

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee

9 February 2024

HGY/2023/3286: Sproughton, Courtenay Avenue, Highgate N6

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee objects to this application on the following grounds:

- Insufficient drawings to judge impacts on landscape, trees and staff quarters
- Sustainability and Embodied energy: request that Haringey's Sustainability Officer should check sustainability, ecology and embodied energy
- Construction Logistics Plan makes no sense
- Impact of basements on existing trees is not indicated on the drawings
- Sylvan character must be maintained
- Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee is not convinced that the design is appropriate for the setting or that it is sufficiently well executed
- Scale of the proposed house does not meet policy requirements
- Daylight to servants' bedrooms, staff kitchen/living and catering kitchen; ventilation to car park and air quality in light well serving staff bedrooms

Details of these objections are set out in more detail below:

1. Insufficient drawings to judge impacts on landscape, trees and staff quarters

Please could the applicant provide a drawing which shows the extent of the basement as well as the proposed house above ground combined with the information provided on the Landscape Plan and all the trees which exist on the site.

Please could the applicant also provide sections which not least show the lightwells which serve the Catering Kitchen, Staff Kitchen/Living and the two staff bedrooms in Basement 1 including the stairs and handrails to the three staircases adjacent to these rooms; and the Part K guarding at ground level to those lightwells.

2. Sustainability and Embodied energy

Please could Haringey's Sustainability Officer carefully assess the Whole Life Cycle Carbon strategy and embodied energy assessments. Please note the thickness of the dormer roofs and cheeks are very thin in order to achieve the historical architectural references.

3. Construction Logistics Plan

"ACCESS

Plan shows lorries coming up Highgate West Hill to The Gate house and along Hampstead Lane

Written description: "route to...A1 (further onto A406 - M25 - M1)

EGRESS

Plan shows lorries leaving via Hampstead Lane to Highgate High Street

Written description: "to A40" "

These routes seem to make no sense but if this is what is proposed the routes are very inappropriate and must be reconsidered.

4. Impact of basements on existing trees. Extent of basements and existing trees not shown on any plans

HCAAC seeks clarity on any works to or having any impact on existing trees. All the trees in Compton and Courtenay Avenues are covered by a Group TPO. There are many veteran trees in the Bishops Area of the Highgate Conservation Area surviving from the days when it formed part of the Bishops Wood, previously the Bishops' hunting grounds. The site of the Bishop's Hunting Lodge which is of archaeological importance is within close proximity of this site. Thus the proposal does not meet the policy requirements of the Highgate Neighbourhood Plan:

Policy DH7: Basements

Where basement development does not fall in the scope of permitted development, and where there is evidence that there may be problems with drainage or flooding, applications for basement development will be supported only where they meet the requirements set out within this policy.

1. Impact Assessment requirements:

I. Any assessment on the impact of a basement development should demonstrate that:

iii There will be no individual or cumulative impact of development on the character and biodiversity of gardens and adjacent open spaces, particularly in designated conservation areas and those areas adjacent to Highgate's Major Open Spaces (identified in 3.4.2).

3. Limiting Environmental/Ecological Impacts:

I. Any basement development should normally be expected to allow for a minimum of one metre of permeable soil above any part of the basement beneath a garden to support biodiversity and larger trees/planting. This depth should be greater if necessary to preserve landscaping consistent with neighbouring properties.

5. Sylvan character must be maintained

The character of Highgate Conservation Area is recognised as having generous amounts of open spaces, large gardens and many trees. Courtenay and Compton Avenues form an important part of that sylvan character which is recognised by the applicant. Without good information about the proposals (see 1. above) we can only presume that character would be lost along with all the inherent surrounding biodiversity. The plot itself currently has a large garden, surrounded by neighbours' large gardens and it shares a boundary with Highgate Golf Course. The site forms a significant stepping stone within a large area of significant open space.

