

Comment from the Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum on Response to LGSs Justification Land at Branch Hill House, Rajvinder Matharu, Asset Strategy and Valuations, LBC

'Response to Local Green Spaces Justification (Draft) Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2033 – Land at Branch Hill Allotments Open Space and Branch Hill House',

We find this very curious, and really cannot understand the statement that 'the designation would hinder any development proposed at Branch Hill House.

Points we wish to make are that 'Local Green Space' designation is not limited to Open Spaces, and hence an apparent erroneous designation of the small area to the left of the Branch Hill entrance gate as Open Space is irrelevant. This very small area is full of shrubs and enclosed on slightly more than half its boundary by historic wall, so could already be described as 'landlocked' and incapable of development, but it is of beneficial use - to local wildlife. We contend that making it a LGS would not exclude it from the sale, and its present but improvable biodiversity value should be seen as an advantage to a future owner of the house.

Also, the southern boundary of the Branch Hill site here does not abut the allotment open space here, but the roof of the extension and conservatory of the Gate House, a privately owned property. This can be seen in the photographs nos 4 and 5 appended to the letter. The western boundary of this small part of the Branch Hill site is - via a wildlife-permeable metal fence consisting of spaced uprights and a top bar - continuous with and at the same level as a strip of trees and relatively unmanaged shrubs running along the northern edge of the allotment. This is maintained as a narrow wild strip by the Branch Hill Allotments Association. Further west along this strip it contains bee hives and the noted presence two years ago of stag-horned beetle larvae. Anyone who visits the allotments here will instantly understand our contention that this area *does* have 'tranquility and a richness of wildlife'.

To further counter an argument that this area should be developed, its longer northern boundary is with a public right of way. There should be no attempts to hinder access along this public right of way, and any attempts to cause the gateway to Branch Hill House to be lockable are against Camden's Local Plan 'Health and Wellbeing Policy C5:

Pedestrian use and natural surveillance

4.93 Encouraging pedestrian use is known to deter crime by natural surveillance (i.e. limiting the opportunity for crime by increasing the likelihood of it being seen). To encourage pedestrian use, the Council aims to ensure spaces are permeable (i.e. easy to walk and cycle through). Gated community developments are therefore unlikely to be acceptable.

Hindering access along this public right of way and attempts to cause the gateway to Branch Hill to be lockable are also contrary to Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan's Policy Design DH1:

1. Development proposals should demonstrate how they respect and enhance the character and local context of the relevant character area(s) by:
 - a) Incorporating and enhancing permeability in and around new developments, avoiding lockable gates and fencing that restricts through access.