

Dear Sir/Madam

Planning application 2024/5407/P

I am writing to lodge a formal objection to the proposed Gardeners' Building on the Mound. We received an e-mail at the end of March informing us that there was a plan to build a Gardeners' Building on the Mound in Highgate Cemetery. There had been no attempt to contact my family prior to this e-mail and the deadline for formal objections had already expired, since we were unable to object by clicking on the Camden Planning Application link. This in itself constitutes a violation of the procedure for planning permission, in the sense that we have the right, as grave-owners, to be formally informed of the plans and to be given the opportunity to object to them. I would therefore be grateful if you would accept this letter as a formal objection to the plans for the Mound in Highgate Cemetery within the Planning application 2024/5407/P.

I would like to make the following objections to the proposed Gardeners' Building on the Mound only:

1. I have been aware for many years that Highgate Cemetery planned to build a café and a visitors centre on the old side of the Cemetery. To my knowledge no one is buried in the area that they intend to build on and this is therefore an acceptable plan, in my view.
2. My father is buried on the Mound. In addition to this I bought a grave site, in order to be buried next to my parents in future and my sister, Caroline David, bought another grave. We own three graves as a family, so that we can be buried together. We bought the graves shortly after my father died on 26 January 2022. When we bought the graves no one mentioned anything about a plan to build a Gardeners' Building. Considering this was only three years ago, there must have been some thoughts about this even at that point and nothing was ever mentioned. The graves are very expensive and I consider this to be withholding of information on the part of Highgate Cemetery, since no one informed us at the time.
3. I am stunned that we were not informed until a very recent e-mail about the proposed Gardeners' Building until it is too late to object to the plans formally. I would suggest that the fact that we as grave-owners were not informed is because Highgate Cemetery did not want us to object. It is a violation of the trust between us, the grave-owners, and Highgate Cemetery.
4. The Mound is the area in Highgate Cemetery with the highest number of recently buried loved ones within the whole Cemetery. Since my father was buried three years ago I have seen more graves be created and more people buried there. This is the most intensive area for grief and grieving within the whole cemetery. It is therefore the most inappropriate area to

build a large Gardeners' Building, since this is where many people come to grieve for their loved ones. Since my father died, the Mound has become incredibly important to us as a family, and we have seen how important it is to other people who come to visit their loved ones. We come there in order to tend the grave, plant flowers, and sit by the grave. If a Gardeners' Building is built there it will destroy the Mound forever as a place of grief, where we can sit and look at the trees and be close to our loved ones within nature. Its character will be changed forever.

5. The proposed Gardeners' Building is very large. The artist's impression is deceptive because in fact the Gardeners Building towers a full 5 m high above the path alongside the Mound where the graves are. 5 metres is very high if you consider that I, for example, am 1 m 65 cms in height. That is a very high building to build close to so many graves. Due to the monstrous height of the building it will cut off the light from at least half of the area of the Mound and make it very difficult for those grave-owners whose graves are within the shadowy area to plant flowers, as we do now. This planting of flowers matters a great deal. Highgate Cemetery wants us to keep the graves nicely, and we want to do that too, but this Building will make that very difficult.

The scale of the proposed Building is such that it is double the height of the colonnade in the old part of the cemetery.

6. The proposed Gardeners' Building is very ugly. It is in fact a very ugly brutalist building, wholly out of step with the old-fashioned design of the colonnade in the old part of the cemetery. It is completely different in design and looks like a very ugly, brutalist garage. I can't believe such a proposal is even being considered in this area.
7. My mother is disabled and we will not be able to wheel her in her wheelchair along the path by the side of the Mound, because the path will be narrowed due to the width of the very ugly brutalist building proposed. This therefore goes counter to her right to grieve as a widow and a grave-owner.
8. The view from my father's grave has been a lifeline for us. I go and sit by my father's grave and look at the trees in the cemetery. The view of the trees and the sky and the experience of the light on the graves are an essential part of the experience of the grave-owners. The proposed Gardeners' Building will destroy that experience completely.
9. Up until now, I believe that Highgate Cemetery has maintained the delicate balance between being a cemetery where we grieve for our loved ones and being a tourist attraction reasonably well. However, in

proposing the Building for the Mound, the balance has been tipped away from consideration of the needs of grieving families towards being a tourist attraction.

10. My understanding is that a viewing platform is part of the proposed plans. This shows how little the needs of those people who come to grieve on the Mound have been understood by Highgate Cemetery and by those in charge of the plans. The grave-owners all go and sit by their own private graves. A viewing platform is only for tourists and this is ultimately only about making money.
11. I have been told in an e-mail from Ian Dungavell that there was nowhere else the proposed Gardeners' Building could be built. I find this hard to believe. The Cemetery is very large and I don't think that choosing the area with the highest number of recently buried loved ones, so that the maximum number of grieving relatives are affected, is a reasonable choice.
12. When we bought my father's grave and the two other graves we were told that the Mound was an area where in the past many poor people had been buried, then earth had been put on top, and then our graves were put on top of that. I find myself thinking that if this is the case then Highgate Cemetery would be building a large, two-storey building on top of many dead bodies. This does not seem ethical to me. It is one thing to put another grave on top of a lot of dead people, and quite another to build a large, two-storey building on top of them. The proposed Gardeners' Building is so large that I cannot see how you could avoid building on top of already buried dead bodies.
13. Comments supporting the proposed Gardeners' Building on the website are from tourists and volunteers – they are not from grave-owners. The grave-owners have not been considered and this is exemplified by the fact that we were not contacted until the end of March and informed of this part of the plan until the official date had expired, so we are no longer able to apply through the link.
14. When we received the e-mail about the proposed building my sister, Caroline David, asked for a sign to be put up informing grave-owners. The sign itself is actually deceptive because it is entitled "Looking Ahead", rather than something like "Planning permission". It is therefore not transparent from the start: I would argue intentionally so in order to minimize protest. In addition, my sister and I have repeatedly asked for a collective meeting with all grave-owners to be organised and there is no sign of this happening – presumably because they don't want us to object collectively.

I would be very grateful if you could please consider my objections. The proposed Gardeners' Building would ruin the Mound for the grave-owners and grieving relatives completely. I ask you please to consider the balance between Highgate Cemetery as a tourist attraction and as a private Cemetery where the needs of those who come to grieve for and honour their dead are respected. It is a fine balance and it is important for the heart and soul of Highgate Cemetery to ensure that this balance is maintained.

Yours sincerely
Dr Nicolette David