

HGY/2026/2308

YMCA 184 Tottenham Lane N8 8SG

The Hornsey Historical Society has the following comments on the current planning application to demolish and rebuild the existing Crouch End YMCA building.

The Society recognises the long association of the YMCA with Crouch End and has no objections in principle to the stated objective of “delivering a modern hostel facility that aligns with current best practice standards, increasing the number of bed spaces from 155 to 174”. However, we have some concerns regarding the size and scale of the proposed new building, particularly relating to its height, massing and elevational design and the potential impact on the recognised quality of Crouch End’s townscape and architectural character.

The existing YMCA building consist of two parts, partly four storeys and partly five storeys in height. The tallest part of the building, which replaced the original 1929 building, is on the corner of Tottenham Lane and Elmfield Avenue. The four storey section forms the majority of the rest of the elevation along Tottenham Lane.

The proposed new building consists of a new block of much greater volume and bulk that is a uniformly six storeys high, although the top storey is set back along approximately three quarters of the Tottenham Lane frontage. The application documents include a number of CGI images showing the proposed new building in its street context, as illustrated for example in View 4 of the Townscape and Visual Assessment (page 51) showing existing and proposed views. In our opinion these views are misleading in that they show the YMCA building in isolation and devoid of any context. In particular, the CGI render of the proposed view greatly exaggerates the width of the road and fails to convey the true character of the site’s urban context.

A more realistic appreciation of the existing building in its tight urban context is given by a photograph that has been submitted to the planning case officer, showing the curved alignment and width of Tottenham Lane and the proximity, height and scale of the surrounding buildings (predominantly four storey), on which the approximate height of the proposed six storey building is marked by the white line. We request that this photograph is viewed together with these comments.

The increased height, volume and massing of the new building would be emphasised by the proposed elevational treatment, employing a uniformly gridded facade that claims to draw

inspiration from Edmondson's highly decorative Victorian shopping parade. The use of different materials including concrete, brick and glazed brick to give visual texture to the elevation is noted but, in our view, it would be desirable to further articulate the facade and to further model the envelope of the building in order to help to reduce the visual impact on the surroundings of its greatly enlarged bulk and massing.

We request that council officers give full consideration to these comments regarding the design of the proposed building before any planning approval is granted. Although just outside the Crouch End Conservation Area, the site marks one of the main entries to Crouch End and the new building would have a major impact on the character of the area. We are concerned that the proposed new building would be too large for its context and set an unwelcome precedent for the scale of new buildings in this historic area.

In conclusion, the Hornsey Historical Society has no objections in principle to the YMCA's continued presence in Crouch End and we would welcome a well-designed new building that positively contributed to the historic townscape character of the area. However, given our concerns about its height, massing and detailed design we wish to register an objection to the current application proposal.

Ray Rogers

RIBA MRTPI (Retd) IHBC

Conservation Officer

Hornsey Historical Society



View along Tottenham Lane showing the urban context indicating the potential impact of the greatly increased height and bulk of the proposed building



View looking south on Tottenham Lane indicating the potential impact of the increased height and bulk of the proposed building