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Supporting People Directorate

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By email

Dear Zenab

Consultation to Planning Application 2016/1590/P

Camden Council has reviewed the above planning application and has decided to object to the proposal on the grounds that a new school with capacity for two forms of entry (2FE) is not needed and could create additional surplus school places in the area. We do not object to the school at one form of entry (1FE), as it was originally intended and accounted for in our planning assumptions, but we do object to the school increasing in capacity to a 2FE.

The proposed permanent site of the Abacus Belsize Primary School is located within Hampstead Town ward and planning area 1 (PA1) for the purposes of school place planning. However, it is possible that children attending the new school could live in the Belsize ward area, situated within planning area 3 (PA3) based on their admission criteria/catchment area. The proposed school site is also located close to Highgate ward and planning area 2 (PA2). In order to provide a detailed response to the application we have therefore considered the need for school places in planning areas 1, 2 and 3. (Appendix A shows school planning areas in Camden).

Every year the authority reviews its school places capacity to ensure there are sufficient school places within the borough for the current year and going forward. This is a cyclical process whereby a report is produced annually compiling and explaining all the data taken into consideration regards school place planning. The report identifies capacity and pressures within the borough, projected future demand and any likely impact of changes in neighbouring boroughs.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

The current 2015 Annual School Places Planning report covers the school planning period up to 2024/25. It includes Greater London Authority (GLA) 2014 population projections (PP), GLA 2015 school roll projections (SRP), the Council's 2015 projected housing development trajectory and additional child yield anticipated as a consequence, plus actual need through offers and rolls data. The 2015 report can be viewed following this link [SPP report 2015](#).

The 2015 report concluded that having analysed all the data listed above, there are sufficient places in the borough until the end of the reporting period (2024/25) with our current and planned provision. This is the result of many years of planning and financial investment, mainly by the Council, in schools to provide provision for bulge classes and permanent accommodation to ensure that all children in the borough are offered/allocated a school place.

In particular there has been sustained pressure on primary school places in recent years in the north-west part of the borough, this is well documented in the report/appendices. This has led to Camden providing additional provision in this particular part of the borough, which includes parts of PA1 and PA3.

In PA1 an additional 2FE of permanent provision has been provided at Kingsgate Primary School from 2016/17 to meet need (forecasted and actual pressure on the ground). In PA3 an additional 1FE of permanent provision at year three has been made available at Hawley Infant School from 2016/17 and the school will change from an infant school to a primary school, thus taking children from reception to year 6. This total additional 2-3FE* of capacity will be available for the 2016/17 intake (*depending on year group, i.e. reception Kingsgate 2FE/year 3 Hawley 1FE).

A considerable amount of investment has been put towards expanding both Kingsgate Primary School and Hawley Infant School in order to provide the capacity needed in the area. The forecasts used to plan for extra capacity and need on the ground included Abacus Belsize Primary School at 1FE only. If an extra 1FE is to be provided at Abacus Belsize School there is a real concern that some of the current and additional places could become surplus which would result in poor investment of public funds and impact on rolls of other local schools.

Vacant reception age places for 2015/16 (comparing school admission numbers to the January School Census) totalled 3% in PA1, 5% in PA2 and 2% in PA3. Therefore 3% of all reception age places available across those three planning areas were vacant, this equates to 42 places. Our projections indicate a peak for pupil places this year but following that it is projected that vacancies will be higher. We have planned and invested to accommodate peak need but we do not want to see that followed by an abundance of surplus capacity when numbers drop away and that could be the situation if Abacus Belsize Primary School opens as a 2FE.

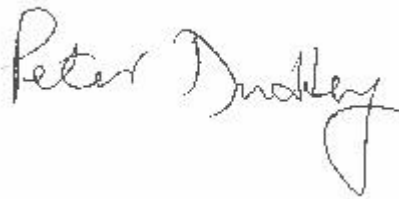
As the SPP 2015 report sets out in detail, at primary school level it is expected, with our existing and planned provision, that there will be sufficient school places in PA 1, 2 and 3 within the planning period up to 2024/25.

If an additional 1FE is provided at Abacus Belsize, the concern is that vacancies at reception from surplus capacity could work through schools, increasing the cumulative

impact across all other year groups. Concerns regarding possible surplus places by planning area and borough wide will be reviewed once our annual report is revised in 2016, as will our forecasts.

In summary, Camden Council wishes to object to the proposal in planning application 2016/1590/P to expand Abacus Belsize Primary School to 2FE. Existing primary provision is forecast to provide sufficient school places within the borough over the current planning period to 2024/25. There is no evidence that demonstrates a need for an additional 1FE of school places at Abacus Belsize Primary School in PA1. If 2FE of school places is provided at Abacus Belsize Primary School at its new site from 2017 this could reduce the number of pupils in existing Camden provision and create vacancies in the system as evidenced in our 2015 annual report.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Dudley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'D' at the end.

Peter Dudley
Director of Education