

## Friends of Queen's Wood

### Sites Allocation Development Plan, March 2014

#### Comments on Site HG5: Summersby Road, Highgate

The Friends of Queen's Wood are a group of local residents with about 200 families in membership who undertake conservation tasks in the wood, provide educational and social events in the wood and monitor the state of the wood. We are therefore concerned that any proposed development which overlooks the wood will not damage its environment or amenity value as a much loved piece of ancient woodland. Site HG5 is adjacent to Queen's Wood. It is certainly a possible location for future development in the borough but we are concerned that the scale of development envisaged would be seriously damaging to the visual appearance of the wood and to its ecology and we believe that safeguards and limitations of scale must be included.

The description of the site is inadequate.

- Queens Wood is to the east of the site as well as the north.
- Because of the steep gradients, a substantial part of the builder's yard is built on made ground. This artificial fill is as much as 10 metres deep next to the wood.

In the section 'Existing Policy Designations' it is stated that the site is a Metropolitan SINC. Is this true? The multiple protective designations given to Queens Wood and Highgate Wood should also be mentioned in this section, as they affect the acceptable policy on the site. They should also be mentioned in the 'Design Principles' section.

Planning policy in Haringey states clearly the importance of the quality of open space. For the woods a vital part of the amenity value is the seclusion and feeling of being away from busy and noisy built-up areas. It is also vital that adjacent developments do not interfere or degrade the ecology of this ancient woodland and nature reserve.

Planning policy includes restrictions on development ADJACENT to open spaces.

Para 6.3.3 of the Local Plan: Strategic Policies notes that 'The council will only allow development ....adjacent to an open space that does not detract from the overall openness and character of the site.....or harms the public enjoyment.'

Policy OS5 states that development close to the edge of MOL, SLOL etc. will only be permitted if it protects or enhances the value and visual character of the open land.

The existing builder's yard is on made ground high above the wood, and detracts from the ambience of the wood both visually and audibly. Any new development must not do so, but

must be less obtrusive, be set back and at a lower level. The stated design principles suggest the development should 'take advantage' and provide views of the wood. This would mean the development is visible from the wood, which is the opposite of the requirement. So new development should be lower than the existing buildings. It will also be necessary to ensure that there is no light spillage at night into the nature reserve.

The site is only 0.50 hectares. It is suggested that not only could there be new residential, office and hotel use, but that the current employment use should be accommodated. This would amount to gross overdevelopment. The potential development capacity should be reduced to about 5,000sq.m.

It is suggested that a new development could provide increased accessibility from Highgate station to the wood. At present there is direct and easy access via either Muswell Hill Road or Wood Lane, and an access through the site could not improve on this.

Queen's Wood contains several sources of the Moselle River. The council and other authorities are trying to improve the quality and amenity of the river. The major problem is domestic and commercial pollution. The existing builder's yard perched on fill above the wood is already giving cause for concern. Any new development must include specific precautions to ensure the drainage systems have adequate capacity and to prevent any spillage into the wood even at times of high rainfall.