

HGY/2023/3404: Channing School, Highgate Hill

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

- All proposed works to be included in application
- Archaeology
- Impact on Highgate Conservation Area
- Setting of listed buildings
- Too much building on the site
- Potential damage to surface and ground water flows
- Independent review of BIA
- Disturbance to wildlife

These are our comments in detail under the above headings:

1. All proposed works to be included in application

This application deals with only some of the building and landscaping work which Channing School wishes to undertake in its programme of proposed works. We need to see all of these works under a single application. The harm that will be caused to the Conservation Area and the setting of listed buildings by this application alone is evident, for the reasons stated herein. The combined effect on heritage, impact on the Highgate Conservation Area, impacts on ecology, biodiversity, archaeology and the basement impacts will be substantial and must be considered simultaneously.

2. Archaeology

School Archaeological Report says

"5.1.8 The site has a low potential for remains dating to the Medieval period.

5.1.9 The site has a low-moderate potential for remains dating to the post-medieval period. The land behind the street frontage was open land, even in the latter part of the 19th century, so any archaeological remains that were present would be likely to date to the Victorian era and be confined to backyard activities."

In fact the 1869 map shows quite clearly that this site was not 'open land' even then. In fact the layout of the sites fronting onto Highgate Hill and running down to the southeast, suggests a mediaeval pattern of cottages with long burgage plots and messuages, to the rear. Indeed, when Channing dug out their basement for the new Arts, Gym and 6th form centre, they found a mediaeval cess pit. GLAAS are probably unaware of this. It is unclear whether it was ever professionally excavated. We strongly suggest there should be a Condition requiring on site investigation.

3. Impact on Highgate Conservation Area

The whole of the frontage to The Bank was developed by 18th century, at the very least and probably centuries earlier. Both early photos of The Bank are dated 'reputedly 1905', where the first photo shows an earlier building than the current one, which is shown in the second photo. This anomaly is mentioned in the text .

The Highgate Conservation Area Character Appraisal states:

"6.4.102: Cholmeley Park is a turning off Highgate Hill immediately west of The Bank. The entrance to to Cholmeley Park at the High Street end is dominated by Cholmeley Lodge (see sub area 2) . Together with Channing School on the other (south east) side these form the gateway to Cholmeley Park. This 'gateway' continues with a small Victorian gatehouse, originally that to Cholmeley Lodge named after sir Roger Cholmeley who move to Highgate in 1536 and who endowed Highgate School in 1565. It has ornate detailing to windows, gables and roof and a shield built into the brickwork."

[Note: the current Cholmeley Lodge was built on the site of the earlier Cholmeley Lodge referred to in this text and to which the extant small Lodge related.]

The steep wooded bank along Channing's boundary on Cholmeley Park together with the Gatehouse contribute a great deal to the charm and sense of bygone age when this was a narrow cartway down to fields much reminiscent of Highgate agricultural past and appreciated locally.

The photograph (37) and the computer generated image (38) on page 17 of the Design and Access Statement make it very clear that the proposed extension to Brunner House would unacceptably urbanise this rather special part of the Conservation Area. (See below for impact on the trees on this bank). Further the setting of Gatehouse, the bank and the trees at the top of the bank would all be adversely affected.

4. Setting of listed buildings

Cholmeley Lodge is listed Grade II. It is on raised ground as is Brunner House with the cartway between having cut through the natural ground level over time. Brunner House is not visible at any time of year at road level with the roof visible only from the flats in Cholmeley Lodge on higher levels. It is quite clear from the documents submitted with the application, including but not limited to the photographs/CGIs, that the proposed works will be clearly visible from the public realm. Just as the urbanisation of this part of the Conservation Area would be adversely affected so would the setting of Cholmeley Lodge.

5. Too much building on the site

There is much emphasis now on flood risk with a need to reduce hard surfaces rather than increase them. Understanding the potential damage to surface and ground water flows is crucial in this area especially as the site at some point is likely to encroach into the Bagshot Sands. The BIA does not establish where this horizon is.

The site falls very steeply from Highgate Hill down to Winchester Place where there is a very high retaining wall on the site boundary. This slope and the other slopes around the natural depression known as the Highgate Bowl area contain incipient streams ultimately surfacing as the Cholmeley Brook. Good evidence of those watercourses and the potential flood risk arising from unattenuated rainfall in the streets below the site, including across the Archway Road where the Miltons is designated a flood risk area and which has suffered several flood events over the years.

Matters have been made worse rather than better over recent years. Two large buildings, a sports hall and a concert hall which are cut into the ground slope, have been built. The ground to the side and below them is variously a tennis court, and area of playground painted bright green, a MUGA and a car park presumably with setts below the grassed surface. The site plan shows this whole area as grass. Virtually none of this 'grassed' area is a permeable surface. The drawings should show accurately how this area is actually paved.

The proposed 'rain gardens' would seem to be hardly adequate to deal with the risks involved.

6. Independent review of BIA

The above leads us to request that Haringey appoints at the applicant's expense an independent review of the applicant's BIA.

7. Disturbance to wildlife

One of the things which neighbours in Highgate Hill, Winchester Place, Cromwell Avenue and possibly in Cholmeley Park notice is that the lights are left on in the new buildings causing light pollution and presumably affecting wildlife especially nocturnal creatures. We would wish to see a genuine reversal of previous harms to the natural ecology and extra measures to improve the situation beyond that baseline.

For all the above reasons we consider that this application should be withdrawn and a new application submitted to cover all the works which Channing kindly has shown on their slides. If the application is not withdrawn then it must be refused for the reasons stated herein.