



Officer Report

Application Number:	HGY/2024/1036
Application Type:	Full planning permission
Address:	Vacant Station Building, Priory Gardens, Highgate, London, N6 5QT
Proposal:	Demolition of vacant station building
Case Officer:	Roland Sheldon
Valid Date:	15/04/2024
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Applicant:	Mr Brendan Hodges
Agent:	

RECOMMENDATION

Approve with Conditions

1. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND LOCATION DETAILS

Proposed development

This is an application for the demolition of a vacant station building.

Site and Surroundings

The application site contains a vacant station building within the grounds of the disused Highgate railway station, just to the south-west of the western end of Priory Gardens, N6. The site is located within the Highgate Conservation Area. The site does not contain a listed building but the central platform just to the south of the site is a locally listed structure. The site is located within designated Metropolitan Open Land (MOL), Ecological Corridor, and a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SINC) of Metropolitan Importance.

The site also forms part of Site Allocation SA39 (former Highgate Station) as identified in the Haringey Site Allocations DPD (2017).

Relevant Planning and Enforcement history

There was no relevant planning history regarding the site.

2. CONSULTATION RESPONSE CONSULTATION RESPONSE

The following were consulted on the planning application:

- LBH Conservation Officer:

The photographic evidence and structural surveys demonstrate the altered, derelict and unsafe state of the building. The old station building is a utilitarian building of no architectural interest and of modest local interest, whose loss would have a negligible impact on the character and significance of the conservation area and locally listed disused station.

- LBH Design Officer: No comments received.
- LBH Building Control: No comments received.
- LBH Transportation Group:

The proposal will need to be conditioned for a Construction Logistics Plan to be submitted and approved prior to commencement of works on site.

- TFL (infrastructure and spatial planning): No comments to make on the application.
 - Historic England: No comments received.
 - Thames Water: No comments received.
- The following local groups and societies were consulted on the planning application:
- Highgate Neighbourhood Forum: No comments received.
 - Highgate Society: No comments received.
 - Highgate CAAC:

The submission does not adequately address all relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework with regards to heritage considerations, highlighting the absence of the application demonstrating that the desirability of the new development makes to local character and distinctiveness. There is an absence of public benefits demonstrated to offset the harm resulting from the loss of the building.

Officer comment: The assessment of the proposal has been taken against relevant heritage policy and reviewed by the Council Principal Heritage Officer. The views of the Highgate CAAC shall be taken into consideration as part of the assessment of the proposal.

LOCAL REPRESENTATIONS LOCAL REPRESENTATIONS

The application has been publicised by way of a notice placed in the local press & a site notice displayed in the vicinity of the site, and letters sent to neighbouring properties. The number of representations received from neighbours, local groups, etc. in response to notification and publicity of the application were as follows:

No of individual responses: 2

- Objecting: 1
- Supporting: 1

The following issues were raised in representations and are addressed further on in this report or below:

- The disused and derelict buildings have attracted anti-social behaviour. Removal of the structure will contribute to reducing scope for such activity.
- The building should be renovated/restored in a sympathetic way, not demolished, given its historic interest.

The following comments were received from local groups/societies that are addressed further in this report or below:

- The proposal does not address parts of the National Planning Policy framework with regards to the maintenance (or lack of) of the heritage asset, and that local planning authorities should take account of the value in retaining and enhancing heritage assets.

3. MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The main planning considerations raised by the proposed development are:

1. Background and design and heritage;
2. Nature and ecology; and
3. Highways and transportation.

Background and design/heritage

Paragraphs 201-202 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) (NPPF) sets out that local planning authorities (LPAs) should assess the particular significance of any heritage asset. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal. Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

Paragraph 203 requires that LPAs take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

London Plan Policy HC1 seeks to ensure that development proposals affecting heritage assets and their settings, should conserve their significance. This policy applies to designated and non-designated heritage assets. Local Plan Policy SP12 and DPD Policy DM9 set out the Council's approach to the management, conservation and enhancement of the Borough's historic environment.

DPD Policy DM9 states that proposals affecting a designated or non-designated heritage asset will be assessed against the significance of the asset and its setting, and the impact of the proposals on that significance; setting out a range of issues which will be taken into account.

The Highgate Neighbourhood Plan (HNP) (July 2017) is a material planning consideration when considering an application for this site. Policy DH1 'Demolition in Highgate's Conservation Areas' is of specific relevance, this states that:

"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." The subtext of the policy outlines that all proposals to demolish will be considered against tests in higher level policies."

Paragraph 12.3.3 of the Highgate Conservation Area Appraisal also outlines that there shall be a presumption in favour of retaining non-designated heritage assets that make a positive contribution

to the Conservation Area; and that planning permission for demolition would not be granted unless the loss of the building is justified.

The building is located within Site Allocation SA39 within the Haringey Site Allocations DPD (2017). The is identified as the former over ground station, having the potential to be opened up to provide a mix of education, tourist and community uses that makes the best use of the disused buildings and hard landscaped spaces.

The site requirements specifically outline that the existing locally listed station building should be retained and brought to use. It should be noted that this refers to the station building on the disused platform itself, and not the building subject to this application.

Structural review

A structural condition report by Bellamy Wallace Partnership has been submitted as part of the application.

The report outlines that vacant station building is a single storey load bearing masonry structure. A timber framed building to the immediate north has suffered fire extensive damage and has since been completely raised. The fire is understood to have occurred in May 2023 as an act of arson by trespassers. The report outlines that generally, the property is in a poor structural condition both internally and externally, with various areas of stepped cracking in the existing masonry, historic rebuilding of existing masonry, and movement across the tops of most windows. Fire damage is apparent to walls and ceilings throughout, with evidence of cracking to load-bearing walls. It was also observed that the existing foundation system has been affected by the surrounding vegetation and would require attention. The report advises that access to the internal areas is limited due to the health and safety issue, given the danger of wall collapse, and the timber roof elements now appearing to be in a hazardous condition in danger of collapse.

