

DHRA
8 Downshire Hill
LONDON
NW3

To whom it may concern,

**Downshire Hill Residents' Association comments Re. Abacus Belsize
Park admissions consultation**

The Downshire Hill Residents Association Committee have met a number of times to discuss the siting of your school at the top of our road and also to consider how we respond to this consultation. We would like to thank you for being part of that process and making the time to visit us during one of the meetings.

In regards to your admissions consultation, our collective thoughts are as follows:

Enlarging the catchment to include part of Downshire Hill.

We welcome your recognition that the catchment needs to include at least some of the area in which your school will sit. However we strongly feel that the whole of Downshire Hill should be included rather than just the top half.

Our rational behind our thinking is as follows:

1) Siting a school at the top of a busy road such as Downshire Hill is going to have a significant impact on traffic in the road (despite the school efforts to encourage parents to walk or get public transport, this cannot be enforced as has been seen in many school locations in Hampstead). The whole road is going to be affected and therefore the whole road should expect to benefit from the school's presence in terms of being able to consider sending their child there. Only including half the road within your catchment when the whole road is going to bear the brunt of increased traffic feels extremely unfair and we believe this needs to be reconsidered.

2) When your school was sited at the old Hampstead Town Hall, your catchment covered an area in all directions of at least 0.2 miles from your school site. If you extend your proposed revised catchment to the end of the Downshire Hill, this distance is only 0.2 miles from your new school site.

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Treasurer Mark Dennis

3) The bottom of Downshire Hill is not particularly well served by local non-religious schools. Currently families only have the option of New End as they are too far from Fitzjohns to be considered. If you include the lower part of the road it gives families an option of choosing between two schools rather than just the one and that will be very positive for those who live there.

The proposed use of St Peters church in Belsize Square as the central data point for distance criteria

We understand that your school was set up to serve the Belsize Park community which lacks access to non-religious schools. However the D of E has decided to situate the school in Hampstead and we believe that if you want to be a local, community school you need to serve the locality in which you sit. We therefore think the central data point from which distance be measured should be the site of the school. That way you encourage local families to apply, thereby enhancing community interaction and lessening the need for people to travel significant distances (probably by car) to the school. We consider a situation that means a child living in Primrose Hill (1.5 miles from the school) can have as much right to entry to the school as a child living at the top of Pilgrims Lane (less than 0.1 mile away and out of catchment) to be very unfair and therefore this proposal should be reconsidered.

Overall we believe it's important to mention at this stage that as a group we are not in favour of a school of such size being sited at the old Police Station. We feel the disruption it will bring to the road, particularly in terms of the increased traffic around an already overused intersection will compromise safety. There have been two fatalities in Downshire Hill in the last 10 years. Discussions on this are, however, for another time.

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