



To: Adam Silverwood,
Haringey Planning Services By email.

Date: 19/03/2026

Dear Adam,

Re: **HGY/2026/0337**

Elm Court, Cholmeley Park, N6 5EJ

Proposal: Construction of basement and mansard roof extension to create 4 additional flats (use class C3: 2 x 2 bed & 1X 1 bed & 1 x 3 bed) with associated amenity space, landscaping, lightwells, and cycle storage. Internal Reconfiguration of the existing building

The proposed development represents a substantial and overly intensive intervention, combining a mansard roof extension, the excavation of a new basement, the introduction of multiple lightwells, and the creation of four additional residential units within the existing building.

Roofscape and Mansard Extension

The existing roof of the building is characterised by a composition of gentle, well-balanced pitched forms that sit comfortably within the surrounding townscape. This roofscape presents a calm and cohesive architectural expression that is very much in keeping with the prevailing character of Highgate.

The proposed mansard roof extension would fundamentally alter this composition, replacing a visually light and harmonious arrangement with a bulkier and more assertive form. As a result, the building would appear top-heavy and dominant, eroding the subtle

roofscape qualities that currently define its relationship with the surrounding context.

Over-intensification of the Site

The proposal seeks to introduce four additional residential units through a combination of vertical and subterranean expansion, alongside a complete internal reconfiguration of the existing building.

This level of intervention raises concerns as to whether the scheme represents a reasonable optimisation of the site or, instead, an over-intensification. The extent of construction required - including major excavation works, significant roof alteration, and extensive reconfiguration - appears disproportionate to the relatively limited gain of four additional units, further reinforcing the impression of overdevelopment.

Lightwells and Loss of Green Character

The introduction of multiple lightwells would result in a tangible loss of garden space and soft landscaping, fragmenting what is currently perceived as a more continuous and verdant setting. This has implications not only for visual amenity but also for the established green character that contributes to the wider Highgate environment.

Basement and Ground Conditions

The proposed basement raises significant concerns given the known complexities of ground conditions in Highgate, an area historically associated with springs, variable subsoil conditions, and intricate groundwater behaviour.

In this context, basement development cannot be considered routine. It requires a particularly robust, site-specific technical justification to demonstrate that the works would not give rise to structural, hydrological, or long-term environmental risks.

Additional Comments On Elm Court Basement

The reports by Cube Consulting Engineers and Earth Water contained in this application are very much preliminary, rather than reports which can be relied upon to support their structural proposals for the purpose of policy compliance.

For example:

1. The BIA refers to “below ground level” (bgl) readings rather than the more meaningful AoD levels, perhaps because it relies entirely on one 1986 BGS borehole reading from a site nearby which uses bgl readings. This shows that firm London Clay reaches to 6.6m bgl, with less stable made ground, sand, and clay layers with lenses of sand above that. Despite this, all reports give the distinct impression that London Clay is close to the surface. For example, the drainage strategy document says:

“Elm Court lies on the Highgate hillside, where the ground is underlain mainly by the London Clay Formation—a stiff, shrink–swell clay—likely including its upper, slightly sandier Claygate Beds at this elevation. Near the surface, the clay is typically overlain by a thin, variable layer of made ground and slope deposits (“head”) made of clay, sand, and gravel derived from the surrounding hill. This combination means shallow soils can be mixed and irregular, but competent London Clay is encountered a few metres down, sometimes with perched groundwater in the sandier horizons. Overall, it is classic Highgate Ground: variable near the surface, but predominantly London Clay beneath.”

This is misleading, “Classic Highgate ground” is actually a complex geology with significant groundwater flows in the significant clay/sand layer levels. The 1986 borehole records groundwater up to 3.26 bgl.

2. The BIA gives a basement floor level of 2.75 bgl, with foundations to 3.2m bgl (and so possibly reaching groundwater levels). It goes on to say that if groundwater is encountered, it will flow around the basement. Basement construction elsewhere in Highgate however, has shown that diversion of groundwater flows can cause significant structural damage where the sands/gravels around nearby foundations have been washed away.

3. Despite the proposed basement excavation being entirely within the often unpredictable sand and clay layers (per the 1986 borehole), the BIA executive

summary says *“The site sits on the Highgate hillside and is predominantly underlain by London Clay, with variable near-surface deposits of Made Ground and slope-derived materials. These predictable geological conditions are well-suited to underpinning and basement formation, although some perched groundwater may be encountered within sandier layers.”* Again, this does not represent the actual situation in Highgate.

4. The report refers to impacts being restricted to Burland Scale 1 damage, but there are no calculations to back up this assertion or even a reference as to how these will be calculated. The site slopes steeply down Cholmeley Park and also towards Cromwell Avenue at the rear - this claim should be backed up with actual calculations using a system which is appropriate for sloping Ground.

5. There is no reference to an examination of the condition of the existing structure, and no references to how impact monitoring will take place during Construction.

6. There has been no contact with utility companies, beyond obtaining the local Thames Water asset maps and no attempt to ascertain the existing drainage structure on the site: *“The exact location of the onsite private drainage network is unknown and will be surveyed in due course.”* However, the flood risk report says, *“The scheme will not result in any impact on groundwater, as the site is understood to be positively drained to a below ground surface water drainage network that discharges to the existing surface water public sewer serving the site.”* How is this known if the onsite private drainage network has not been investigated?

It is clear that these reports do not show that the policy protections of **DM18 A**, or those of **DH7 1**, have been met. Given that during the proposed construction, it is expected that the occupants of eight flats over four floors will remain in residence, it is particularly important that the appropriate investigations and calculations have taken place before permission is contemplated.

In order to meet policy and protect the occupants, surrounding neighbours and the environment, further work is needed:

1. A full structural examination of the existing structure (by someone qualified to do so) to ensure it can withstand the proposed basement excavation below and the addition storey above, to include investigations into the existing drainage networks on the site.
2. A full AoD topographical map of the site to form the basis of all proposals.
3. Full and detailed hydrogeological and geotechnical reports providing a full investigation of the actual site, with appropriately sited boreholes and seasonal groundwater readings. If these show that the basement proposal will breach groundwater levels, appropriate groundwater drainage should be included. Comments that “further investigations will be undertaken” are not adequate.
4. Impact assessment calculations, using a system appropriate for the slope of the site to show that the proposals can go ahead without causing damage beyond Burland Scale one and, proposals for impact monitoring.
5. The design life of the proposed structure prior to significant maintenance is assumed to be 50 years (structural report page 12). This is an inappropriately short time for a permanent building housing 12 separate households. The appropriateness of this assumption needs to be questioned.
6. A Campbell Reith audit of the improved reports should be commissioned.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Yours sincerely,

Marta Sanchez,

On behalf of

The Highgate Society Planning Committee

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