



HIGHGATE SOCIETY

10A South Grove, Highgate London N6 6BS

Refurbishment and extension of existing Science Building Planning Application no HGY/2023/0317 Listed Building Application HGY/2023/0390

1. Introduction

The Highgate Society is writing concerning the above applications, objecting in particular to the proposals for side extension to the East Wing and a rear extension to the Main Building of Highgate School's Science Building situated on Southwood Lane, Highgate, London N6.

The Science Building although not statutorily listed in its own right, forms an important contribution to and an integral part of the group of Highgate School buildings adjoining Southwood Lane. This is recognised by the applicant's Heritage Statement which states in sections 6.44 and 6.45:

"The Science Building contributes a formal courtyard appearance to Southwood Lane, the set back of buildings creating a gap in development which reflects the historic access to a square visible within historic mapping. The severe Georgian aesthetic is the only example of the type along the lane and the building dominates views from the South, reaching substantially above the surrounding buildings within the immediate streetscape.

All views of the Science Building from the east presently take in the glazed roof extension, cementing the variation in materiality, aesthetic, use and massing seen along the street front. In views from North Road, which the building is of a more equal massing, it is distinguished by a variation in roof form and decorative detailing, easily identifiable within the wider school complex.

Therefore the building, by virtue of its considered façade which reflects the distant visibility from the south and more intimate views when directly opposite from the east, overall makes a positive addition to the street-front"

The Society, having reviewed the recent revised drawings strongly objects to the proposed schemes. The Society gave a brief objection, largely on archaeological grounds to the original 2023 submissions, but withheld comment pending further consultation by the School. The Society in this objection would like to confirm the following.

2. Community Engagement

2.1 Pre submission Community Engagement

The pre submission community engagement was inadequate. A public meeting was held on 12th March 2018, but much was changed subsequently. The SPD designation of March 2021 was very general and did not show specific proposals. The Community were not consulted on the final scheme and only became aware of the proposals when the submission was made

in 2023. Bearing in mind how closely integrated the School is within the fabric of Highgate Village, this was unfortunate.

2.2 Post Submission Community Engagement

The submissions were made in February 2023. Following this, there was major concern within the community about the impact of such a major building programme. As a result, an extremely well attended public meeting, chaired by Catherine West MP, was held at St Michael's Primary School on 8th June 2023. The school was present and at that time, the head, Adam Pettitt said that, although this was not the time for him to respond, the School would fully engage with the consultation process. It is extremely regrettable that this process was not carried out prior to submission of the application.

2.3 Workshops

The school arranged for a series of workshops, facilitated by The Kings Foundation, for representatives from the community. Whilst the community is very grateful for the time and resources that the School put into the meetings, it is both frustrated and deeply disappointed that, other than the withdrawal of the Far Field application, little has been done to address the concerns raised and the designs remains substantially the same as those submitted in 2023.

In terms of the Science Building, objections to the two extension were raised on the basis of their impact of the public domain and on their significant damage to Heritage Assets,

2.4 Community Engagement Post Workshops

In view of continuing unresolved concerns expressed by representatives of the community, a series of subsequent meetings were held, initially to discuss all the buildings, including the Mallinson Centre and Dyne House. In view of remaining concerns about the Science Building raised by both the Highgate Society and the Highgate CAAC, and in an attempt to reach a satisfactory solution, Adam Pettitt and Gwyn Jones held further smaller meetings with the chairs of the CAAC and HS Planning Committee.

At these meetings strong objections to the damaging impact of the two extensions on the street scape and the adjoining listed buildings were expressed. Discussion took place with the school about cutting back the extensions. The initial conversation regarding the extension to the East Wing was that Haringey's case officers had actively rejected this idea which is both disappointing and surprising in view of the damage to the streetscape this extension causes. An alternative scheme was tabled by the HS retaining the existing stair and a minimal extension housing the lift, but this was rejected by the school on the grounds that safeguarding distancing was required. An alternative scheme was offered to address this, but this were rejected and the scheme remains unchanged.

3. East Wing Extension

In spite of objections at the workshops and subsequent meetings, there have been no discernible changes to the applications for the Science Building other than the addition of in context elevations intended to illustrate that the new extension to the East Wing does not intrude into the Science Quad. These show sections through existing buildings but do nothing to address this concern

3.1 Side extension to East Wing

The East Wing, built in 1928, and later than the main Science Block is an important element of the Highgate streetscape. Although not listed, it is a fine example of early 20th Century neo classicism with a symmetrical and ordered façade and restrained classical detailing. It is typical of early 20th-century classical architecture which was characterized by a revival of formal, orderly, and monumental styles

The importance of this is recognised by the statement in Section 6.1 of the architect's design and access statement which states:

“The 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. The elevation on the north side the same practical red brick approach as Centre Block.

