

Todd J. Berman



Mr. David Fowler
Camden Planning
5 Pancras Square
London N1C 4AG
David.fowler@camden.gov.uk

Re: Planning Application Number: 2019/2375/P

5 July 2019

Dear Mr. Fowler:

I am writing in my capacity as Chair of the Hampstead Hill Gardens Residents' Association to express our strong opposition to the proposed conversion of the Hampstead Police Station to a school for the Abacus Belsize Park Primary School. Our Residents' Association Committee, representing approximately 100 local Hampstead residences, has considered this plan and voted unanimously to be opposed to the Abacus application.

We are one of the closest roads to the Police Station, with a number of our resident's properties directly connected to or immediately adjacent to the Hampstead Police Station, and our membership also includes several properties on Rosslyn Hill (#'s 22 and 24, in particular), which would be very directly impacted by this proposal.

Camden Council Planning should reject this application because it would violate a host of planning policies, the Neighbourhood Plan and Camden's own planning rules:

Heritage: The proposal will dramatically increase the intensity of usage of the site far beyond that which was ever contemplated when the original building was constructed. For almost 100 years the site was used as a Police Station and at no point during a full century of usage was there ever more than 25 police officers stationed there, and that was for an extremely brief period. The Abacus proposal would increase the intensity of usage beyond 10 times what has ever been the case, and more than 25 times the average usage rate for the past 40 years. The Abacus proposal would destroy the long heritage of the site as an oasis of peace and calm in Hampstead, a site of beautiful architectural design in a Conservation Area.

In addition, the Abacus plan destroys the historical fabric of the three core buildings with the sale of the Police House, the destruction of the cells and chambers, and the division of the site into a school with separate but integrated business premises. This is a radical transformation of the site and is wholly inconsistent with the historical character and heritage of the buildings and the Conservation Area in which the Police Station sits.

Traffic: The proposal would substantially increase traffic in Hampstead, with the addition of at least 45 cars (the Abacus estimate in their application) to 75 cars (the average actual car traffic based on

local schools within their catchment areas). It is critical to appreciate that this would be at least twice a day and that every car would involve a stop to pick up or drop off. There is virtually no parking available in the area so these stops would require double parking, exacerbating congestion and resulting noxious pollution, a large portion of which would end up on Hampstead Hill Gardens.

The Abacus suggestion that they would anoint traffic wardens to assist is appalling and admits the problem: This would amount to no more than valet parking as they have absolutely no statutory power to actually prevent or reduce the additional volume of traffic this proposal would generate.

The Abacus mantra that they have a “car free ethos” is a bumper sticker slogan and not a policy: If it were that easy, Camden could also make a generic statement about its “car free ethos” and solve the traffic issues facing the borough in that way. But it isn’t that easy and that isn’t a realistic or enforceable commitment. The Abacus plan materially increases traffic and should not be allowed.

Congestion: The Abacus plan would dramatically increase congestion in Hampstead, with almost 500 children and minders crossing twice a day each way at the Pond Street / Rosslyn Hill intersection, all within the same 45 minute or so period in the morning and then again in the afternoon. This is already a very busy junction and is particularly dangerous to cross as it is an irregular intersection. Abacus proposes to move that many people along a single route using “walking buses”: However, take a minute and think what that means in reality, ie, 50 groups of 10 (or 25 groups of 20) children, minders, prams, scooters, etc. all crowding already congested routes during the morning rush hour and then again in the afternoon. This would be a disaster for the local community, many if not all of whom already suffer the horrendous traffic on the High Street.

Pollution: The area in front of and around the Police Station suffers pollution levels well in excess of that allowed by UK and EU law and also exceeds World Health Organisation recommended levels: Approximately 40,000 people suffer chronic illness and premature death in the UK each year from noxious air pollution; approximately 17,000 of those premature deaths are in London. At a time when many of us are doing everything possible to reduce pollution in Camden and in London, it is staggering to suggest building yet another school in Hampstead which is by the Council’s own assessment not necessary and which would most surely increase pollution, harming local residents when it is simply not necessary to do so.

Noise: The Abacus plan would create constant noise throughout the day, as well as during evenings and weekends when in use. This would destroy the character of the local Conservation Area, fundamentally damaging the amenity of local roads and homes. Abacus had 30 or so children visit the site and play in the parking lot on a recent Saturday morning and the volume was extraordinary because the shape of the buildings is such that it creates an echo chamber, reverberating across local gardens, homes, and roads. This would severely impact the quality of life of local residents, many of whom are elderly.

Design: The plans include multiple skylights on the roof of the Stable block which would create a Klieg light effect and severely damage local gardens and, in particular, harm wildlife populations of bats, owls, bees and other animals which use the area to nest. There are virtually zero lights in the immediate area now and so the Abacus plans would dramatically increase light pollution and harm this wildlife habitat.

The Abacus plans are not necessary but, more importantly, they are not appropriate at this location.
We are not opposed to the Abacus Belsize Park School but rather only to its proposed location at the Hampstead Police Station.

If allowed to proceed, this proposal would be damaging and destructive to the local area, and distressing to local residents. There is absolutely no justification for the harm that will result, in particular given there were alternative sites within the Abacus Belsize Park School's catchment area that would have cost the Department for Education a small fraction of what has been proposed for this site and which would have had a minimal impact on the local community.

On behalf of more than 100 families and homes on Hampstead Hill Gardens and Rosslyn Hill, I ask you to please do all that you can to stop this proposal as it violates many Planning rules as well as offending common sense.

Kind regards.

Todd Berman,

Chair, The Hampstead Hill Gardens Residents' Association.