

I am writing to object to the proposed conversion of the former Hampstead Police Station into a Free School.

I have lived at 52 Downshire Hill, right next to and overlooking the Police Station, since 1985—for more than over thirty years. More, I've lived in the neighbourhood since 1975; I know this site very well.

The planning proposal presented to you is wrong in many ways, but chiefly it is wrong in its initial conception; the proposal to put a Belsize Park School in Hampstead is a mistake, and this fundamental mistake generates a number of planning problems that the proposal seeks to minimise or ignore.

A fundamental mistake

All children deserve a good local school. A primary school should be a part of its community, a place where local residents, of all ages, meet and contribute to the development of the young. Physically, a local school should be situated at the centre the community it serves. Young children should be able to walk to school with their parents, siblings and carers, and then as they grow older, they should be able to walk to school with friends, or on their own. The school's events should be a part of the local community. It is customary to place a school in its community, because of the constructive, valuable interaction between a school and its community. It is a highly problematic—and questionable—planning decision to place a community's school at some distance, in another neighbourhood altogether.

For this reason, the current plan to build a Belsize Park school in Hampstead is fundamentally misconceived—it does a disservice to the children of Belsize Park.

Furthermore, locating a Belsize Park school in Hampstead generates a considerable number of planning issues that the current proposal seeks to minimise or ignore. These include: traffic, overdevelopment, noise and congestion, pollution, poor design, no local need, excessive costs and a negative effect on the existing excellent local schools.

Here, because of time and space, I will simply discuss traffic, school need, and the effect on our existing local schools.

Traffic

The proposal and planning materials showing, 'A new home for Abacus Belsize Primary School', is deceptive and misleading.

The computer generated images in the leaflet and planning proposal show the old police station converted into a new school with 6 children standing in front of the school, at drop-off time. This 'computer generated illustration of the proposal' is plainly impossible.

Abacus Belsize Primary School is asking for permission to build a 420 pupil school. With staff there will be approximately 500 people coming to the school in the morning and leaving in the afternoon. Given that the school is for children aged 4-11, it is reasonable to estimate that there will be approximately 700-800 people at the corner of Rosslyn Hill and Downshire Hill every morning, and every afternoon, five days a week.

Furthermore, there will be an overwhelming increase in car traffic. This is a school for Belsize Park pupils—it is not to serve the education needs of the children in Hampstead. This means the children attending the school will come from Belsize Park and beyond—from areas as far away as Kilburn, Cricklewood, and Regents Park. Given that the pupils are between the ages 4 and 11, and given the size and shape of the catchment area, most children will not be able to walk to their school. Some might take public transport, but many will be brought to school and taken home, by car. Even a low estimate of 150-200 cars twice a day, will have a catastrophic effect—in terms of congestion, noise, and pollution—on the area.

Because the school is not in Belsize Park, the proposers have sought to obfuscate walking distance from the Belsize Park to Hampstead. For example, the school application (Appendix A) gives an estimate of walking times to the school which are, plainly, inaccurate. As a

parent, I know that small children walk at their own speed. For example, it takes 10 minutes to walk from the Police Station to Belsize Park Tube – for an adult walking quickly. A young child might take 15. The Appendix suggests that it would take a child 10 minutes to walk several blocks beyond that point. It also states that it would take 20 minutes for a child to walk from West Hampstead tube to the police station. This is, clearly, impossible. It would take more like 35 or 40 minutes.

Because this proposal is to build a Belsize Park school in Hampstead, the proposers have been compelled to misrepresent the walking times to the school, so as to suggest that pupils would be able to walk to school—that the school really isn't very far from the furthest ends of its Beliseze Park Catchment Area.

If the school was being built in Belsize Park, the proposers would not have had to misrepresent these figures.

Further, there is a doctor's practice directly opposite the proposed entrance to the school. There is another doctor's surgery around the corner on Rosslyn Hill, next to the proposed school. With the increased congestion from the proposed school, patients would have difficulty getting to these practices. More, the busiest time for arrivals at Keats Group Practice is at 8am. The time the school day begins. Many elderly people come to the Keats Group Practice at this time. I have seen two serious car accidents as cars turn around to drop patients off at this time. And yet, I can find no discussion of the effect on these adjacent medical practices, and their patients. More, on those occasions when it snows, the area directly outside the 'school gate' is the one of the iciest places in Hampstead. The police were often flummoxed about how to keep it gritted and safe—there is no mention of this in the proposal.