6. Assessment of proposed house

We note the Heritage Statement states the existing "*house commits the cardinal architectural sin of lacking repose.*" We presume the applicant or architect consider 'repose' can only be delivered by emulating Robert Adam at Kenwood and that repose is the predominant form in this area. However this area is in fact best known for the Arts & Crafts style, arguably the antithesis of the work of Robert Adam. We venture to suggest that the design is somewhat lacking in repose in comparison with Palladian Kenwood. With the mansard form and dormers the proposal appears to be more French in style than English. We await with interest a Design Guide for the Bishops Area of the Highgate Conservation Area much needed because so much inappropriate design has been consented.

The Heritage Statement quotes parts of the Pre-Application advice:
"Insofar as the design of the proposed dwelling, it is accepted the amendments to the scheme are viewed to be successful and respectful of the chosen design approach, specifically addressing concerns about proportions. The siting, form and massing of the proposed building would also be respectful of landscape features important to the character of the site." (ref PRE/2023/0018). We note some quotations do not include full sentences and we do not have the benefit of being able to see the advice in full. Such advice is however not binding and we do not know what drawings were being considered by Officers at that time.

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee is not convinced that the design is appropriate for the setting or that it is sufficiently well executed. Our further concerns are set out below.

7. Scale of the proposed house in its setting is too large

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee firmly objects to this application because the proposal with its extensive basement, large volume above ground, loss of trees and biodiversity in a very sensitive location does not meet policy requirements.

Although we do not have the benefit of a revised Highgate Conservation Area Character Appraisal which no doubt would recognise the considerable harm to this part of Highgate Conservation Area in the intervening years, this application must comply with the extant document which in Chapter 10 covers the Bishops Area states:

"10.10.1 The streets in the Bishops Sub Area are an excellent example of high quality residential development of the period. However incremental loss of features, remodelling or complete demolition of houses have a detrimental effect on the Conservation Area. Future developments should resist the loss of any buildings making a positive contribution to the area and should respect its layout and spaciousness." and:

"10.8 Positive contributions

10.8.1 Most of the existing buildings contribute to the homogenous character of the sub-area"

Haringey's Development Management policies 2017 states at DM9:

"When considering the impact of proposals on the historic environment, the Council will have regard to:

a. priority given to sustaining and enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and its setting;" The heritage asset to be considered is Highgate Conservation Area.

Highgate Neighbourhood Plan states that replacement buildings should make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area:

"Policy DH1: Demolition in Highgate's Conservation Areas

Proposals to demolish buildings and structures that are non-designated heritage assets will be subject to a balance judgement with regard to the scale of the loss and the significance of the asset. Any proposed replacement should make a positive contribution to the conservation area.

Policy DH2: Development Proposals in Highgate's Conservation Areas Development proposals, including alterations or extensions to existing buildings, should preserve

or enhance the character or appearance of Highgate's conservation areas, and respect the setting of its listed buildings and other heritage assets. Development should preserve or enhance the open, semi-rural or village character where this is a feature of the area. "

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee considers, at best, the proposed house would make a neutral impact on the Highgate Conservation Area.

8. Staff bedrooms, staff kitchen/living and catering kitchen

Haringey Planning Department is aware of our growing concern about the poor quality of working and living conditions provided for staff and servants. Under point 1 we have asked for further drawings so that we and Haringey can fully understand the impact of the external stairs, railings and walls surrounding the light wells. Daylight and sunlight studies are required. We note that the staff bedrooms are located immediately above the seven-vehicle car park and the car lift is located in the front courtyard. People arriving for a meeting in the Boardroom will no doubt all arrive at once entering and exiting past the lightwell which provides opening windows to the Staff bedrooms. No information is provided on how air from exhausts (EV or petrol) will be extracted from the car park.

SUMMARY

This Application fails to meet policy requirements particularly but not limited to policies relating to heritage assets, retaining the open and the sylvan character of Highgate, basements and biodiversity and so must be refused.

In addition, it would provide, we suggest, a poor standard of accommodation for staff.
