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Principal Planner



Thanks for a taking a minute to read this-I really appreciate it.

Not a Car Owner, Not Offered a Place at a Borough School within 30 min of House

I'm writing because I'm a Belsize Park resident that was about to leave the borough when our daughter was not offered a reception spot within the area. We don't have a car nor do we ever plan to own one whilst we live in London.

We had been told that we would never get into a "good school" where we lived & would have to eventually move. Luckily for us we got accepted off the waiting list for Abacus (our first choice). Now we understand there is opposition to this school that is 100% responsible for keeping our growing family in this area.

I just want to share our perspective:

1.No Material Disruption to Residents from Current State

Given the current nature of the Downshire Hill environs, the addition of a one reception class school will not lead to a material increase in disruption nor a material decrease in the enjoyment of the area. This is due to the resident's current proximity to existing commercial establishments & attractions.

Downshire Hill is a lovely but not an extraordinarily quiet neighborhood set apart from city visitors & attractions. It is a neighborhood that includes footfall & noise from the following: 1) Keats Group Practice (Surgery); 2) Killik & Co Investment; 3) Keats House (20-26,000 annual footfall); 3)Freemasons Arms Pub (open until 10pm every day except Sunday (9pm)); 4) St. John's Church; 4) Hampstead Heath at one end (est. 7

million annual visitors); 5) Hampstead High Street & commercial businesses at the other end. The overwhelming majority of residents moved to the area under these conditions. Given the nature of the area, there can be no *reasonable expectation of extraordinary quiet* during business hours. Accordingly, the addition of Abacus will not result in a material decrease in enjoyment from the current (& historic) state of the neighborhood & environs.

2. Abacus Proposals are recommended for approval

Despite the above, Abacus has worked closely with Camden Council's planning and conservation departments & Historic England for two years to ensure that its move would not lead to any material disruption. Accordingly, neither groups have an objection.

3. Parents move to areas with outstanding schools increasing Rolls & Housing Values

UK families and especially London families: 1) move to areas with outstanding schools (even across the country)^[1]; and 2) pay more to live in those areas (London average +80,000 GBP for home near Outstanding school).^[2] In order to attract more families and see an increase in birthrates & rolls, the borough needs to provide outstanding educational facilities just like Abacus.

4. Birthrate for Belsize are not falling & are higher than Camden average

Unlike other parts of the Borough, Belsize Park has robust birthrate that is higher than the Camden average.^[3]

5. The Path from Good to Outstanding Indicates an Outstanding Faculty & Model

In the presentation **Taking your School from Good to Outstanding** (London Borough of Camden, 2008) four key themes are identified as necessary for taking a school forward: raising attainment and accelerating progress; improving the quality of teaching and learning; improving the conditions for learning; and developing the school as a professional learning community.^[4] Vicki Briody & her team have accomplished all the above whilst housed in a temporary facility and having to fight a campaign against anxious homeowners. Abacus and her faculty should be embraced & emulated not attacked.

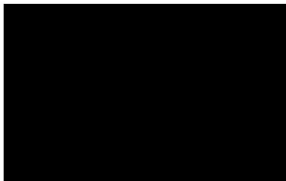
Conclusion

Given the current & historic state of the Devonshire Hill environs: the many commercial businesses, churches, landmarks, as well as the Heath means that the addition of a relatively small school will not materially decrease the residents' enjoyment of the area.

In fact, outstanding schools: 1) attract families; 2) keep the community vibrant & growing; 3) increase housing prices. Abacus has been a good citizen and its proposal is recommended for approval.

Abacus should be applauded & used as a model for other schools to replicate its success so that other borough schools can learn to move from satisfactory/good to outstanding. When this occurs, even more families will move to the surrounding areas making Camden ever more vibrant.

Thank you for your service to our borough and your kind attention to this matter.



[1]Parents Move to live near better schools

Four parents explain why they were willing to sell the family home and move – sometimes across the country – to get the best possible state education for their children <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2015/sep/20/parents-paid-thousands-live-near-better-schools>

[2]Parents pay £52,000 in the UK & 80,000 more in London more to live in areas with outstanding schools, new survey reveals

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/04/04/parents-pay-52000-live-areas-outstanding-schools-new-survey/>

[3]Belsize Park, Camden Gov (open data), page 4 (33)

**[4]To the next level: good schools becoming outstanding
Research report**

<https://www.educationdevelopmenttrust.com/EducationDevelopmentTrust/files/89/89fc7659-9fd4-448e-a0f6-df548565bd02.pdf>

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