The proposal portrays Downshire Hill as a quiet residential street. In fact, it is a main through road, particularly during the morning and evening rush hours. At one end of Downshire Hill the road becomes single lane. With the new school it seems likely that the road would become gridlocked twice a day.

Education Need and the Effect on Hampstead's Local Schools

First, Abacus itself did not ask for a 420 pupil school. They wanted a single form entry school, a school for approximately 210 students. Clearly, this number was thought to be sufficient to meet the needs of children living in Belsize Park.

Second, Abacus was set up to meet the educational needs of children in Belsize Park where there were no primary schools. There are a number of excellent local schools in Hampstead: Fleet, New End, Christchurch, Hampstead Parochial, Fitzjohn's and Rosary. In locating a Belsize Park school in Hampstead, the planners are failing the children of Belsize Park—schools should be a part of their local community. More, they may be damaging our existing local schools.

As a free school, Abacus has no restriction on moving its catchment area. Already, in an attempt to placate neighbours living near the proposed school, Abacus agreed to enlarge their catchment area to include some homes near to the school. In having to create a new catchment area which included the Hampstead Police Station, Abacus created a catchment area that now overlaps with Fleet School's catchment area.

Should Abacus be unable to fill its 420 places, they could, again, increase their catchment area, taking pupils away from Fleet Primary School. This would have dreadful financial consequences for Fleet. It would lose up to £7,300 in government funding for every unfilled pupil place - just two unfilled places in every year group could cost the school up to £87,000 – the equivalent of three teachers' salaries.

Finally, there is one point I must mention as a neighbour—a proposed electric substation.

In one set of plans, the school proposes to place an electric substation in the playground and directly behind my home. In fact, the plans show a substation of more than a storey high directly behind our house. It seems crazy to suggest putting a substation in a school playground. But the problems of noise, electromagnetic radiation, and safety issues are of great concern to houses like ours

which are directly next to the police station.

In conclusion, as immediate neighbours, we are upset that no one from the school has approached us.

In sum, the planning application is ill-conceived. From the start locating a Belsize Park school in Hampstead has a number of negative consequences. The planning proposal attempts to minimise and hide these problems, because they are not solvable.

It is in the best interests of the Hampstead residents, the best interests of Abacus school—and most importantly—in the best interest of the children of Belsize Park, that they have a new school located in their neighbourhood—that is Belsize Park.

I hope that you will reject the proposal.

Yours sincerely,
Stephen Grosz

Stephen Grosz
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London NW3 1PA

www.stephengrosz.com

Camden Council Customer feedback and enquiries
Comments on a current Planning Application - Ref. 20566524

Planning Application Details

Year	2016
Number	1690
Letter	P
Planning application address	Hampstead Police Station, Rosslyn Hill
Title	Mrs.
Your First Name	Elizabeth
Initial	J
Last Name	Berman
Organisation	
Comment Type	Object
Postcode	NW3 2PH
Address line 1	3 Hampstead Hill Gardens
Address line 2	
Address line 3	
Postcode	NW3 2PH



Your comments on the planning application

Dear Ms. Haji-Ismael: I have live next to the Hampstead Police Station and I object in the strongest terms to the proposed redevelopment by Abacus Belsize Park School which represents a threat to the local community;

- a) there is no local need for more school places;
- b) a new school would cannibalise pupils and budgets from existing local schools;
- c) the school is far too large in pupil numbers and would significantly increase pedestrian congestion and the potential for road accidents involving pedestrians, particularly children;

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Planning Application Details

