

Highgate CAAC objection to application [HGY/2023/2878](#) for Stanhope Road Bridge Stanhope Road, N6 5DE.

This “Non-material” amendment makes changes to the following five elements of application HGY/2021/2718:

- Revised Ramp Layout
- Inclusion of estate fencing at the top and side of the embankments
- Revised footprint of stairs (south west embankment)
- Removal of retaining wall on north east embankment
- Inclusion of a water feature in the north east quadrant

Summary

Highgate CAAC believes that some of the amendments proposed are not “non-material” and hence should not have been submitted in this format.

Since only two engineering drawings are included, without any meaningful explanation or drawings and illustrations of what the revised plans will look like, and since sustainability appears only to have been revisited vis-a-vis some elements of the project but not others, we have no hesitation in objecting to this application.

A couple of the revisions might be desirable but the information provided is so scant it is impossible to say.

Detail

• ***Revised Ramp Layout*** – *this revision was to ensure the root protection zone of the privately owned tree in Thirsk Cottage and mature LB Haringey tree T1 were avoided.*

No comparison is provided between the new layout and the previous one, whether a greater area of the nature reserve will be lost, whether there will be more tree felling as a result, and so-on. This information is not adequate and hence we object.

As noted below, if a change to a more sustainable construction method can be envisaged for the north east embankment, why can't the construction method of the ramp also be amended to one of the more sustainable options outlined at the consultation meeting in November 2022? Almost all of those options had a very similar outcome to the concrete option according to the somewhat subjective, approximate “scoring” presented to consultees at that meeting.

A more sustainable construction method should also be considered for this element.

We also object to the assumed surfaces of the ramp as presented in the landscaping diagram. This prejudices the outcome of the recent consultation on Parkland Walk surfaces, and the surfaces proposed are both ugly and unsuitable (see below).

• ***Inclusion of estate fencing at the top and side of the embankments – this is to guard against falls.***

An enormous amount of railing is shown in drawing 70085596-WSP-SBR-DR-BR-0001 P05.pdf. No comparison is provided with the previous version indicating whether there is more fencing than shown previously.

The drawing legend says “APPROACH GUARDRAILS SHOWN INDICATIVELY”, so this is not necessarily a drawing of what is intended. This is not good enough. More detail of what is actually intended should be provided.

The landscape diagram tells us the material is “Metal 5-bar fence, height 1030mm.” Other labels say “REFER TO DRAWING 70085596-WSP-SBR-DE-LA-201”. That drawing is not included in this application.

None of this is adequate to determine what these railings will look like in practice or whether they will be appropriate for a nature reserve in a conservation area. On the face of it, they look very urban indeed.

Could more natural barriers be used in some of these locations, more in keeping with the Parkland Walk’s status as a nature reserve?

• ***Revised footprint of stairs (south west embankment) –The new alignment avoids a clash between the stairs and the reinforced earth Construction.***

At the November 2022 consultation meeting attended by two HCAAC members we argued that there was no need for these stairs given the ramp for wheelchair users and cyclists opposite. Why couldn’t able bodied people use the ramp? We would like to see these stairs removed and the area planted with trees and shrubs typical of the Parkland Walk, providing genuine natural habitats for nature, and to replace the trees that were felled just prior to the commencement date of the project, as part of the investigation into whether this project was required.

We agree with the Friends of the Parkland Walk that the current proposals for the Stanhope Road entrance:

“...will require significant areas of the nature reserve to be built over. [...] Stanhope Road is one of the least used access points on the whole of Parkland Walk and has extremely poor links to public transport and local services. The potential benefit and need of provision of ramps should be carefully balanced with the sensitive nature of

the site and the degree of service it can provide. [and] Materials used and the aesthetics of structures should be in keeping with a nature reserve."

(See <https://www.parkland-walk.org.uk/mobility/> and <https://www.parkland-walk.org.uk/new-path-surface/>)

Also, was reinforced earth construction the preferred method for this element in November 2022? If not, what has changed to make the transport and engineering staff alter their views? Drawings and artists' impressions should be provided to illustrate how this will alter the shape, extent and appearance of the embankment.

By contrast, the highly inappropriate 100 year life concrete bee towers presented at the November 2022 meeting do not appear to be included in these amendments. Dropping this element of the plans would be highly welcome, as they did not take into account the natural history of bees, varroa mite, climate change or the likelihood of vandalism.

