

Leader and Cabinet Office

Cllr Sarah Williams

Cabinet Member for Housing Services,
Private Renters and Planning



29 June 2023

Catherine West MP

Member of Parliament for Hornsey & Wood Green
House of Commons
SW1A 0AA

Sent by email to: catherine.west.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Catherine,

Many thanks for your letter regarding Highgate School Planning Application. Please find my response to your questions below.

“No doubt the Council will receive a lot of feedback regarding Highgate School's mega planning application on Metropolitan Open Land to be realised over the next decade. I chaired a 'standing room only' feedback meeting with local residents last night, which was sponsored by the Highgate Society.”

I understand, as you state, that the public meeting was well attended. As I think you are aware, the planning service ensured, following a request by the Highgate Society that a planning officer attended the meeting in an observational capacity, who fed back that a number of issues were raised by local residents.

As you know the council are currently considering 6 planning applications and as you state, there has been a substantial number of written comments and objections received.

“The Conservation Committee, led by Gail Waldman, laid out a compelling concern of potential detrimental impacts to the medieval character of the village, as she has written them up, I do not need to go into them in more detail.”

I can confirm that the council, following consultation on the planning applications, has also received written comments from the conservation area advisory group reflecting those comments above, all which will be taken into consideration as part of the assessment of the planning applications.

“The following points from the audience struck me in particular:

The lack of a rigorous environmental impact statement to address climate change. This includes the lack of protection of trees, no independent statement of the impact of the application on nature, or an assessment of the impact of the sheer mass of building on the fragile, boggy marsh like landscape around the playing fields prone to flooding.

In the building stage there is currently no independent assessment of best practice approaches to repurposing concrete, glass and brick to reduce waste and save on carbon footprint.

Southwood Lane element of the application-what protection will there be for Highgate Bowl, and views of Highgate Bowl from Southwood Lane, an area of special nature Conservation.”

Officers are in the process of assessing an application known as a ‘screening’ application which essentially determines whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required to cover the consideration process of the 6 planning applications. This has not yet been determined but will be in the near future.

EIAs are only required for the very largest developments (1,000 homes etc.), it may be determined that an EIA is not required, however the planning applications have been submitted with a comprehensive suite of specialised supporting professional reports:

- energy and sustainability statements,
- whole life carbon assessments,
- circular economy statements,
- ecological impact assessments,
- flood risk assessments,
- drainage statements,
- transport assessments,
- heritage statements.

Additionally, as part of the BREAM requirements, the re-use of on-site materials is considered in the Pre-Demolition and Pre-Redevelopment Audit Report.

These reports cover the particular issues you have raised, all of which will be considered by various experts (conservation, transport, design, sustainability, nature conservation etc.) who are qualified to assess and comment in relation to the proposals, which will in turn enable the planning officer to arrive at the appropriate recommendations for the proposals. The planning applications will of course also be assessed against all relevant planning

policies (covering the issues you mention above) to also determine the acceptability of the proposals.

I would add that Highgate residents have obtained an engineering report for the proposed below ground works required for Dyne House and the conclusions of the report are at odds to the engineering report submitted with the planning applications by the Applicant. Therefore, Officers are considering whether to commission a 3rd / independent ground / basement engineer to assess the proposed below ground works in order to ensure that the assessments are accurate and fair, and above all, that the proposed ground works are realistic and achievable.

“The lack of demonstrated consultation with children and young people, e.g., current students and alumni. Everyone in the room last night was over 55 years old except for a handful of attenders. In the end this is an application for a school!”

You will recall that the Council undertook engagement on a Highgate School Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in October-December 2020 before the Cabined adopted the SPD in March 2021. The SPD acts as formal planning guidance which will be used to inform the ultimate decisions on the live planning applications. It should be noted that one of the key pieces of feedback received from the community for the SPD was a request for the School to bring forward its planning applications simultaneously so the community could see the holistic treatment of the different proposals, and this was reflected in the adopted SPD and in the submission of simultaneous planning applications by the school.

The Council did undertake an engagement process consisting of a Development Management Forum (chaired by officers), where the applicants presented the schemes to local people, who had the opportunity to comment and ask questions.. Once the applications were submitted, the council undertook their normal consultation exercise (in accordance with the relevant regulations) consisting of individual letters being sent to residents living around the school sites together with a number of notices erected around all of the sites.

Officers will also raise with the applicants the need for improved engagement across different ages.

Moving forward, the council will continue to accept written comments from local residents regarding the planning applications all of which will be taken into consideration by the case officer before reaching a recommendation on the planning applications. There is not an actual date agreed for when the planning applications will be determined as yet but I can

assure you that all residents that have submitted comments will be informed of the date and invited to the Planning Sub-Committee meeting in writing.

Kind regards

Sarah

Cllr Sarah Williams

Cabinet Member – Housing Services, Private Renters & Planning
Labour Councillor for West Green, Tottenham