

HGY/2024/0028: Townsend Yard (OMVED) Glasshouses:

Demolition and re-building of the existing glasshouse together with some minor modifications to the site entrance area.

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

Bioscan ecological appraisal:

This report consistently states the adjacent land belongs to the Harington Scheme which may have bought that land but we believe it may still belong to the Silverstein family. It is known locally as 'Silverstein's Wood'. OmVed have very recently applied to cut back the Silverstein trees along the boundary, presumably to allow this development.

We ask the Case Officer to note these extracts from Bioscan's Ecological Appraisal March 2024:

2.2.3 The largest tree specimens within the site are two mature and semi-mature free-standing weeping willow *Salix babylonica* trees (T51 and T8 on Figures 1-3), the southern of which (T51) appears to now be dead after having been pollarded back to the bole sometime in the period since 2019. The standing trunk of this tree appears likely to be removed as a consequence of the proposals and was therefore subject to closer inspection for any signs of bat roosting

3.2.11 The site has some potential to support certain other generally common species that may be relatively scarce in the locality and/or are subject to national and/or local Biodiversity Action Plans, such as hedgehog and common toad. No change is anticipated in respect of these species should they use the site.

3.2.12 The site is considered unlikely to support any other species of particular value or statutory protection.

Many other trees on the OmVed Gardens site have been removed since they purchased the site for housing development over a decade ago. We note that this Appraisal states on page 7 that 'there are no mature trees in the vicinity'.

The loss of the willows and other mature trees has been very concerning as these were key features of the site. At the very least T8 and T51 should be replaced with mature specimens as a condition if the Council were minded to grant permission. Comparison between aerial photos would show the changes in the landscape.

The whole OmVed Gardens area has been regraded and new substantial structures are in the process of construction. Much if not all ecological benefit may have been lost and so we would strongly recommend that Bioscan's suggestion in 4.2 should be conditioned at a minimum as should the use of retractable louvres or blinds on page 9 both for neighbours in Cholmeley Crescent as much as for wildlife. We would like to see a firm proposal from OmVed to increase biodiversity on their land. There is also the question of protecting bats and other wildlife during the course of the works.

The structures which are currently being built are based on the combined footprint of sheds that were on the Capital Garden Centre but not their height and are considerably taller than those sheds. HCAAC wishes to see no increase in height in the proposed new glasshouses than the existing as this site falls within the 'Green line' of the Highgate Bowl Site Allocations in both Haringey's and the Highgate Neighbourhood Plan.

It would appear that the raised balcony at the eastern end of the site and the shed/store and entry buildings are being included in this application. We believe that no planning applications have been made for these structures. The raised balcony which is very close to the boundaries with houses on Cholmeley Crescent is now to be enclosed suggesting it would be more intensively used, probably also at night, causing a nuisance for humans and bats alike, especially given the fall of the land down to Cholmeley Crescent. These additional built elements including the proposed electricity substation all result in an urbanisation of the Highgate Bowl which flies in the face of policy intended to ensure this green area of Highgate behind the Village remains undeveloped for the long-term benefit of local people and biodiversity.

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee firmly believes that this application must be refused.