



To Camden Councillors Oliver Lewis & Angela Mason  
Re Planning Application 2014/7683/P

Dear Oliver Lewis & Angela Mason

My friend and neighbour John Carrier suggested that I write to you both when I asked him about the current planning proposals for the site of Parliament Hill School, and in particular expressed my concern about the location of the proposed new LaSwap sixth-form centre.

Before I explain this concern, may I first of all say that in general I am strongly in favour of the proposals to improve the facilities of PHS & the LaSwap consortium. I have lived for almost 30 years in Boscastle Road, just one block from the School, and my younger daughter was a pupil at PHS in the late 80's/early 90s, and I was also a governor for a while.

I understand from John that considerable efforts have already been made to address the concerns of immediate neighbours such as residents in Grove Terrace and Lissenden Gardens.

My concern is rather with the proposal to build the new (and undoubtedly needed) sixth form centre on the open space in front of the School. This has historically been an open space for at least two hundred years, and would have formed part of the old Kentish Town Green which was originally surrounded by villas with large gardens on the west side before the construction of the schools.

This is noted by Gillian Tindall in her book 'The Fields Beneath' (p.115), and the rough layout can be seen in Rocque's early map of 1766, as well as in subsequent historic maps of the area. The distinctive and historic character of this open space area running from south of The Grove up to the beginning of the Heath is also highlighted in the background report on the Dartmouth Park Conservation Area, which in particular notes the value of the open space in front of the two schools ("Sub-Area 10 The Schools", paras 7.104 ff).

I have studied the architect's drawings on the Council's planning website as best I can, and appreciate that the proposed building is low-rise with a single storey (and thus much less threatening than the large building proposed for the ASF Garage site at the southern end of the old Kentish Town Green area). But it seems difficult to discern exactly what the new LaSwap building will actually look like, not least because the architect has drawn lots of trees in front of it, though it will undoubtedly obstruct the view of the old PHS building as one walks from my street down Woodsome Road towards the School and

Heath. However, John also tells me that efforts have been made to blend the new building into the environment by providing it with a green roof and other elements of vegetation.

My fundamental questions, however, are why is it necessary to locate the new centre on the open ground in front of the school, and should this be allowed given the historic nature of this open space and its continuing value today? Is this really the only possible location for it on the sites covered by the three schools in the consortium? Should we not be preserving the 'open space' character of this historic part of Kentish Town, which is surely one of the most attractive of the surviving 'village-type' settings in this part of north London? Even if the building is well-blended, it will violate this character of the area, and may also set a dangerous precedent.

I would be interested to know your views on the points I have raised. And I would also appreciate it if you could draw this letter to the attention of the planning committee when it considers comments on this application (the only other way I can see to do this is in a tiny box on the web page relating to the application, which hardly seems appropriate).

I shall copy this letter to the Dartmouth Park Conservation Area Advisory Committee, and also to the London Office of English Heritage.

With best wishes  
Dr Robin Oakley  
20A Boscastle Road  
London NW5 1EG



Hello Gideon

Further to our telephone conversation recently (20/01/15) thank you for discussing the planning application (Application Ref: 2014/7683/P) and confirming the consultation has been extended until the 31st January and any proposed works will be scheduled during the school holidays periods no earlier than the end of 2015 to 2016.

As requested I am now feeding back to you on the email address you provided ([planning@camden.gov.uk](mailto:planning@camden.gov.uk)) with a number of points for your consideration (which have also been submitted via the online consultation comments page at Camden Council Planning for this proposal).

Firstly we understand the well intended nature of this current scheme and there is a need for the schools to be able to expand however we would like to draw your attention to the points below as we feel if these concerns we're fully explored and borne in mind for a future draft of this proposal the plans would receive increased support and appreciation by all affected:

Points to note:

**1. The proposed building scales, materials and designs in this application appear to be out of step for a conservation area by detracting and obscuring parts of the original historic buildings.** Similar unsympathetic construction took place when the Morant building extension ('green glass metal block') which blighted our views and we do not wish to see further designs of this style.

**2. The LA Swap School building location proposal has a impact on privacy and views due to its close proximity to numerous residents living opposite the school on Highgate Road.** We feel much more thought could be given to this. For instance (as per the attached 'Landscape Layout' downloaded from the Camden Council website for this planning application) here are just a few examples of more suitable locations for the LA swap building with relevant points to consider:

*a) The proposed 'extended car park' towards the southern boundaries of the Parliament Hill School grounds annexing Highgate Road.*

School buildings already exist here which are set to be demolished in this proposal. The school buildings presently located in these car parking areas are a greater distance away from residents and sheltered by tree foliage along this point in Highgate Road which makes it suited to replacement buildings and which has the benefit of not obscuring the original frontage of the Morant building.

As we understand it this proposal is not aimed at increasing car parking spaces rather than than refurbishment and new facilities for the children however in addition to the proposed 'extended car park' its noted additional parking near Lissenden Gardens also features in this proposal. If further car parking really is deemed necessary then other suitable areas in the school grounds that are not in close proximity to residents and / or hidden from tree foliage) should be explored instead.

The proposed new entrance for LA Swap will create issues for children crossing the road to / from the nearest bus stop located further south. As previously witnessed and verified by the council with the William

Ellis entrance children had a tendency to walk 'as the crow flies' as a short cut over Highgate Road between the school and bus stop rather than walk that bit further to use the 'existing formal crossing' to do the same task. This caused a number of accidents and the existing formal crossing was demolished and re-located successfully to its present position (see point 3 below). However if the LA Swap building was located further south as described above the existing pedestrian access entrance to Parliament Hill school could be used and this is nearer to both the bus stop located on the opposite side of the road travelling south and the pelican crossing already in operation.

*b) The proposed 'MUGA - Multi use games areas' on the westerly heath side of the school boundary. i.e create the MUGA on the existing sports / tennis areas rather than demolishing these to create similar sized sports areas elsewhere.*

*c) The proposed 'playing field' on the westerly heath side of the school boundary i.e With the currently proposed MUGA games areas location in mind, create playing fields on the existing sports / tennis courts instead which would enhance the front of the school and the approach to the heath.*

**3. Any proposal that employs the 'existing formal' crossing for Highgate Road (i.e. south of the new and vastly improved location of the existing 'zebra crossing' (as per the attached 'Construction Management Plan - Drawing' and 'Landscape Layout' document attached downloaded from the Camden Council website for this planning application) is fundamentally flawed and we will object strongly to its use at any point.**

During the lifetime of the 'existing formal crossing' there was a spate of car related injuries and near misses to pedestrians, particularly children due to the crossings location and design whilst the crossing also caused deep vibrations which were felt in our property and others in Croftdown Road when large vehicles and the numerous buses on this route passed over the crossing.

Therefore in 2010 this existing zebra crossing was sensibly removed following following a lengthy consultation with Camden Council (Representatives: Simi Shah: Principle Engineer and Giles Radford: Traffic Engineer) and pedestrians and residents alike have benefited enormously from this positive step.

We feel lessons should therefore be learnt from these experiences which may affect pedestrians and the safe passage of children crossing roads to / from the bus stops and school during peak times.

We would therefore be grateful if you could consider the points raised above in any future drafts of this planning application and if you require any further details assistance please do not hesitate to contact us.

Many thanks

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