

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee 08/03/2024

Highgate CAAC objection to amended design/plans for HGY/2023/2121, 24

Cholmeley Crescent, N6 5HA

Demolition of the existing house and construction of a new house of similar appearance, size and footprint with new boundary treatment (**RECONSULTATION - AMENDED DESIGN/PLANS**).

Highgate CAAC has considered the new documents submitted between 06/10/2023 and 13/2/2024, and remains firmly of the view that this application should be refused.

Very few, if any, of the problems we identified in our earlier objection have been addressed. The comments below add to that objection.

1. Haringey's Conservation Officer submitted a long, strongly-worded comment on the original version of this application. We agree with her that building a pastiche is not the same as keeping the original building, that crown roofs are not typical of this area and hence inappropriate, that the proportions of the fenestration were wrong, demolition is not the right approach and overall the proposal would cause less than substantial harm.

The revised drawings attempt to make the windows, porch, etc. look more like the originals but the crown roof remains. Hence the revised design is not in keeping with the character of this part of Highgate Conservation Area and should be refused.

2. Secondly, the case for demolition has not been made. In our previous objection we requested a proper engineering analysis of the structure of the existing building. This has not been done.

The new documents include a visual survey conducted prior to house purchase, including the usual caveats about what is not covered, and a "revised" version of the same document which is identical apart from a 4 page annex of tables and a plan concerning borehole results. No explanation of these borehole results appears to have been included so their relevance is hard to deduce.

The new documents also include two pages of broad-brush architects' diagrams of structural and other works, but since there is no engineer's report about the structural problems and no explanation of the technical status of these architects' illustrations they cannot justify demolition.

Without a proper engineer's analysis, the proposal to demolish and rebuild the building should be refused.

3. It is not clear whether the various cracks illustrated are superficial or more serious, or whether any other problems are more significant than the type of movement often seen in older buildings, but many appear to be located in the side extension, which apparently had a second floor added above at a later date. As we noted in our earlier objection, the Cholmeley Brook runs down this side of the house, and it is possible that this has undermined a poorly built and/or overly enlarged extension. A more ecologically sustainable and economic solution may lie in rebuilding only the extension.

A related issue is that if this side of the house is above the Cholmeley Brook, very deep foundations may have to be constructed, involving a great deal of concrete, to support the new, much larger house adequately. This should be factored into the lifetime carbon calculations of whether demolish and rebuild is justified.

As far as we are aware, no further calculations have been done and the lifetime carbon calculations still compare the original proposed design (without due allowance for building above the Cholmeley Brook) with an assumed generic old house, not this particular house. We do not believe this is adequate to justify the demolition and replacement of this house.

4. Neither is the revised proposal for a "new house of similar appearance, size and footprint" as stated in the application description.

Not only is the revised proposal still considerably larger than the existing house, the design is problematic. Side elevation C is intrusive, with substantial dormers adding

to the incongruity of the crown roof relative to surrounding buildings. The very large rear dormer may well be visible from the road. If someone proposed adding these dormers to an existing house in this area, under current rules and guidelines they might well be refused. It is not clear why such an anomalous design should be permitted in a new house.

5. Permitting this application, which is clearly not an Arts and Crafts design and not in keeping with the character of this part of the Highgate Conservation Area, would open the floodgates to further unsympathetic projects, and lead to an erosion of the character of this part of the HCA in the same way that the character of the Bishops Area has significantly changed over recent years. If this happens in more and more parts of the Highgate Conservation Area, what are conservation areas for?

6. The revised design should comply with any legal requirements regarding how much garden space is left compared to the property as originally built.

The revised garden design seems not to take adequate account of sustainability requirements. A large hedge will be removed without apparently being replaced by meaningful nature-oriented planting.

Summary

The above observations are in addition to our original objection. In our view, the revised drawings do very little to make this design fit in with the character of this part of Highgate Conservation Area, open the door to other inappropriate developments, and do not make space for nature or properly address concerns about climate change. There is no proper engineering analysis of current structural problems, of the work that would be required to correct them, nor of the problems and solutions associated with building a substantially larger house partly above Cholmeley Brook. The lifetime carbon implications of demolishing *this* house and rebuilding it with an appropriately designed and properly engineered replacement in this location are not provided.

Haringey policy favours retaining and refurbishing existing houses over demolish and rebuild, and we have no hesitation in continuing to object to the demolition of this house.

This application should be refused.

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