

Application N	Consultees Name	Recipient Address	Received	Comment	Response
2024/5407/P	Gary Hodgson	28 St James Road Bridlington YO15 3PF	01/05/2025 17:59:33	OBJ	<p>I write to submit a formal objection to Planning Application 2024/5407/P, which proposes the construction of a new Gardeners' Building on the Mound at Highgate Cemetery. As someone with a close family member buried on the Mound, I must express both personal distress and a broader set of serious concerns regarding this plan. Whilst I understand the cemetery's need for functional updates, this proposal is incompatible with the heritage, ecology, spiritual atmosphere, and core purpose of Highgate Cemetery. It reflects a worrying drift toward commercialisation and operational convenience at the expense of the site's sanctity and the trust of families and mourners.</p> <p>1. Visual Intrusion and Incompatible Design The proposed building is visually and architecturally discordant with its Grade I listed surroundings. Its height—rising 5 metres above the Mound and nearly 8 metres above the lower path—is excessive. Its industrial features (including roller shutters, loading bays, staircases, and concrete façade) are out of place in a cemetery of national historic importance. The building's bulk and modernity would dominate and overshadow the Mound, obstructing established sightlines to graves, trees, and sky, and permanently damaging the character of the landscape. The cemetery's visual renderings do not truthfully reflect the impact of the proposal. The photomontages include distorted human figures and angles that downplay the structure's true scale. This misrepresentation undermines public confidence and prevents a fair understanding of the proposal's consequences.</p> <p>2. Emotional and Spiritual Harm The Mound is a sacred, active area of mourning with some of the cemetery's most recent graves, including those of children. Many families, like mine, visit regularly for quiet reflection. The installation of a large operational facility—with public access, elevated walkways, vehicle bays, and even a viewing platform—profoundly violates the atmosphere of reverence and sanctuary that mourners depend upon. The inclusion of a viewing platform is especially inappropriate. It suggests a commercial or touristic motive that sits uncomfortably within a space of grief. Furthermore, families who purchased graves on the Mound were assured it would remain undisturbed. The current proposal represents not only a breach of this assurance but a rupture of trust and an ethical failure in stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>3. Accessibility and Safety Concerns The proposed development would significantly reduce the main pedestrian path— currently the only access route—to as little as 1.2 metres. This is plainly inadequate for wheelchair users or those accompanying them, and creates a genuine safety hazard given the proximity to elevated structures and construction equipment. During the construction phase, the entire area would likely be inaccessible. This will deny mourners the ability to visit and tend graves for a prolonged period—a distressing and unacceptable consequence for an active burial site.</p> <p>4. Environmental and Heritage Impact The proposed structure would eliminate existing green space, including an established wildflower bank, alter the Mound's microclimate by casting deep shadows, and make it</p>

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					<p>significantly harder for grave owners to maintain planting schemes. These changes are directly at odds with the cemetery's listing status and its designation as Metropolitan Open Land. Planning policies that safeguard openness, ecological sensitivity, and historical integrity would be compromised. Shadow diagrams and environmental assessments requested by the public have not been transparently provided, raising additional concerns about procedural integrity.</p> <p>5. Operational Suitability and Location Functionally, the Mound is a poor location for an operational hub. The footpaths are narrow and the terrain fragile. The presence of vehicles and operational staff will necessarily increase noise, traffic, and wear—conditions unsuitable for a site of mourning. The inclusion of staff toilets, showers, and commercial service features within such close proximity to graves is not only inappropriate but disrespectful. Alternative solutions have been proposed and should be revisited. I echo the thoughts raised in another objection, suggesting that part of the substantial space made available by the proposed reclamation of 500 graves could instead be used for this purpose</p> <p>6. Lack of Consultation and Procedural Failures Many family members were not adequately notified of the application in a timely or direct manner. Notices were sent as late as March, and the consultation process appears to have prioritised gaining supportive comments from unrelated stakeholders while excluding those most affected. This selective engagement has fostered mistrust and considerable resentment among families.</p> <p>7. Erosion of Ethical Responsibilities At the heart of this objection lies a question of custodianship. Highgate Cemetery is a site of national significance—but also of deep personal meaning to those who have entrusted loved ones to its care. A development of this nature should not proceed without the full and informed participation of the people it most directly affects. It is ethically indefensible to prioritise operational or commercial interests over the integrity of graves and the wellbeing of mourners.</p> <p>In conclusion, The Gardeners' Building, as proposed, would cause irreversible harm to the character, accessibility, ecology, and sacred atmosphere of Highgate Cemetery. It is a dissonant intrusion into one of the most vulnerable and emotionally significant areas of the site. There are alternative, practical, and more sensitive ways to meet operational needs— ways that do not violate the cemetery's spirit, duty of care, or planning protections. I respectfully urge Camden Council to reject this planning application and call for a transparent, inclusive, and heritage-led rethink of how to accommodate operational needs without sacrificing the trust and peace of grieving families.</p>