Although not specified in detail, it appears that the Quality Review Panel had reservations about the design of this as Bidwell’s Planning Statement suggest in section 6.7.

“Finally, the panel suggests that some modification to the alignment of the southern elevation of the Science Quad extension may help to refine the visual impact of the building as viewed from Southwood Lane.”

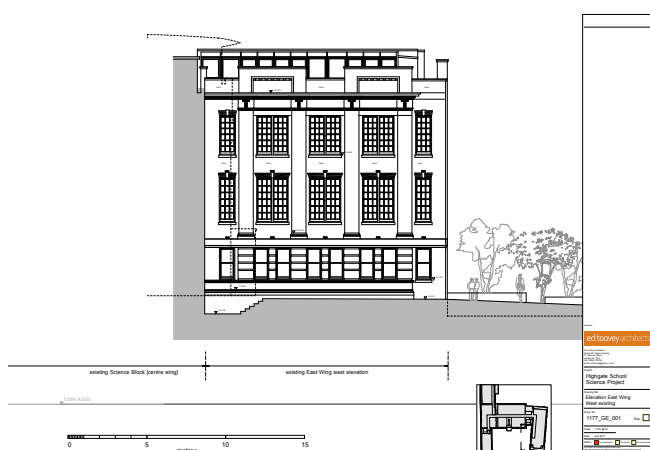
The proposals for the extension to the East Wing are to add a 4 storey side extension plus basement to run from just proud of the south elevation to the junction between the Main Building and East Wing of the Science Building. This new extension houses a stair and lift and nothing more and is an unsympathetic and uncompromising modern building with a fully glazed elevation with a metal brise soleil, butting up against the south elevation of the East Wing. It causes significant harm to the iconic views of the south elevation of the East Wing and into the Science Quad from the village as illustrated by the attached image.

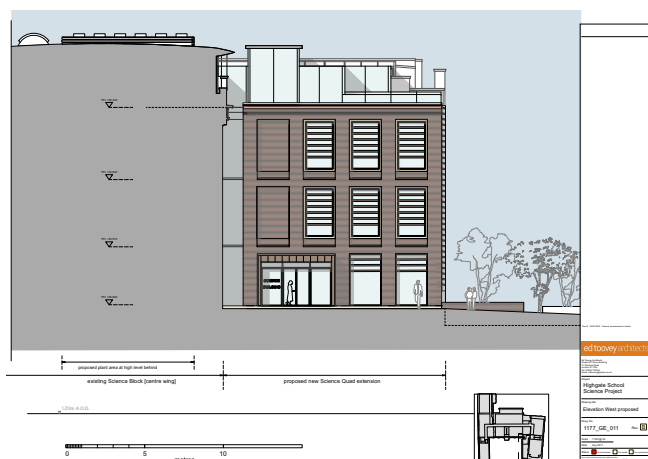
3.2 Setting of listed buildings

Although the Science Building is not statutorily listed as above, it is within the curtilage of listed buildings and therefore is viewed as a Listed Building. This is confirmed by the Listed Building Application for the extension. The Main Building and East Wing form two sides of the Science Quad, the other two sides being made up of the Old School and the Library, both listed. The Science Building is close to a number of a number of grade II listed buildings in Southwood Lane, including the School Chapel, the Tabernacle building and a number of houses. The new extension fails to take the setting into consideration and the facade facing into the court contains none of the elegance and fine detailing of the existing. As such the new extensions could be judged to be causing significant harm to a statutorily listed heritage asset in breach of Clause 240 of the NPPF.

3.3 Masking of detailing

The two side elevations, one facing Southwood Lane and the other into the courtyard have matching detailing with a fine entablature at roof level, expressed pilasters and careful detailing of the fenestration. The elevation into the courtyard will be completely covered by the new extension. The architect justifies this by stating that the new stair and landing will be pulled away from the existing façade to enable the original façade to be visible. However, the façade will still be masked by the intermediate stair and landing structures. It will also only be visible from inside the structure and not from the Quad or the public domain. The fine entablature is completely covered by the roof structure and will not be visible at all. Bearing in mind that the East Wing forms an integral part of the Science Quad and the whole curtilage is listed, the Society is at a loss to know how this damage can be justified. See below existing and proposed west elevations of the East Wing





3.4 Loss of views into courtyard

The Science Quad is currently a fine piece of integrated and balanced urban landscape incorporating a mix of buildings of various periods and styles, namely the Library, Big School, the Main Building and East Wing of the Science Building. As one walks down from the High Street, the view into the courtyard opens up.

