



Cllr Ravi Govindia
Leader of the Council
Wandsworth Borough Council

38 Disraeli Road
London SW15 2DS

30 November 2011

Dear Cllr Govindia

Putney Hospital Site – new Academy Primary School

Several members of the Putney Society Executive Committee visited the exhibition of preliminary plans at All Saints Church on 14 and 17 November and had the opportunity to speak to the architects and council officials there, as well as gauge the views of some local residents.

We wish to thank the Council for organising this pre-application consultation. It was a very useful exercise since it enabled the local community to see what the Council has in mind for the site and to comment on the issues before the plans have progressed too far towards the full planning application. Unfortunately the various drawings did not show the actual legal freehold boundary of the Council's site (at the exhibition on 14 November) which we considered a serious omission and potentially confusing to the public, particularly as, in this case, the boundaries of the site are not marked by anything on the ground. This had, however, been rectified on some drawings by the 17 November exhibition.

We understand that the council proposes to build a two-form entry Primary School as well as a block of 24 flats on the site. This is an important site at the western gateway to Putney and the final design is of great importance as the site is surrounded by conservation areas and public common land, increasing its visibility. Local people would expect a building of a high design standard in this location.

The Putney Society will certainly be very pleased to see this long derelict site back in use but we have some concerns which we list below.

Size of site: requirement for flats at expense of playground

We are not convinced that the site is big enough to accommodate both a two-form entry Primary School and a block of 24 flats. In our view a school playground on a roof top is far from ideal as a play space for young children - 470 children - even if playtimes are staggered. The land to be occupied by the flats should, in our opinion, be made over for use as a ground level playground for children - it is not as though this is an inner city site in a highly built up area where there is no playground space but at roof top level. The needs of

The Putney Society

The amenity society for Putney and Roehampton
Registered Charity No. 263242

children for generations to come should be of greater importance than the need for flats, given that so many flats are being built elsewhere in Putney.

Catchment area and need for 470 primary places

The catchment area is not tightly defined but we understand will be mainly for Thamesfield residents with applications from Barnes residents also accepted. The new nursery/primary school is considered essential to keep up with population growth. How certain is the Council that there will be sufficient future demand for school places? We learn that a local school, All Saints School, currently has spare places. Would the provision of such a large new primary/ nursery school be detrimental to existing local schools? Have existing local schools been consulted? How many pupils are local schools having to turn away? Will other local schools be forced to close owing to falling rolls? If there is a possibility that demand is not as high as anticipated, perhaps the proposed school should be changed to a single-form entry only rather than two-form entry. It would be very helpful if the Council gave further statistical evidence of the need for so many additional school places.

Traffic

The expectation that 20% of journeys will be by car is not realistic as the school is on the edges of Putney and there is inadequate public transport provision, particularly as the academy school will have a wider catchment area than Putney. There can already be serious traffic problems on the Lower Richmond Road during the rush-hour, and we anticipate that this new scheme runs the risk of creating much more severe traffic problems in the neighbourhood during the morning rush hour and at close of the school day. The roads will not be able to cope with the traffic. We anticipate tail backs as cars travelling west along Lower Richmond Road try to turn right into the school grounds across the streams of oncoming traffic. If the drop-off area is full, cars from both directions could be blocked from turning into the school grounds causing major tail-backs. It takes considerably longer (often several minutes) for parents of toddlers and primary age children to drop off children at the school gate compared to older secondary age children. The young children will need more assistance into the school premises. Thus, the drop-off area is likely to fill up rather quickly as little space has been provided.

Commondale residents we have spoken to are concerned that parents will attempt to drop off children in adjacent Commondale if the entrance to the school is blocked – perhaps a gate across the entrance to Commondale will be needed to prevent that. In any event there needs to be a commitment to enforce strictly controlled resident parking zones and double yellow lines by the new school to meet residents' concerns.

The Council will be aware that the application for expansion of Prospect House School at the top of Putney Hill was refused planning permission for reasons that included the traffic and parking situation. Thus considerable attention will need to be paid to a traffic management scheme at the proposed Academy school: bus stops, pedestrian crossings, new traffic lights etc. It is also paramount that a carefully prepared travel plan is made part of the consultation documents, with an emphasis on effective measures to encourage parents to avoid car use when bringing their children to the school.

Public transport inadequate

It is unlikely that parents living some distance away from the school will walk there with young children. There are currently three buses which go past the site (22, 265 and 485) but

none of these connects with the southern part of Putney. Thus some parents may have to take two buses to arrive by public transport. Bus bays may need to be built to allow for longer boarding and de-boarding times for parents with young children and push-chairs to avoid further traffic congestion. There will need to be improvements to current bus services by the time that the new school opens and it is strongly recommended that the fruits of initial discussions with TfL on improved bus services are also made part of the consultation.

Parking

There is wholly inadequate on-site car-parking provision. Many teachers could have long journeys to reach the school, but where will they park? Parents and visitors to the school will also need to park.

We hope that these matters will be taken into consideration as the more detailed plans for this new school are drawn up. There is a clear danger that too much is being shoe-horned into a site that is not big enough for the purposes intended, with a detrimental effect not only on the school design but also on the quality of life of nearby residents.

Yours sincerely

Carolyn McMillan PhD
Chairman

Jonathan Callaway
Deputy Chairman