

## The Performing Arts Building

### Impact upon the Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area, the setting of the listed buildings and the amenity of adjoining residents.

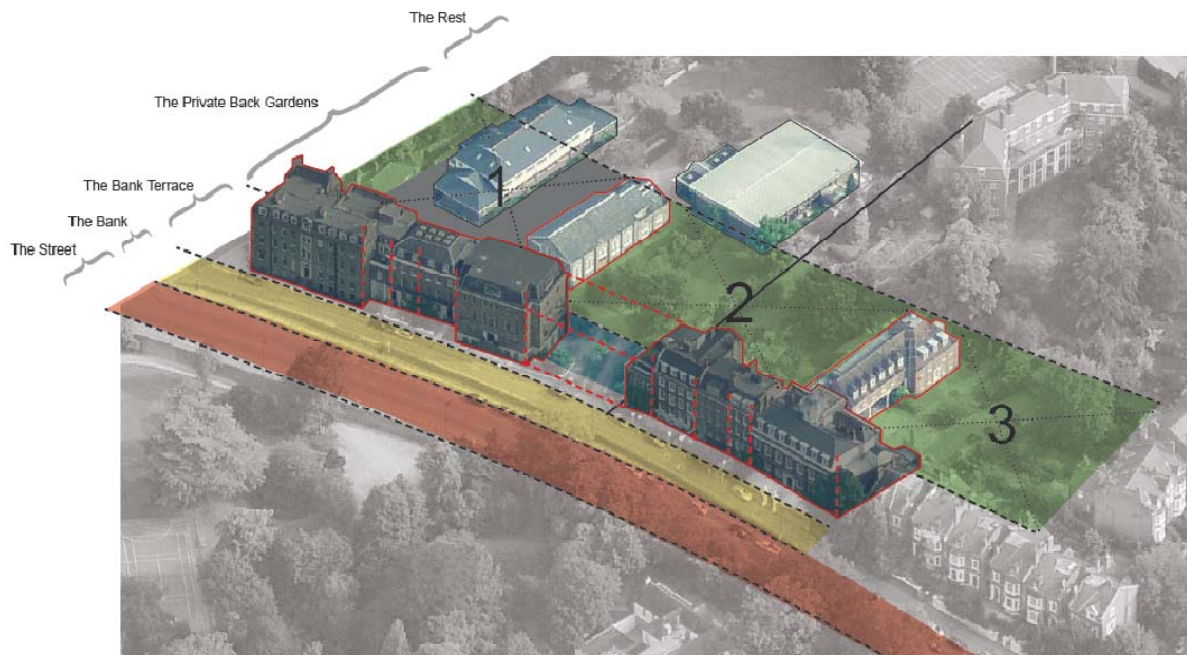
#### **The existing character of the Conservation Area in this locality**

Section 72 of the 1990 Listed Buildings Act requires the authority to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. Similar considerations apply to development in the setting of the listed buildings.

To decide whether the existing 'character or appearance' of a Conservation Area would be 'preserved or enhanced'. It is necessary to establish the nature of the existing 'character or appearance' and its significance.