- d) the school's pupils would almost all have to commute to Hampstead and many would do so by car, increasing local traffic congestion in an area already suffering extreme traffic problems;
- e) the school would materially increase air pollution levels in the area which are already well above legal limits set by both the UK and the EU;
- f) the school's design is awful and ungainly and contravenes virtually all principles of good heritage design and development, particularly upsetting given the landmark Grade II status of the building and the Conservation Area in which it sits;
- g) in January 2015 the CEO of the CfBT Schools Trust which governs Abacus Belsize Primary School wrote to parents and prospective parents that the Police Station was "carefully considered" but "was found not to be a viable option" and that siting Abacus at the Police Station "would have compromised our mission of providing an excellent learning experience to your children.";
- h) the costs of the school are egregiously high, particularly given the lack of any local need, and in a period of austerity it is an unacceptable cost per pupil folly;
- i) Abacus is a new small school without proven management expertise for a school 5 times larger;
- j) there are much more socially beneficial local uses such as local key worker housing.

Please know that I and many others object strongly to this ill founded proposal and ask that the Planning Department reject it.

If you wish to upload a file containing your comments then use the link below

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Camden Town Hall
Judd Street
London WC1H 9JE

Form reference

20566524

Camden Council Customer feedback and enquiries
Comments on a current Planning Application - Ref. 20567541

Planning Application Details

Year 2016

Number 1590

Letter P

Planning application address hampstead police station

Title

Your First Name Rukmini

Initial

Last Name Kamat

Organisation

Comment Type

Postcode

Address line 1 21 Denning Road

Address line 2

Address line 3

Postcode NW3 1ST

Your comments on the planning application

We would like to oppose the building of a 420 pupil school on the site of the Hampstead Police Station as:

- There are already 55 schools in the area, which is more than enough to meet requirements
- The new school will be located on a main road and cause traffic congestion, noise and pollution in a Grade II listed Heritage area
- The pavement will get congested.
- The kids could meet with accidents.

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Form reference	20567541

Camden Council Customer feedback and enquiries
Comments on a current Planning Application - Ref. 20567544

Planning Application Details

Year	2016
Number	1590
Letter	P
Planning application address	Hampstead Police Station

Title

Your First Name	Akash
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Initial

Last Name	Maharaj
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Organisation

Comment Type

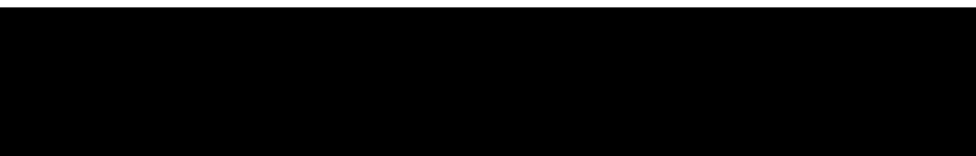
Postcode

Address line 1	Flat B
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Address line 2	21 Denning Road
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Address line 3

Postcode	NW3 1ST
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Your comments on the planning application

I wish to oppose the building of a 420 pupil school on the Hampstead Police Station site.

The area has 55 schools already - this is enough to meet requirements. The new school cause traffic congestion, pavement congestion, noise and air pollution in a Grade II listed Heritage area.

We pay a high council tax, towards maintaining a certain standard of cleanliness and quiet, in the area. Therefore. it is not fair of the council. to expect local residents to

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undergo this inconvenience, everyday.

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Form reference	20567544
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Dear Mr Haji-Ismail

I am writing to voice my grave concern regarding the Abacus school's planning permission application 2016/1590/P which requests permission to change the old Hampstead Police station into a school for 400+ students.

I have lived in Hampstead for 20 years and in my opinion the school traffic problem is already beyond breaking point.

I too have children in Hampstead schools so I am quite sympathetic to the needs for good quality schools. But so many are already in existence here.

Hampstead bears more than its fair share of noise and air pollution as well as traffic congestion thanks to plethora of schools in our small neighbourhood.

Hampstead is rated twice the UK and EUs legal limits for air pollution. To add to this problem by creating more traffic is criminal and unconscionable.

My family resides on Netherhall Gardens where we are directly affected by traffic from Southbank International, South Hampstead, North Bridge House, Fitzjohns Primary, Devonshire House and Arnold House schools. Most days I cannot even get to my property in a car during the two school run periods.

I urge Camden Council to refuse planning permission for such a large school.

Markus Noe-Nordberg
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