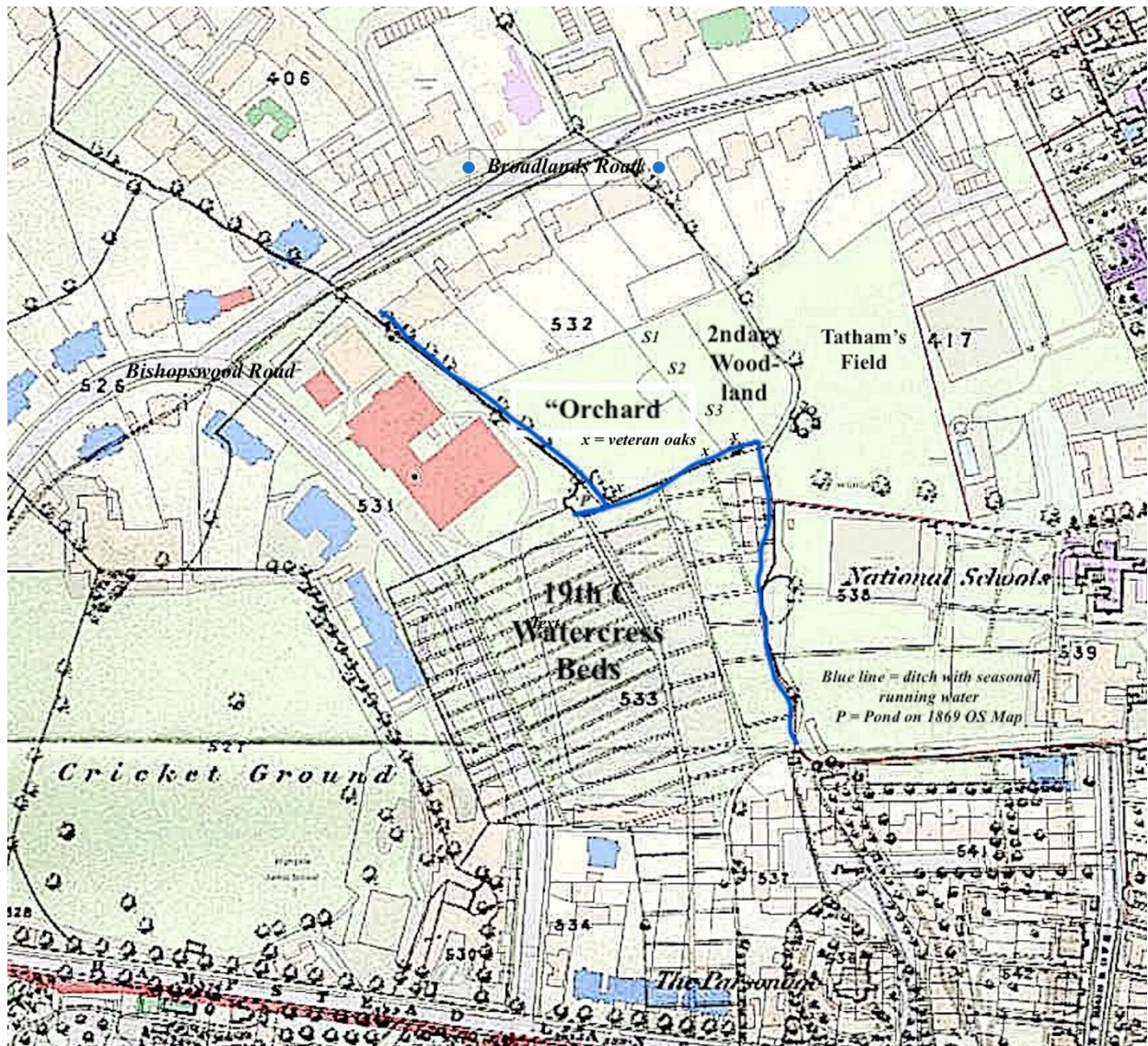
above hydrological grounds but because, as the last surviving meadow and ancient

hedgerow in Highgate, it has high Heritage value. We consider that the Orchard field and adjoining woodland should be retained and developed as an ecological education facility for Highgate School and for neighbouring school. The gravely ill-considered and potentially damaging amphitheatre proposal should be refused for hydrological, ecological, sustainability and heritage reasons.