There are also traces of asbestos present within the property, albeit in a relatively small amount and location.

The report concludes that based upon the evidential data gathered during the site inspection, alongside historical information, the building is currently categorized as a dangerous structure, and based on highlighted health and safety issue, that the building is carefully demolished and rebuilt.

Heritage

The proposal has been reviewed by the Council Principal Heritage Officer. Their views have been informed by the submitted heritage impact assessment structural survey reports. The building in question was constructed as part of the Great Northern Railway line and pre-dates the locally listed and disused 1940 disused Highgate Interchange Station. It was built as a waiting shelter and then was subsequently altered to be used as a dwelling.

The station was rebuilt in 1939 and then closed to passengers in 1954 and the site was progressively adapted and rebuilt for London Underground uses. The old station building in question was further altered and extended to the west and used by the underground station staff until 12 years ago.

An arson attack in 2023 destroyed the extension to the west and partially damaged the old station building. Both photographic and structural surveys of the building demonstrate the altered, derelict, and unsafe state of the building. The Heritage Officer acknowledges the decayed fabric and the structural issues affecting both roof, walls and foundations pose health and safety issues, further aggravated by asbestos presence.

The dangerous conditions of this building largely pre-date the recent and the additional damage caused by the 2023 arson and the old Station Building is a utilitarian building of no architectural interest and of modest local interest, whose loss will have a very negligible impact on the character and significance of both the Conservation Area and the locally listed 1940 disused station.

The proposed demolition of the Old Station building, intended as a neutral contributor to the character of the conservation area and as a dangerous structure well beyond repair, is comprehensively articulated in the submitted application, will cause a very low level of less than substantial harm to the significance of heritage assets, and the test set at paragraph 207 of the NPPF applies.

Site allocation

Whilst the demolition of the building would run counter to the site allocation objective or making use of the disused buildings within the site, it is very much an ancillary structure to the actual station interchange building. The allocation specifically highlights that it is the locally listed structures on site that should be retained, which would not include the subject building. Its removal would not compromise the overall objectives of the site allocation to be used for a range of community uses and improving the connections from Parkland Walk to Highgate Wood.

Taking the above into consideration, the submission has adequately demonstrated that the building is in a significantly decayed state that is now a dangerous structure that poses health and safety risks. The building is of very low architectural and historic heritage interest, and therefore given its condition, there are not sufficient grounds to resist its demolition. The loss of the building would not compromise the overall objectives of site allocation SA39.

Nature and ecology

The site is located within Metropolitan Open Land (MOL), an Ecological Corridor and a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). Local Plan policy SP13 sets out that when and where possible, designated Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) shall be protected and enhanced. DM policy DM19 requires that proposals on sites which are, or are adjacent to Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)/Ecological Corridors, should protect and enhance the nature conservation of the site.

A Bat Survey Report by Temple has been submitted as part of the application. The report concludes that there was no evidence of roosting bats found during the Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA), and the vacant station building was assessed as having negligible suitability for roosting bats.

No further surveys for bats have been recommended before the demolition of the building.

According to the submitted covering letter from 'Places for London', the proposed demolition works will be undertaken via TfL's 'Safe System of Work', which shall ensure the works are carried out in compliance with Health, Safety and Environmental requirements of all relevant legislation, best practice and guidance. A Demolition Method Statement for the proposal has been submitted alongside the application which demonstrates how the works would be undertaken in accordance with the 'Safe System of Work', and shall form part of the approved documents.

Taking the above into consideration, the proposal is acceptable with regards to nature and ecology considerations.

Highways and transportation

Paragraph 115 of the NPPF outlines that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

London Plan policy T4 outlines that development proposals should include transport assessments/statements to ensure that impacts on the capacity of the transport network (including impacts on pedestrians and the cycle network), at the local, network-wide and strategic level, are fully assessed. Transport assessments should focus on embedding the Healthy Streets Approach within, and in the vicinity of, new development. Travel Plans, Parking Design and Management Plans, Construction Logistics Plans and Delivery and Servicing Plans will be required having regard to Transport for London guidance. Development proposals should not increase road danger.

The proposal has been reviewed by a Transport Officer. No objections were raised to the proposal to demolish the building, subject to the submission of a construction logistics management plan (CLP). Given however the scale of this project and Government guidance on the imposition of conditions as well as the guidance on securing CLP the scale of the works here are not proportionate to secure this. The scale of works with demolition here will not generate any significant traffic movement.

Conclusion

The submission has provided sufficient justification that the demolition of the structure is required in the interests of health and safety, and the removal of the building would will cause a very low level of less than substantial harm to the significance of heritage assets.

All other relevant policies and considerations, including equalities, have been taken into account. Planning permission should be granted for the reasons set out above. The details of the decision are set out in the RECOMMENDATION.

5. CIL APPLICABLE

Based on the information given on the plans, there will be no Mayoral CIL or Haringey CIL charge, as there will be no net increase in floorspace resulting from the proposal.

6. RECOMMENDATION

GRANT PERMISSION subject to conditions

Conditions:

- 1 The development to which this permission relates must be begun no later than three years from the date of this decision notice, failing which the permission shall be of no effect.

Reason: This condition is imposed by virtue of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and to prevent the accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions.

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in complete accordance with the approved plans and drawings listed in this decision notice, other than where those details are altered pursuant to the conditions of this planning permission.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.