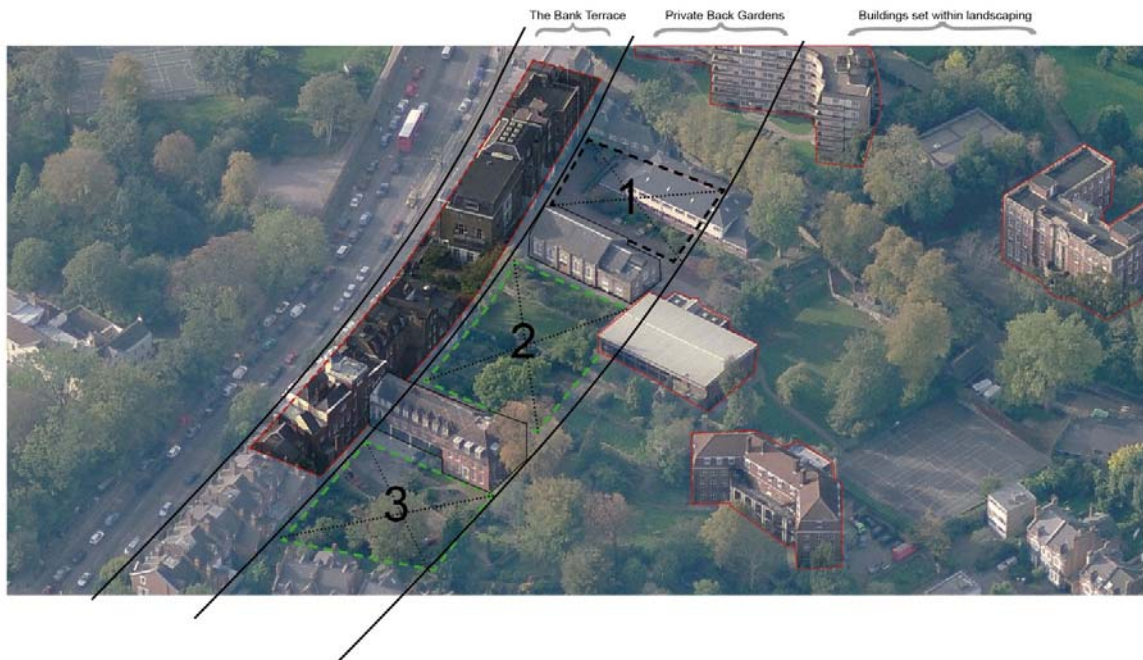
The Highgate Conservation Area is very large but 'The Bank' is a well known and identifiable feature within the Conservation Area. As a sub-area of the Conservation Area The Bank is clearly defined as consisting of the properties fronting the elevated carriageway running from the corner of Cholmeley Park to the Ghanaian High Commission.

The distinctive character and historic significance of the area is acknowledged through the listing of The Bank elevated structure/wall and the listed houses along the elevated carriageway. The group reveal the historic evolution of this area and combine to create a unique and characterful townscape the essence of which is the dramatic effect of the sequence of vertically proportioned buildings rising up the hill which stand proud of their surroundings in an elevated and prestigious setting.



*The Bank a distinctive townscape of 'elevated' houses standing proud of their surroundings.*

The precipitous effect of the terrace is equally distinctive at the rear because all the frontage buildings share a common depth and footprint and their rear elevations rise vertically from their rear gardens.



The group have traditional 'public' front elevations with main entrances to The Bank and private 'domestic' rear elevations which overlook and are seen from private garden and courtyard areas. There is a clearly discernable and consistent depth to the garden zone behind the main buildings which runs parallel to the frontage buildings.

The annexe to the High Commission and Founders Hall in Channing School are built to the depth of this garden zone and enclose a rectangle [see '2' on photo] of domestic gardens behind the main houses which cascade down the hill. The views within and across this area are shown in the following photographs and are in complete contrast with the formal views of the frontage of The Bank. The history and character of the group of buildings is clearly understood in this townscape to the rear.

It is the coalescence of these gardens that creates this townscape and the school garden plot is of the same domestic proportions as its neighbours and is significant because it links the character and appearance of the school to its residential neighbours. This makes the school an integral part of the townscape group and provides a setting for the houses and school. In most views it is also a foreground setting for the listed buildings. The school garden is a vantage point from which to appreciate the character and appearance of the adjoining buildings and provides an important setting to Founders Hall which is especially significant because it is seen to have been sited 'in the back garden'.

It is significant that the school has maintained a garden character on the side of Founders Hall because this is both a neighbourly approach and in character with the cascade of domestic gardens next door. The school



garden softens its boundary with the neighbouring properties whilst it is able to have a more intensive urban courtyard character on the other side of the Hall. In this way the pattern of uses in the school has a neighbourly and harmonious relationship with the rest of the group. The school becomes more intensive and urban the further away one gets from the eastern residential boundary.

These characteristics are shown on the following photographs:-



*The gardens are an intrinsic part of the existing character of the Conservation Area and provide a setting for The Bank properties and the listed buildings. The foreground garden would be lost to the Performing Arts Building.*





*The cascade of gardens run down the hill and include the school garden as the 'top' tier.*







*The school garden is an integral part of the sequence of gardens in this part of the Conservation Area*





*The setting is equally important for Founders Hall which is appreciated within the garden setting.*



*Founders Hall encloses the cascade of gardens and the garden foreground is a key feature of the setting of that building.*

From this analysis it can be seen that the school garden is an important and integral part of the existing character and appearance of this distinctive part of the Conservation Area. As a part of the sequence of gardens it provides an important setting for The Bank townscape group as a whole and especially as an integral part of the cascade of gardens that run from the High Commission to Founders Hall.