• Removal of retaining wall on north east embankment - *this embankment is now only formed by reinforced earth therefore it is more sustainable.*

The Transport Department and their engineers argued at the November 2022 meeting that reinforced earth construction was unsuitable in some parts of the project site. (Because it would take up too much space given the structural requirements of the bridge, ramp, embankments etc?) No explanation is provided here concerning how this amendment differs from what was proposed earlier, nor why reinforced earth is now considered an adequate method of construction.

If such a change can be made in this quadrant, why can't the ramp also be constructed according to one of the more sustainable methods outlined at the November 2022 meeting, almost all of which had a very similar outcomes to the concrete option according to the somewhat subjective, approximate "scores" presented to consultees?

The Highways Dept and engineers argued at the November 2022 meeting that the ramp had to be constructed of concrete because this was what councillors had ticked up in the planning permission granted and could not be changed. Obviously, this is not so, and this application demonstrates that methods and materials can be altered subsequent to planning permission. If one construction method set out in the planning permission given for HGY/2021/2718 can be altered subsequently, so can others.

We object to this partial reconsideration of sustainability, as in our view as few elements of this project as possible should be made of highly carbon intensive materials such as concrete.

• ***Inclusion of a water feature in the north east quadrant – this was developed in collaboration with stakeholders to bring in additional bio-diversity and enhance water management***

A bit of history

Haringey Highways Department and their engineering consultants WSP met with consultees from Highgate CAAC, the HNF, Friends of Parkland Walk, CASCH Residents, Highgate Tree Protectors and so-on several times, for instance on July 28th 2022 and 24th November 2022. At one of the earlier meetings consultees apparently said a pond would be a nice addition to the project. At the November 2022 meeting the Highways Dept and engineers suggested a highly formal concrete “rain garden” of the type that are installed in town centres, on main roads etc. Unsurprisingly, given that Parkland Walk is a nature reserve in a conservation area, consultees were appalled. Further, the use of highly carbon intensive concrete in numerous proposed structures was very unwelcome given the climate emergency.

Who are the “stakeholders” who have influenced this NMA? Highgate CAAC and the HNF have not been consulted during 2023, for instance.

If this revised pond design (or “water feature”) is more sustainable that is to be welcomed, but insufficient information is provided to take a view on this.

On engineer’s diagram *70085596-WSP-SBR-DR-BR-0001 P05.pdf* the water feature is labelled:

*“Pond layout and permanent works
boundary to be updated following
Landscape design completion”*

On this diagram and in drawing: *70085596-WSP-SBR-DR-LA-100 - Landscape GA Plan C02.pdf*, the pond appears to be a highly formal, geometric “teardrop” shape.

The key to the landscape diagram does not say what the grey colour of the innermost concentric oval around the pond represents. Is the grey colour concrete? If so, this is still very similar to the highly urban, formal “rainwater garden” which so appalled consultees such as ourselves at the meeting in November 2022.

There is insufficient information to determine whether this water feature is still highly inappropriate for a nature reserve in a conservation area or whether concessions have been made to concerns about climate change and nature. Certainly its regular shape does not suggest a natural feature appropriate for a nature reserve.

More generally, the “water feature” is surrounded by areas described as:

*ROOT PROTECTION MEASURES REQUIRED
FOR PERMANENT WORKS INSTALLATION*

*REINFORCED EARTH EMBANKMENT FACE
(TENSARTECH NATURALGREEN SLOPE) /
LANDSCAPED AREAS*

*LANDSCAPED AREAS /
EMBANKMENT RE-PROFILING*

*REINFORCED EARTH EMBANKMENT FACE
(BAGWORK WRAPAROUND SLOPE) / LANDSCAPED
AREAs*

This makes the construction of the water feature sound very intrusive and technical.

No information is provided about how this water feature will be constructed in practice, what it will look like from Parkland Walk or the Highgate Conservation Area, whether it is necessary for attenuation reasons or could easily be omitted from the plan, whether natural plants will grow in the surrounding materials or whether wild animals will find this a good place to live, and so-on. It certainly does not sound like the sort of low tech, sustainable natural pond that volunteers have built elsewhere along Parkland Walk.

The lack of information means that we are unable to comment on whether this amendment is desirable or not. Therefore we have no alternative but to object to it.

General observations

As the HNF comments on this and application HGY/2023/2877 point out, the landscape diagram labels various surfaces as made of porous asphalt, Bimagrip and non-slip aggregate, and Class 1 Aggregate. This prejudices the outcome of the current consultation on surfaces in Parkland Walk and are hence highly inappropriate assumptions.