(2) Educational and ecological opportunity

We believe that the area of the &”Orchard” and accompanying secondary woodland (the latter already being informally used as an ecological education amenity) should be managed as an exemplar ecological education area, with meadow, hedgerow, woodland and marsh habitats, for both Highgate School and visiting schools from elsewhere in Haringey. Such an opportunity, using original pre-development era habitats, should not be lost without good reason.

It is therefore clearly essential that Haringey Planning Committee must be able to fully understand the issues and likely harm this Reservoir / Arena is in our view likely to cause. Reading a report is insufficient; they must have a site visit, prior to the Committee meeting at which the application is to be decided, to see the situation on the ground for themselves and hear our concerns.



Supplementary material

1. 1869 Ordnance Survey map overlaid on Modern map of immediate area

This indicates:

- the locations of “The Orchard” playing field, the Secondary Woodland adjoining it, and Tatham’s Field above both. All lie within what is indicated on the 1869 map as field 532. The hedgerow forming the field boundary marking its south-west and south-east edges still exists and, as the last surviving pre-development hedgerow in the Highgate area, is of both ecological and heritage importance.
- the series of horizontal lines across what is now the Highgate School Junior Field area, which at the time of the 1860 map was beds for growing Watercress. These required a constant supply of water, and the underlying hydrology is unlikely to have changed significantly.
- the three veteran oaks along the South-east side of the ancient hedgerow are marked with an ‘x’.
- What was then an active stream, and is still now a drainage ditch which runs continually in wet conditions, is indicated by a blue line. The land slopes downward from the area of the Watercress Beds to where it reaches Broadlands Road.

- Note “P”, at the southern apex of Field 532. This indicates what in 1869 was a large Pond.

2. Photographs of the site

1. Veteran Oak 1, located at the lowest point of the Orchard Field, at the apex of Field 532, which it is considered will suffer unacceptable harm in the event of water table changes as a result of the Attenuation Tank works.

3. The external face of the south-west side of the ancient hedgerow. The Mallinson Centre is visible at far left.

8. The inner face of the south-east side of the ancient hedgerow. Veteran oaks 2 and 3 are visible to the left of the photo.

11. Exterior face of the south-east side of the ancient hedgerow, looking downhill, across the Junior Field to Bishopswood Road and the Highgate School Mills Centre.

12. Veteran Oak 3, Hedgerow, SE side.

13. Viewpoint close to 11, but closer to the hedgerow, showing the drainage ditch with running water due to recent wet conditions.

20. The extensive marshy area immediately above the Orchard Playing Field, indicated by many Sedge plants, created by active spring 1.

22 shows where spring 1 enters the Playing Field.

24 shows where active spring 2 enters the Playing Field.

25 shows how walking across the Playing Field in wet winter conditions, fed by the springs, creates a muddy environment.

32 shows the third active spring, within the secondary woodland between the orchard Playing Field and Tatham’s Field. This woodland is used by the school as an informal ecological education area.

20 is a panoramic view taken within the “Orchard” playing field, showing veteran oaks 1 (near the centre) and 2, and the south-east (left) and south-west (right) lengths of the ancient hedgerow. Behind at right-centre is the Mallinson Centre. In the distance is the Mills Centre and Bishopswood Road.

Yours sincerely,

Constantine Koritsas

On behalf of

The Highgate Society Planning Committee

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Veteran Oak



Ancient Hedgerow (SW)



Ancient hedgerow from Orchard



Ancient hedgerow SE side



Veteran Oak SE side



Running Stream SE side



Active Stream



Active Spring at Playing Field



Active Spring 2



Orchard Field showing foot traffic damage



Active Spring 3 in woodland



Panorama view