

Former Hampstead Police Station
26 Rosslyn Hill
NW3 1PD

PINS References APP/X5210/W/20/3428002 and APP/
X5210/Y/20/3248003

LPA Reference 2019/2375/P and 2019/2419/L

Stephen Grosz
Local Resident
PROOF OF EVIDENCE

Introduction

1. For the past thirty-five years, since the summer of 1985, I have lived and worked at 52 Downshire Hill. This building is the property that stands closest to Hampstead Police Station. With almost no garden, the rear of 52 Downshire Hill is only a few meters from the police station boundary wall. Our rear windows overlook the back of the police station and its yard—which includes the former stable and harness rooms—which became the evidence cottage—and the rear car park. There is also the original area for bicycle parking. The large wooden gate to the police station yard is attached to our home.

2. From 1895, the time 52 Downshire Hill was built, until its conversion into flats in 1959, the building was owned and lived in by Dr Leslie Collier and his descendants. When, in 1985, I moved into 52 Downshire Hill, the building was made up of four one-bedroom flats. The three other flats were owned and occupied by the three women who originally purchased their flats in 1959, from Dr Collier's children. On many occasions, I discussed the history of the building and its relationship to the police station with the three other residents, and one time with Dr Collier's son, who was born and raised in 52 Downshire Hill.

3. I now live and work in the upper part of the house (formerly Flats B, C and D) with my wife and two children. Flat B is my consulting room; our home—Flats C and D—are on the first, second and third floors. Flat A is the basement flat.

4. In short, I have over one hundred years indirect knowledge, and thirty-five years direct, daily, lived experience of activity at the police station.

5. This Proof of Evidence is submitted in support of the case for the Hampstead Committee for Responsible Development.

6. I would like to address two areas:

7. First, historically, from a neighbour's perspective, activity at the police station—in particular, noise and traffic.

8. Second, from a neighbour's perspective, the noise impact the proposed playground in the police station yard would have on my home and consulting rooms.

HISTORICALLY, FROM A NEIGHBOUR'S PERSPECTIVE, NOISE AND TRAFFIC AT HAMPSTEAD POLICE STATION

9. The residents of 52 Downshire Hill had warm, friendly relations with the police at Hampstead Police Station. The police were quiet neighbours.

10. Although the police station was fully operational, it was quiet. Since 1985, there has been little foot and car traffic to and from the station—on any day, no more than two or three parked cars in the back of the station. The yard has always been peaceful. I remember the yard being used for exams and training, but rarely was it used for more than a few cars. Because horses were stabled in the yard, the sounds of the police yard were the sounds of quiet voices, hoofs—snorts, neighs and nickers. We heard horses being watered and fed. We felt lucky to live next to the station—it was more like living in the country than the city.

11. This quietness is characteristic. It extends from the rear of Hampstead Police Station behind the houses at 52, 51, and 50 Downshire Hill, continuing eastward in the gardens of the mansion block, Hopkins House and the other homes on the south side of Downshire Hill into Keats Grove.

12. To the best of my knowledge, there has been only one disagreement between neighbours and the police about noise. In the mid-1990s, on weekends, lost or stray dogs from Hampstead Heath were brought to the station and kept there until Monday, when they would be taken to Battersea Dog's Home. On Sunday nights, the cries and barking from dogs in the cells was upsetting. Neighbours discussed this with the police, and they agreed to stop keeping dogs in the station overnight.

13. As you will know, the Hampstead Police Station has been in a state of decline and disuse since 1995, culminating in its closure in 2013. In 2002, the front desk stopped being operational 24 hours a day, seven days a week; the station went to restricted hours. From 2002 until 2013, there were one or two Safer Neighbourhood Teams stationed there—a handful of people. Safer Neighbourhood Teams do not have or use cars; the police car park was not used at all. So from 2002 to 2013, the station car park was virtually empty, those working at the station created little or no traffic, pedestrian or otherwise. And in the seven years since 2013, the station has been closed—generating no traffic, noise or pollution whatsoever.

14. Lacking accurate information about traffic and noise at Hampstead Police Station, Abacus School generalise in their application about traffic and noise at the station by using facts taken from Kentish Town Police Station. There is no comparison. Kentish Town Police Station is a large fully operational police station covering an extremely wide area. Hampstead Police Station has not been fully operational for more than twenty-five years. When it was operational, its catchment area was much smaller, and the station less used than Kentish Town Police Station. In 2002, this was one of the reasons the Met gave for wanting to sell-off Hampstead Police Station. At the time they said that Hampstead Police Station was underused; it lacked modern amenities—lifts, for example—making it unfit for full operational use.

15. In sum, for most of its history, Hampstead Police Station has been distinctively quiet—having stables, the noises from the station were more akin to a country police station than a city station. This quietness is the characteristic soundscape behind the houses at 52, 51, 50 Downshire Hill, continuing eastward in the rear gardens of Downshire Hill. During the past twenty-five years, the station has been virtually empty or empty, generating little or no foot or car traffic, and no pollution.

THE NOISE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED PLAYGROUND
IN THE POLICE STATION YARD
ON MY HOME AND CONSULTING ROOMS.

