

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee objects to application HGY/2023/2897 for a number of reasons.

1. There is no Design and Access or Heritage Statement, nor photos/illustrations which set the proposed changes in the context of the Highgate Conservation Area. In particular, no consideration is given to the fact that High Sheldon consists of two identical blocks and that these alterations would make one block look different from the other to the detriment of the Highgate Conservation Area. (See photos below.)

The proposed changes to the external appearance of the block are thoughtfully minimal, aligning with the key driver of preserving and enhancing the existing building's character. Considerable attention has been given to maintaining harmony with the surroundings. The specific interventions are as follows:

a. Alterations to Window Fenestration on South-East Corner:

- Proposed changes to window arrangement on the front elevation's south-east corner are intended to accommodate internal adjustments.
- Notably, layouts consider alignment with neighboring windows below, ensuring visual coherence.
- The proposed window design aims to mirror the appearance of windows directly beneath, as illustrated in Drawing No. PA-03.

b. Installation of Glass Balustrade and Roof Terrace:

- This modification seeks to optimize existing roof space, providing essential amenity space for flat occupants.
- Acknowledging the neighboring block's balustrade featuring metal railings and glass, our proposal enhances safety on an easily accessible roof.
- Introducing greenery contributes to improved aesthetics and harmony with the surroundings.

c. Alterations to Rear-Facing Balcony:

- Safety considerations drive changes to the rear-facing balcony, addressing concerns for visiting young family members.
- The proposed alteration retains the original balustrade design for consistency while removing a raised wall to optimize views from the living space.
- Although primarily aesthetic, we are open to revisions and retaining the two masonry balustrades if required. Informal discussions with the management agency suggest that they are open to changing the masonry balustrades as the existing balconies already differs from the smaller balconies below.

d. Alterations to Rear-Facing Glazing:

- Minimal changes are proposed, maintaining almost identical arrangements between existing and proposed glazing.
- A slight adjustment to the sill of one existing window is suggested for a consistent glazing arrangement, mirroring a similar alteration in the adjacent top floor flat.

e. Installation of New Skylight above Living Area:

- Proposing a new skylight above the living area aims to improve natural daylight within the flat.
- The skylight will not be visible from the public realm.

2. We object to the change to the window fenestration on the front elevation on the south-east corner of the building, where the application proposes to replace two square windows with a single horizontally proportioned window. No reason is given for this alteration. The change would alter the entirely regular fenestration of the whole block and would therefore be very harmful to the design of the building, and would also harm the Highgate Conservation Area.

These blocks are currently of a highly regular pattern and we believe introducing such inconsistency will form a precedent for further changes which may result in a hotchpotch of materials and styles, to the detriment of the building and the Highgate CA.

No drawings are provided showing the altered windows. On the "proposed" drawings the existing windows are merely marked with a red line and the statement "Existing window partition to be removed". No details are provided about the replacement windows: materials, style, etc. It is not possible to know exactly how much the proposed windows will clash with the existing.

Please refer to response 'a' under objection 1. To reiterate we are changing the window design in accordance with the regular pattern of the windows below. Please refer to the Photo Below and Drawing PA-03 which identifies the proposed window change. All windows and doors will be like-for-like replacements as identified in the planning application form.



Figure 1 – High Sheldon – View taken from street looking at the aforementioned existing elevation. Note; The window below which we are proposed to replicate.



Figure 2 – High Sheldon – View taken from street looking at the neighbouring block where the window fenestration for the top floor flat mimics the design below.

3. Similarly, the application proposes to entirely change the currently highly regular and characteristic pattern of the rear balconies, removing the current balcony parapet matching those below and that on the neighbouring block, and installing a wall of glass windows behind glass balustrades which are entirely out of keeping with the style of the two buildings and the floors below. Although at the “rear”, this will be visible from the public realm: Aylmer Road Allotments, Highgate Golf Course, numerous buildings along the A1 and the A1 itself. The different pattern will be particularly visible from a distance at night given the expanse of glass proposed for the lounge area and the height of the building. Again, this also sets a precedent for future anomalous changes to the detriment of the two buildings and Highgate Conservation Area.

Please refer to responses ‘b’ & ‘c’ under Objection 1. Please note that we would be happy to revert to the original balcony parapet and can provide updated drawings. We would however reiterate the importance of a raised balustrade on safety grounds.

4. The application states that a “green roof terrace” is to be installed on the large terrace area, but in fact exceedingly little or no planting appears to be envisaged. The drawings show several seating areas surrounded by 1.8m high glass screens with “hedges” set behind them. It is not clear from the drawings whether the “hedges” are real or artificial. Artificial greenery would not, of course, be in keeping with the leafy character of this part of the conservation area and would make no contribution towards sustainability, ameliorating climate change or provide any homes for nature etc.

The much higher edges around the terrace will also make this High Sheldon block look quite different from the other, which will be clearly visible from a long stretch of Sheldon Avenue, to the detriment of the conservation area.

We believe that a landscaping condition should be set if permission is granted, as these "hedges" will be highly visible from the public realm and some planting schemes set at the edge of such buildings can look very jarring.

As the Highgate Conservation Area Character Appraisal notes, the two blocks of High Sheldon are large and dominate the street scene. Such glaringly inconsistent alterations would be highly visible.

We believe these alterations are unsympathetic to the style of the two High Sheldon blocks, and contrary to their symmetry and regularity, to the detriment of the Highgate Conservation Area, and that no reasons have been provided for making such changes. The application should be refused.

We are proposing 32 linear meters of 500mm deep box 'live' planting – the equivalent to 16 square meters of planting. It is worth noting there is currently zero planting on the roof. Due to the high wind levels, a higher balustrade has been proposed to ensure that it is a safe, comfortable, and enjoyable environment. We would be open to discussing a reduction in the balustrade height if required. In doing this, we could also reduce the height of the planting.