

From: Darla Hocking [REDACTED]
Sent: 16 July 2019 21:32
To: Planning [REDACTED]
Subject: [REDACTED] 2019/2375/P Former Hampstead Police Station 26 Rosslyn Hill London NW3 1PD

[REDACTED]

To the Camden Planning Committee: Attn David Fowler,

I am writing to explain how Abacus Primary School is an essential school in the borough of Camden but also more specifically in Belsize Park.

Although I will explain our families personal story I suspect there are several factors that relate to many families in Belsize Park. When the time came for our family to enter into the primary school education system we had a lot of research to do. I was fortunate to have an opportunity to speak with a representative from the school application program at Belsize Library. The representative looked at my address (central Belsize Park), and cultural identity (religion) and explained that I lived in "the blackhole of Belsize Park". There wasn't a lot of options for walkable schools.

After touring the 12 State school closest to our home I applied for 6. Abacus was our first choice even though the travel was a disadvantage at its temporary location. The others I applied for were good schools but many would have required a long travel time to school or didn't match our religious ideals.

Travel time for our family is a key requirement. We don't own a vehicle. And moreover, we want to walk to school. We want all the benefits of having a sense of community. What seems rare and wonderful to me is the fact that even with the current Abacus site not being local it still has a strong sense of community. Presently, we walk to the bus, and if the school was to relocate to the Police station we would still walk for all the reasons mentioned above.

As a parent working with the school we have searched for an appropriate site first in Belsize Park and also in other local areas. We can't find one that fits the needs of a 1 for entry school. We've even revisited sites of key interest but we just couldn't make it work while persevering the heritage requirements and keeping in mind our children need an outdoor space. The record shows we have searched 78 sites over the last several years. This has been very frustrating but also it has been a lot of work and effort.

As parents of a school that has been in temporary accommodation for 6 years we are desperate to put down permanent routes. But also find it disheartening when people of the public keep voicing the fact that we don't need another school. It belittles every success and effort we have made in the few short years of existence, both academically and in coming together in many ways to secure a permanent home.

With regards to the proposed police station we have addressed all the concerns since our 2016 application. We have acted on all requests including traffic congestion, noise, heritage guidelines. Our school is already acknowledged by Camden as one that exists. Furthermore, we are rated Outstanding and proven to be trailblazers as a secular school deep in the heart of Camden. We have become a State school that people are willing to wait to get into. This should be celebrated and acknowledged, especially with so many obstacles in our way.

Abacus needs a permanent home. It needs a place to continue to thrive.

One of the things I find fascinating about an extraordinarily population dense city like London, is how one community turns into another with no defined borders. Wards and boroughs provide lines on a map but in reality they all just mix together. And that's something we should be proud of, it makes London. In that same thought, Belsize Park and

Hampstead are different but they share so much and it shouldn't be a deal breaker that a permanent site for a Belsize school is short distance outside catchment.

Darla Hocking
Belsize Park Resident