16. If this appeal is granted, the residents of 52 Downshire Hill will lose the use of the garden, and—because I work on the ground floor, and my work involves ordinary discussion between two people—I will be unable to open my windows during the day. The noise will have a catastrophic impact not just on our home, but our immediate neighbours at 51 and 50 Downshire Hill. It will radically change the soundscape for many residents in Downshire Hill, Rosslyn Hill and Hampstead Hill Gardens.

Garden

17. Having carefully read *Abacus Belsize Primary School Planning Noise Assessment, Report 19/0084/R1*, prepared by Cole Jarman Limited for Abacus, it is clear that the noise situation is worse than imagined. While their report aims to minimise the blight that will be suffered by all of the adjacent residential properties, it is clear, for example, that the garden at 52 Downshire Hill would be unusable at drop-off and pick-up, during break times, sports lessons, and outdoor assemblies. The school plans to rent out their facilities in the evenings and on weekends.

18. If there are people sitting in the garden at 52 Downshire Hill, they would be less than a metre away from the playground. In terms of sound, it would be like sitting in the playground. Anyone sitting

in these gardens would not be able to carry on an ordinary conversation.

19. In short, if this appeal is granted we will lose the use of the garden at 52 Downshire Hill during the day, on some weekends, and evenings. This would also be true for our neighbours at 51 Downshire Hill, the Mahtani family, as well as other adjacent homes—the home of the Joseph family at 24 Rosslyn Hill, and the Berman family at 3 Hampstead Hill Gardens. The Henson family—who are not resident in the United Kingdom, and hardly use the house at 50 Downshire Hill—have accepted the proposed idea of an acoustic fence, but this will have no effect on the noise to these other properties, and little or no effect on noise to their property.

20. Abacus recognizes the noise blight they will cause to these families—this is why they purport to be willing to limit the use of their outdoor facilities to certain times of the day and the week. And yet, there is no way this arrangement can be maintained, let alone guaranteed. Worse, this arrangement is unfair to both local residents and Abacus children. If applied, residents would lose the peaceable use of their properties; the children would be stuck with a school playground that they would not be able to enjoy fully or freely.

Windows

21. The proposed school playground would be visible from all of the fourteen rear windows of our home—the rear windows of our home are only a few meters from the police station yard. Our home is closer to the proposed playground, and would have more windows facing the playground—more exposure to the commotion of the playground—than the proposed school itself.

22. Put simply: the school has been designed in such a way that local residents will experience more noise from the playground than teachers and children in the school.

23. I am a psychotherapist. I have practiced in Downshire Hill for thirty-five years. The rear, raised ground floor room in our home is

used as consulting rooms. As you know, all the rear windows are SE-facing, these rooms heat up during the day. Throughout the year, we regularly open these windows during the day for ventilation. From April through October, these rear windows are open during the day, every day—if this planning application is approved, we will not be able to open the rear windows and carry on a normal conversation. In short, I will not be able to work in these consulting rooms.

Summary And Conclusions

24. In sum, for most of its history, Hampstead Police Station has been distinctively quiet. This quiet is the characteristic soundscape behind the houses at 52, 51, 50 Downshire Hill, continuing eastward in the rear gardens of Downshire Hill to Keat's Grove.

25. To allow this appeal, to grant planning permission for Abacus Belsize to build a school in the Hampstead Police Station, would mean that for much of the day, the residents of 52, 51 and 50 Downshire Hill would lose the use of their rear gardens. If ordinary conversation were to be possible, all rear windows would have to be closed. I would lose the use of my consulting room.

26. In 2016, one of the reasons the previous application was turned down was because of the noise impact on neighboring properties. If you examine this application, you will see that the noise impact will be worse. Not only is the playground now closer to the adjacent properties, but also the size and shape of the playground will mean that noise levels will be higher from the playground to the surrounding homes.

27. In the report *Proposed Development Hampstead Police Station Rosslyn Hill Camden^[L] NW3 1PA, Review of Noise & Sunlight Reporting*, June 2019, prepared by Southwest Environmental Limited for the Hampstead Committee for Responsible Development, they conclude that:

'There will be a 100% increase in noise levels to adjacent gardens resulting in levels in excess of 60dB compared to an

acceptable level of 50dB, resulting in significant loss of amenity.'

28. Further, the proposed Abacus Belsize solution—a 4m high acoustic wall—would be catastrophic for us:

'Sunlight to adjacent gardens is drastically reduced by up to 92% by the proposed 4m acoustic wall, which has little noise reduction benefit. The BRE threshold value is 20%.'

29. To allow this appeal, to grant planning permission for Abacus Belsize to build a school in the Hampstead Police Station is to forever change the soundscape in this area of Hampstead. It would mean the loss of the ordinary use of our garden, home and workspace—this would be an emotional and economic catastrophe for my family and myself. Correspondingly, if allowed, this appeal would have a similar catastrophic impact on our immediate neighbours at 51 and 50 Downshire Hill, and radically change the soundscape for a number of homes in Downshire Hill, Rosslyn Hill and Hampstead Hill Gardens.

Appendix

30. I am attaching a report, prepared by Ms Janine Griffis, 14 Denning Road, NW3 1SU. Ms Griffis was formerly chair of the Hampstead and Belsize Sector Working and the Camden Community and Police Consultative Group. Her report also describes how Hampstead Police Station was used during the period 2000-2013.

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