

ABACUS Belsize changing the Hampstead Police Station to a school ref no 2019/2375P

Abacus Belsize previous application No 2016/1590P was turned down on all points by Camden in July 2016

So what has changed three years later?

1. **210 pupils (at the moment) against 420** However there will still be between four and five hundred people arriving between 8 and 9a.m. Then parents waiting outside on the pavements complete in some cases with young children in push chairs between 3 and 4p.m. Rossllyn Hill is already well used by pedestrians as is Downshire Hill. The result must be to overflow into the streets
2. **No longer a roof top playing ground.** However, the playground will not take the full number of pupils at one time, so play time will be rotated. Result is that the noise will be most of the day five days a week. Some few Saturday mornings ago, a loud noise of children playing was coming from the Police Station. This noise was heard in our house as well as those of neighbors. Between our garden and the Police Station, is a 12ft high thick brick wall, on our side heavy and tall foliage and tall trees, yet the noise was unbearable outside for longer than a few minutes. Inside was lower, but still loud. I walked around the block down into Downshire Hill where the noise was still disturbing.
3. **More huge extra costs.** New planners, new advisors, new architects, new team employed specifically to ensure the plans are passed by Camden.
4. **Meetings with neighbors.** We were never officially invited to any meeting. However, others kept us informed. The first one was purely to introduce us to the team and inform us of the new plans. When asked about other more appropriate sites, and could we help, the reply was yes but we must offer up within four weeks !!!! . Other sites nearer to Belsize Park, the catchment area, were the correct size, not on main roads, and much less costs, were recommended, but turned down without much investigation. (others have already passed on full details) . The second meeting was similar to the first. We were shown many plans, amongst other items including the concern that 210 would be later turned into a 420 pupil School. No guarantees could be given. It was confirmed that the house was not part of the application. In fact we were given plans showing that the garden of the original house in its full length up to the Stables was to be excluded. The new plans in the application have reversed that, and the garden has been cut short, enlarging the play area. The third and last meeting was held by the council, allegedly to explain and discuss questions from the public. That meeting was full of Abacus parents and their children. It was programmed by abacus to be an opportunity for the parents, one after another, to talk about the school. We had no chance to ask questions.
5. **Nothing has changed from the Majority who objected in 2016 to the latest application.**

Circumstances have deteriorated in the last three years.

1. Transport was reported in the July 2016 meeting as Unacceptable. Traffic has just got worse
2. **Pollution has got worse** The application states that an Air cleaning system will be installed within the building. That confirms Pollution has got worse. But what about the playground? What about the external area in front and to the side? What about the streets coming and going from the school? As this is a car free school the children will be walking in one of the highest polluted areas of London. Many schools around the country are trying to have the roads adjacent to their schools closed at peak times. Why?
3. **Noise does not change.** Whilst there is no roof play area, the noise will be replaced by the Air cleaning systems.
4. **Heritage** The demolition of external buildings has been reduced, but the internal will still be changed. The Abacus school if permitted, will ruin the Village atmosphere that exists and has existed since the building was erected, with this extra, noise, extra volume of people, and cars. It will change the atmosphere of this unique village of London.
5. **Costs have increased.** The completed building will cost circa £20,000,000. This is so unfair when many schools in London and around the country are struggling to pay their way. Many are calling on parents to help fund urgent repairs such as leaking roofs and costs towards paying for standard books.
6. **This application if granted will be the most expensive school in the U.K.**
7. Camden and surrounding areas School specialist, at the July 2016 hearing, stated that:- ***'There was no shortage of places in other existing Schools within the catchment area.'*** He also stated ***'Was this School a need or choice?'*** The situation has deteriorated, there are today many more empty places in the local Schools, in fact, in some schools the situation is becoming a financial concern. Teachers could be sacked, standards could suffer.

Conclusion Education is the most important thing we leave to the next generations. What is hard to understand for the reasons above, and many others, is what or who is driving for this School to be built in Hampstead, out of its catchment area, where there are already over fifty Schools; where there are spare places; where the traffic and Pollution are so high and where the costs are out of all proportions, especially in this time of such a shortage of public finances. We are not against this school if it is needed, but surely it should be built in its own area, not on the main road and not at such a huge public cost!

Sandra and John Joseph

