

Dear Sir/Madam

Water House, Millfield Lane, London N6 6HQ - Planning Application 2011/4390/P

My name is Mary Powell. I am requesting the right to speak at the meeting of the Development Control Committee meeting on 7 April 2016 in respect of planning application 2011/4390/P concerning "The Water House". I wish to oppose the planning application.

I am speaking on behalf of the Kenwood Ladies' Pond Association (KLPA). I have been Secretary of the KLPA since 2013 and an active member since 2007. The KLPA which has existed since 1985 represents nearly 500 members who are regular swimmers at the Ladies' Pond. Approximately half of our membership is made up of women who swim all year round at the Ladies' Pond, and the remainder are swimmers there for part of the year. Our membership is made up of women of all ages and includes some members with disabilities. The Ladies' Pond is of particular importance to women who require segregated swimming for religious reasons, such as members of the Orthodox Jewish community.

The KLPA is encouraged that officers have recommended a rejection of this planning application, after consideration of so much evidence.

The KLPA has consistently raised objections to the planning application to rebuild the Water House since 2011. This has been done as an organisation and via individual responses of our members' to the planning consultations. Revised plans submitted by the applicants have not allayed our concerns. Our objections have focused on a number of issues:

- The scale of the proposed development in the setting of Millfield Lane
- Disruption that the building work itself would cause over 2+ years, including noise and dust
- The potential damage to many trees along this lane through impact on roots, including 3 veteran boundary oaks and an avenue of mature horse-chestnuts.
- The impact on drainage around the proposed basement, which would affect the Bird Sanctuary Pond on Hampstead Heath
- The impact of heavy construction traffic on users of Millfield Lane for 2+ years

I shall emphasise in particular the final point which is of the most immediate concern to the KLPA. Millfield Lane is the main year-round access to the Ladies' Pond. A pedestrian gate at the west side of the Ladies' Pond enclosure is only in use from May to September, and the approach from the Heath side is often very muddy. At all other times users must access the Ladies' Pond from Millfield Lane. In many places this lane is narrow with very limited verge to stand on to allow vehicles past. Users of the Ladies' Pond generally arrive by bicycle or on foot. Some of our members have disabilities, including mobility and sensory impairments which make them particularly vulnerable to the proposed heavy construction traffic.

The Ladies' Pond is well used all year round. In the summer months, there can be well over a thousand visitors a day. Even in the winter months there are between 50 and 100 visits per day, and on special occasions such as New Year's Day we can see up to 200 visitors at the Ladies' Pond.

Millfield Lane also offers the only vehicular access to the Ladies' Pond and this is essential for use by the emergency services which are occasionally needed in the event of illness or incident at the Ladies' Pond. For example in August 2013 there was a fatality at the pond.

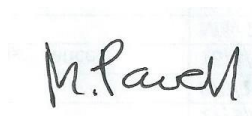
I understand from the reports that I have seen, that the construction vehicles would not be able to turn in Millfield Lane to access/exit the Water House safely, unless they make use of the Ladies' Pond entrance to manoeuvre. There is also a significant risk to the railings in front of the Ladies' Pond enclosure, which currently protect the bicycle park area. Both possibilities are entirely unacceptable to the users of the Ladies' Pond, and present further hazards to us. The owners of the Water House do not have any right of way over these areas.

The lane is semi-rural in nature with an unmade surface. In the last year its condition appears to have deteriorated quite suddenly with many deep potholes close to the entrance of the Water House. The vegetation along the side of the lane also appears to have been cut back several months ago although this was not done by the City of London or owners of other properties fronting onto those sections of the lane. The lane is simply not fit to sustain heavy construction traffic in its current condition, and temporary ground guard measures appear entirely inadequate. Such ground guards only offer surface protection and do not increase the weight bearing capacity of the lane. It is sure to crumble dreadfully under the impact of over 2 years' construction traffic and tree routes along the length of the lane will be at risk.

The KLPA has formed part of the campaign group known as the Friends of Millfield Lane, which also includes the Highgate Society, Heath & Hampstead Society, the Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee and the Highgate Men's Pond Association, along with other local residents. KLPA members were active in helping to set up the online petition in October via 38 Degrees, and in gaining signatures. Our members canvassed support from people using Millfield Lane over a number of weeks as well as publicising the petition via social media and the local press. That petition now has over 4000 signatures.

I urge the committee to reject this planning application, in order to protect an unspoilt area of countryside in the city. One domestic building project should not be allowed to cause such disruption to the 1000s of people who use this lane and benefit from its tranquillity. The Heath and its surroundings are there for the benefit of all Londoners and visitors to our city.

Thank you for the consideration you have given to this difficult issue.



Mary Powell

KLPA secretary

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