Bimagrip appears to be a highly industrial floor surface used on pedestrian bridges above busy roads (see <https://r1i.co.uk/products/bimagrip/>) and porous asphalt is a very ugly material used to prevent plants growing in tree pits. Neither is appropriate for a nature reserve in a conservation area.

This application should be refused on the grounds of invalidating the wider public consultation about surfaces to be used along Parkland Walk and because the materials proposed are unacceptable for a nature reserve in a conservation area.

The engineering landscape diagram *70085596-WSP-SBR-DR-LA-100 - Landscape GA Plan C02.pdf* also includes numerous references to other diagrams which are not included in this application.

3. *FOR LANDSCAPE FEATURES, REFER TO LANDSCAPE PLAN 70085596-WSP-XX-XX-DR-LA-0001.*
4. *FOR SUBSTRUCTURE AND FOUNDATION DETAILS REFER TO DRAWINGS 70085596-WSP-SBR-DR-BR-1700 TO 1721.*
5. *FOR SUPERSTRUCTURE DETAILS REFER TO DRAWINGS 70085596-WSP-SBR-DR-BR-1800 TO 1803.*
6. *FOR DRAINAGE DESIGN DETAILS REFER TO DRAWING 70085596-WSP-SBR-DR-BR-0500.*
7. *REINFORCED EARTH EMBANKMENTS DESIGN, REFER TO TENSAR DETAILED DESIGN DRAWINGS TD/23/002/D1_SH1, SH2 AND SH3 FOR DETAILS.*

The brief descriptions of the features on the map under “Proposed softscapes” are exceedingly scanty. No information is given about types of trees and shrubs, their placement, whether they are likely to thrive in the construction media proposed, and so-on. The diagram is labelled “Do not scale”. None of this is adequate.

Also there is reference to *REINFORCED EARTH EMBANKMENT FACE (TENSARTECH NATURALGREEN SLOPE) /LANDSCAPED AREAS*

Tensartech natural green slope is presumably this product, seemingly designed for motorway embankments, railway cuttings and the like:

<https://www.tensar.co.uk/solutions/wall-and-slope-systems/naturalgreen-slope-system>
<https://www.tensar.co.uk/solutions/wall-and-slope-systems/greenslope-system>

The application includes no explanation of how the use of this construction method differs from what was proposed previously nor drawings or artist’s impressions of what Stanhope Road or Parkland Walk will look like as a result. On the face of it, this approach appears exceedingly bleak and not suited to a nature reserve in a conservation area.

The three shades of green used on the landscaping diagram are hard to tell apart, and the various types of hatching do not help much, so it is not clear what the revisions will look like from street level or Parkland Walk.

Drawing 70085596-WSP-SBR-DR-BR-0001 P05.pdf also includes a box listing the following residual risks:

HEALTH AND SAFETY RISKS ARE IDENTIFIED IN THE T446: DESIGN RISK MANAGEMENT SCHEDULE,

SIGNIFICANT RESIDUAL RISKS ARE LISTED BELOW:

14. SERVICES/UTILITIES BENEATH CARRIAGEWAY SURFACE, NOTABLY GAS MAIN UNDER THE WEST FOOTWAY AND EAST EXTENT OF CARRIAGEWAY, AND HV CABLES UNDER THE EAST FOOTWAY. THAMES WATER PIPES AND COMMUNICATIONS CABLES ARE ALSO PRESENT.

35. EXCAVATIONS DISTURBING ROOTS, IMPACTING TREE STABILITY, CONTRACTOR TO MINIMISE OVER EXCAVATING DURING CONSTRUCTION.

40. TREES TO BE SURCHARGED DUE TO INCREASE IN LEVEL TO BRIDGE APPROACHES, ROOT PROTECTION MEASURES TO BE INSTALLED

No explanation is provided about how such risks will be mitigated. It is not acceptable to delegate responsibility for not damaging trees to the contractor.

Overall, these proposals give far more prominence to engineering and highways aspects than to ecology, local character and so-on. It would be a very good idea for someone with genuine knowledge of natural history, ecology etc to take a look at this application. Does Haringey have an ecology officer? The applications should also be shown to Haringey's Conservation Officers so they can comment on whether they think the methods proposed are likely to result in damage to the Highgate Conservation Area.

For all of the above reasons Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee believes this application is not adequate and we object as detailed above to the proposals described. The application should be refused.