As the character and appearance of this part of the application is characterised by being a garden it cannot be said that this garden character is preserved or enhanced by building on it as manifestly by building on the garden its garden character is lost and the townscape is harmed and impoverished by the loss of the garden. It follows that a proposal to build a major building in the garden zone of this important area cannot meet the test established by section 72 of the Listed Building Act.

**The Applicants Failure to consider this aspect**

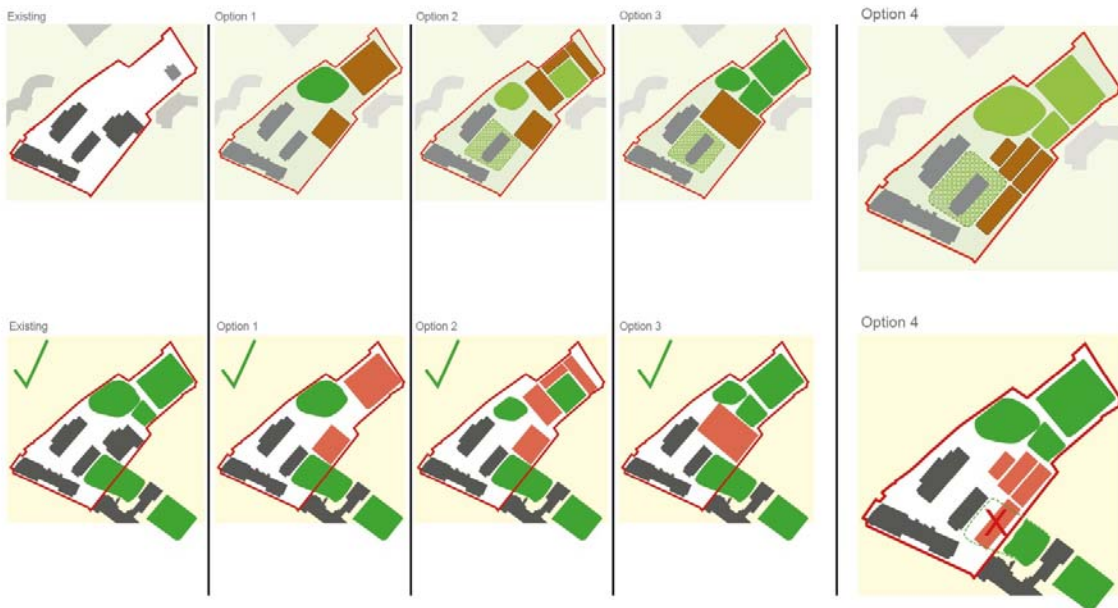
The application does not attempt any assessment of the existing character or appearance of this part of the Conservation Area and it does not therefore establish any justification for the location of the Performing Arts building within the garden space which is so important in the appreciation of the setting of The Bank.

The applicant’s failure to give any weight to this aspect of the Conservation Area can be seen from the fact that the application Design and Access Statement does not identify the school garden or the adjoining cascade of gardens in the options that are used to justify the selection of chosen site for the Performing Arts Building.

The top sequence of diagrams below is taken from the application statement. We have added the school and neighbouring gardens in the second sequence. This shows how Option 4 (the chosen option) is the only option that has this effect on the Conservation Area. Had the applicants given consideration to the significance of the existing garden and its neighbours to the Conservation Area they would have shown this in the review options. It is clear therefore that this has not been considered.

The options in the Design and Access Statement show that the School could deploy any of the other 3 options without having this adverse effect on the Conservation Area.

