

# Holland Park school design 'is like a slab block'

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**Plans to build Britain's most expensive state school in one of the country's wealthiest residential areas were blasted today by English Heritage.**

The conservation watchdog demanded changes to the proposed £72.6million rebuilding of Holland Park School in Kensington.

It said the design resembled a "very large slab block" that was out of keeping with the local conservation area.

It also wants "fundamental revisions" to the "monolithic" design of a block of flats that Kensington and Chelsea council wants developers to build on part of the school's playground to finance the scheme.

It comes after the council's own review panel of architects branded the design "monolithic and relentless", criticised plans to use stone cladding and said other architecture in the area had not been taken into account. Residents also believe councillors should rethink the plans when the borough's planning committee meets on Thursday.

David White, chairman of Campden Hill Residents' Association, said: "This is yet another damning architectural report on Holland Park School. First it was the council's own architectural

panel, now it's the national heritage guardian. Surely the council must now take stock and pause before rushing to a decision. But will the council listen to anyone or are they determined to be judge and jury on their own proposal?"

Resident Tony Benn, the former Labour Cabinet minister who sent his children to the school and whose late wife Caroline chaired the governing body, said: "The new building design is absolutely wrong for this brilliant school and for this area. Affordable housing is not available locally. The purpose is to sell the land for luxury housing."

Other objectors include Sport England, which focused on the loss of outdoor playing areas.

The Twentieth Century Society, which campaigns to protect modern architecture, said it was "alarmed and disappointed" at the prospect of losing the first purpose-built comprehensive in the country.

However, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, which advises the Government, said the scheme was "likely to become a reference point for future school proposals in London and beyond".

Its design review adviser Rachel Toms said the plans were "appropriate" and the flats were "not at odds with the local urban character".

A Kensington and Chelsea spokesman said: "English Heritage has no objection to the demolition of the existing school. Neither does it dispute the strength of our argument that there is a pressing public need for a new school.

"It is recommending that the height of the building should be lowered and different finishes applied in order to reduce the impact on the conservation area. These points will now be considered alongside those of CABE, which supports the scheme, and the views of other statutory and non-statutory consultees."