

Dear Mr Thuaire,

Please see below, Haringey Borough Council's comments relating to the planning application at Athlone House. Please confirm you have received this email

Kind regards,

**Gareth Prosser** | Planning Officer

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**Background:** Athlone House is a substantial Victorian mansion built in 1871, then named Caenwood Towers. The house was built within the grounds of a previous house. The existing house is built in Jacobethan style, originally with Dutch gables, and lies on high ground amongst trees just beyond the northern edge of Hampstead Heath, visible to varying degrees from parts of the Heath and from Hampstead Lane. The house is visible from views within the Haringey Council's part of Highgate Conservation Area. The building has been used as a private residence in the past, occupied by RAF during the war time and later converted to a hospital.

**Assessment of special interest:** From a conservation point of view, Athlone House is considered of significant architectural merit and with its surrounding landscape setting, contributes positively to the conservation area. The special interest of the building lies in its architectural merit, its landscape setting, contribution to the conservation area and its subsequent social history owing to changing uses. Its association with eminent historical figures such as 'capability' Brown renders it additional historic interest, all of which positively contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area and its social history. The building also acts as a landmark feature, with views available from in and out of the Highgate ridge. Whilst not designated in its own right as an heritage asset, the building's own merits determine it to be an important building within the conservation area.

**Comments:**

**Demolition:** The applicant has submitted a Condition Survey and a detailed Heritage Statement to justify the demolition of the building and its replacement. The Condition Survey indicates that repair works to external facade and roof would be required. Substantial internal alterations would also be required to achieve a sustainable viable use of the building. It is felt, however, that these repair works relate to general works that are required for buildings of this age and can be achieved without harming the fabric of the building. It is also noted, that an enabling development to secure the future of this building was allowed in the past by Camden Council. However, repair works were never undertaken and the building's condition was left to deteriorate further. In accordance with paragraph 130 of the NPPF, this should therefore, not be a reason to support its demolition.

In addition, the Heritage Statement implies that several alterations have been undertaken to the original building which reduce its authenticity. This again is a common occurrence with buildings of a certain age. Georgian and Victorian buildings were often re-fronted to keep up with the changing architectural 'fashion'. This should be considered as part of the 'patina' of the fabric rather than a deterrent to its appearance.

Notwithstanding the previous Appeal Inspector's report, it is felt that the demolition of the building is not justifiable and its loss would have a significant harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

**Replacement building:** The scheme proposes to demolish the existing building and replace it with a much larger and bulkier house. This is only marginally different from the previous scheme with a reduced basement. In terms of design, the proposed building is veering on to the 'Stalinist Wedding Cake' style of architecture and is considered to be out of context within the Highgate area, relating very poorly to it. Whilst an eclectic mix of architectural styles is evident within the conservation area, the new building cannot be considered as a contemporary 21<sup>st</sup> Century building, nor does it represent the true Classical proportions, as intended by its design. The larger height, bulk and mass of the proposed house would be visually prominent on the skyline of the Hampstead and Highgate ridge area, and would adversely affect views into and out of Highgate Conservation Area. Thus it would not contribute positively to the conservation area. Whilst the restoration of the gardens is welcomed, given its future use as a single family dwelling, there appear to be no wider public benefits that may outweigh the loss of the non-designated heritage asset. As such, it is requested that Camden Council refuses this application.

If Camden Council is mindful to approve this development, the loss of the existing non-designated heritage asset should be weighed against the public benefits of the new house, in accordance with NPPF paragraph 135.

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