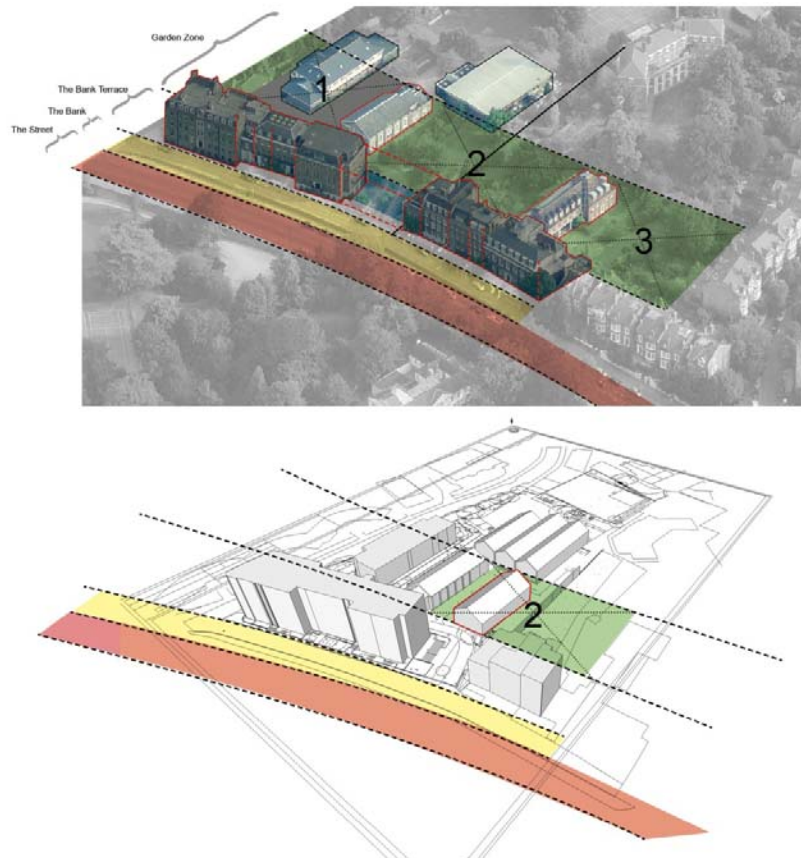
Applicants Design and Access Statement: *Site Strategy, P24*





The proposed Performing Arts Building destroys the sequence of garden spaces between Founders Hall and the High Commission which is a fundamental characteristic of this part of the Conservation Area.

As the existing character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area is as a part of a garden area this cannot be preserved if it is lost completely to a new building as proposed.

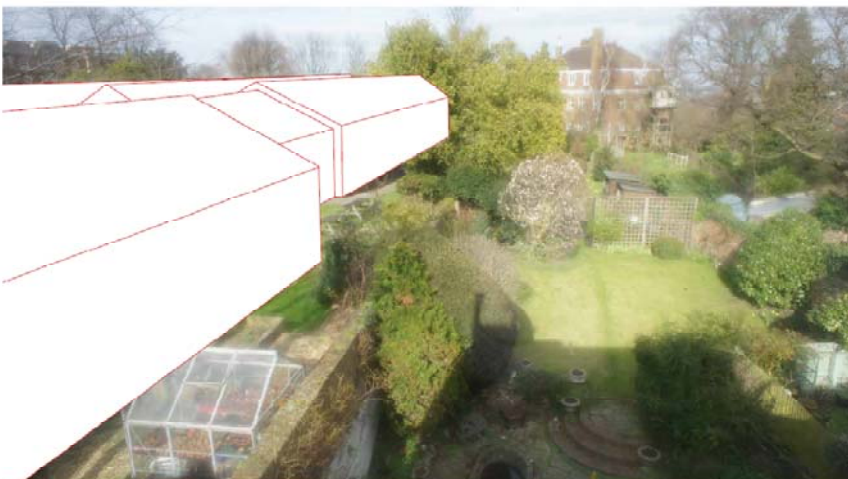


The effect is exacerbated by the combination of the Performing Arts Building and the replacement Sports Hall which together create a complete urbanisation of the eastern boundary of the school changing its character from a neighbourly garden with a sports hall behind to an extremely long continuous building as shown in the following photomontages.





*The school garden is lost to a very long range of buildings which are elevated above the gardens and houses.*



*The degree of change is as extreme as it could be in an area where maintaining the existing character is the objective of the Conservation Area.*



*The Performance Arts Building will combine with the sports hall to have a very negative effect on the amenities of the adjoining houses.*

This must surely be judged as unacceptable when considered against the usual planning considerations of residential amenity and the adverse effects of a sense of enclosure and overshadowing caused by a very a large and long range of buildings. These considerations should in themselves constitute sufficient reason for refusal and must compound the unacceptability of the Performing Arts Building in terms of the Conservation Area and the setting of the listed buildings.

GCC

27/03/12