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Grave Owner

Ms Miriam Baptist
Planning Application Case Officer
Camden Council Planning Department

Development Management,
Camden Town Hall, Judd Street,
London WC1H 9JE.

09 May 2025

Subject: Objection to Planning Application –2024/5407/P – 2024/5423/L Highgate Cemetery

Dear Ms. Baptist,

Addendum to Original Objection Statement Regarding the Proposed Gardener's Building at Highgate Cemetery submitted on 22 March 2025.

On 8th May, we held a meeting on the Mound with you and several other grave owners to discuss the implications of the proposed Gardener's Building, particularly in terms of its scale and the challenges it poses during construction. Amir Sinai, one of the grave owners, physically demonstrated the actual scale of the proposed structure. This clearly showed that the computer modelling submitted as part of the Highgate Cemetery Trust's planning application fails to accurately represent the building's true dimensions. He also highlighted key concerns about the construction process. These demonstrations and discussions have significantly heightened our concerns about the development.

I would like to formally add several key practical concerns, raised during our meeting, to my original statement:

1. Impact of Scale and Design

The proposed building is overwhelming in scale and will block the only open side of the Mound. This will dramatically alter the character and experience of the space. The building's visibility from across the cemetery, and particularly from the Mound itself, will have a substantial and negative impact on the historic and contemplative atmosphere of the site.

2. Road Access and Vehicle Movements

We observed gardening vehicles turning by reversing into the ramp at the base of the Mound. While standing on the adjacent road, we had to step aside onto graves area to allow a gardening vehicle to pass. This demonstrates that the road is too narrow to accommodate regular vehicle access, especially if vehicles are entering or exiting the proposed building.

3. Noise and Activity Impact

Increased vehicle noise and foot traffic from gardening staff will dominate the area, undermining the peace and solemnity essential to any cemetery. The proposed ground-level façade, consisting entirely of grilled security shutters, raises serious concerns. These shutters will likely be noisy during

operation, further disrupting the tranquillity of the area. **It is easy to foresee a situation in which the presence of an overly large, utilitarian structure with its frequent vehicle movements, mechanical shutters, and daily operational noise transforms the Mound into a service yard rather than a sacred, reflective space. This is entirely inappropriate and unacceptable given that the primary purpose of Highgate Cemetery is to serve as a burial ground and place of remembrance.**

4. Construction Challenges and Feasibility

The site is located near the heart of the cemetery, equidistant from both entrances, with limited road access for heavy construction vehicles. The excavation needed for foundations in such a sensitive area poses serious challenges. Ensuring structural stability of the Mound's fill material during excavation will require complex retaining structures. These issues will drive up construction costs significantly, especially for what is intended to be a relatively modest service building.

We therefore question whether the Highgate Cemetery Trust has sufficiently budgeted for this complexity, and whether the construction is truly feasible. There is a real risk that, if approved, the project will encounter unforeseen difficulties during construction potentially forcing cost-saving compromises that could have serious long-term implications.

5. Precedent and Long-Term Implications

Approval of this proposal could set a precedent for further development in or around the Mound and throughout the cemetery. This would fundamentally alter the character of the space and erode its historical and cultural significance.

6. Alternative Locations and Design

While the Trust has claimed that no alternative sites are available, a short walk through the grounds and a fresh review of the original design brief for the buildings near the entrance suggest otherwise. The functions of the proposed building a mess area, gardening equipment store, and vehicle shelter—could be accommodated in a less prominent and more suitable location, such as along the perimeter of the site. This would be more affordable and could be addressed with a modest architectural solution more in keeping with the cemetery's purpose and heritage.

In Conclusion

We urge the Highgate Cemetery Trust and relevant decision-makers to reconsider the current proposal. Its scale, location, and construction implications make it wholly unsuitable for this sensitive and historic site. A more practical and respectful solution can and should be found—one that meets operational needs without compromising the sanctity of the cemetery.

Thank you for your attention and thoughtful consideration.

Kind Regards

Leyla Sezer