The introduction of the new extension significantly narrows the gap leading to a restriction of the view from the street, particularly at the High Street end. See below views from Southwood Lane looking towards the East Wing. Although not identified specifically as a view within the Conservation Area Appraisal, as it does not form a long view, it does form part of the entry on Southwood Lane as follows:

“The road widens to follow the line of Highgate School Hall and there is a gap in the building frontage to reveal a courtyard set back from the street. The sense of enclosure along the pavement is maintained by iron railings, trees and a gate providing access into the courtyard. The courtyard itself is formed by backs of various Highgate School buildings fronting North Road and the science wing along Southwood Lane.”



3.5 Design quality of new side extension

The quality of the elevations facing both into the courtyard and adjoining the south elevation of the East Wing is not satisfactory. The elevation sits proud of the existing elevation and is fully glazed with a metal brise soleil surrounded by artificial stone which is totally unsympathetic to the existing building and its context. The image submitted with the application does not reflect the submitted drawings being materially different and distorting the impact of the side elevation. The elevation facing into the courtyard (see image shown in

3.3 above) is inelegant, out of scale and proportion, and has a lack of general refined detailing required by this important location. It significantly damages the Heritage Asset of the Science Quad and is thus in breach. of NPPF 240

It is at roof level that the design really beaks down (proposed side elevation as 3.3 above) To accommodate the differing levels and allow head room, a convoluted series of glazed boxes have been placed on the third floor of the new extension. These neither relate to the new extension nor to the existing glazed roof extension and appears unbuildable. The result is an unresolved mess.

3.6 Alternative options

In order to engage with the school, and whilst understanding their needs, the Society and CAAC submitted an alternative option showing the retention of the existing staircase, and forming a considerably smaller extension to house a lift and circulation space placed in the elbow between the east Wing and the Main Building. This would not be visible from the public domain and thus would deal with one of the major objections to this scheme. This was rejected by the school as failing to provide waiting space between classes and ensure safe distancing for the pupils with special needs.

The Society offered to produce an alternative solution, still retaining the existing star and providing new lift access but incorporating “milling space”. This offer was rejected by the school. It is disappointing that neither the architect nor school are prepared to compromise on this element of the application which so damages a much loved, iconic view forming an integral part of the streetscape of Highgate.

4. Rear extension

The proposals for the rear extension are to extend out some 3 metres over four storeys into Garner’s Court to increase the area of the science classrooms. The north elevation of the Main Building is, unlike the East Wing, undistinguished. The mews leading up to the rear extension adjoins the rear gardens of houses both on North Road and Southwood Lane. The residents of these properties are also concerned about the rear extension and the increasing densification of an already overcrowded and restricted area of Highgate.

Immediately adjoining the current rear wall of the Science Building is a row of historic alms houses, the setting of which will be profoundly affected by this extension

4.1 The Almshouses

The John Woolaston’s Almshouses occupy nos. 13-37 Southwood Lane and are Grade II listed. They were constructed in 1722 and consist of a terrace built of brown brick with red dressing and a tile roof. They are generally single storey, dual aspect with a central two storey element and with small rear gardens.

4.2 Loss of amenity

Although the overbearing presence of the new rear extension affects all properties down the mews, it particularly affects no.13 Southwood Lane, the end house adjoining the Science Block. Currently it has a small rear garden which has the Science Building on one side and the rear wall of the house on the other. The introduction of the 3m wide four storey extension at right angle from this will form a space enclosed on 3 sides, bounded on two sides by 4 storey buildings. This is unacceptable as it will destroy any outlook and external amenity this cottage may have.

4.3 Loss of daylight

There will be a considerable loss of daylight to this cottage and this is recorded elsewhere by others. It is not known what the impact on sunlight will be, but any evening sun which would have reached the rear of the house will now be severely restricted.

4.4 Damage to setting

The alms houses, dating from 1722 are amongst the oldest buildings in Highgate. They are still fully occupied. The fronts of the face immediately onto the pavement and the rear gardens are the only respite from the traffic of busy Southwood Lane. The introduction of a 3m deep, 4 storey extension plus the overlooking fins, will be a domineering presence over these houses profoundly damaging their setting and thus causing significant harm to the setting of a Heritage Asset, as such is a clear breach of NPPF clause 240

4.5 Overlooking

The issue of overlooking from the rear windows of the new extension into the rear windows and the amenity space of the neighbouring houses has been recognised by the school and the solution for this has been to add approximately 750mm fins at right angles to the face of the building. This is a contrived solution which increases the negative impact of the rear extension even further.

5. Summary

The case put forward by Highgate School to support these alterations is that they address the needs of the school but at the expense of the needs of the community the general public as a whole and the historic environment. The views of the community have been expressed throughout the post application consultation process. There are solutions for the Science Building to meet these various demands but in this case, the school have shown singular inflexibility, refusing to make even the smallest of changes. This is regrettable and as such leaves the Highgate Society no option other than to strongly object to these applications relating to the Science Building.