

The Members' Room

Southwark Council

160 Tooley Street

London SE1 2QH

14 October 2014

Rt. Hon, David Laws MP
Minister of State for Schools
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SWP 3BT

Dear David,

My colleague Councillor Rosie Shimell and I are writing to you about the provision of school places in East Dulwich and the wider area – both primary and secondary school places.

As you know from your last visit to East Dulwich we have a pending desperate shortage of primary school places which with the opening of several free schools should be resolved. Locally Cllr Shimell and I have led campaigns for two new Harris free primary schools obtaining support from over 250 local families. We also successfully supported two other local free school campaigns. Collectively they are critical to resolving the local primary school place crisis. However, one of those Harris primary schools has yet to find a confirmed site to be built on and your advisors have suggested it be located at the Dulwich Community Hospital (DCH) as we once expected. Indeed Southwark Council made a special planning exemption to enable this.

Since your last visit it became clear that secondary school places will become critical in September 2016. Southwark Council, were clear no such shortage would take place. They unrealistically expected children to commute out of area. So we initiated and led a campaign for a new free secondary school and with well over 750 supporting families Southwark Council changed its mind. With such strong local support I'm glad to report two providers have applied to fill that gap and we hope the preferred provider of our parent s steering group Haberdashers' Aske's Federation will be successful. The key for this school will be finding a suitable site.

A primary school would need 1,800m² of land as a minimum. A new secondary school for 1,150 pupils using government guidelines BB103 would require 19,550m².

The only suitable local site to house a secondary school is the anticipated spare land at the DCH. The local Clinical Commissioning Groups have publicly stated they will need 7,000-9,000m² of the DCH 28,300m² site. To help focus minds on resolving DCH land use we submitted a Right to Contest at

the beginning of the year. Sadly this has stalled and it currently running seven months late for a formal response.

To further complicate this Southwark Council have refused to withdraw planning policies stating the DCH site should be used to provide replacement health facilities, new housing and possibly education. This means the Department of Health will be advised to price spare land at local housing development rates of £3,300/m² or £64M for sufficient land for a secondary school. This means the Education Finance Agency (EFA) and Department for Education (DfE) could not afford to buy the recommended quantity of land.

Equally Southwark Council have refused to issue planning policies or zoning enabling a second new local Harris Primary school to go onto another site. Ideally it would be built close to one of the two admissions black holes of supporters east and south of East Dulwich. We believe only three sites are possible: Building on Metropolitan Open Land on Harris Girls East Dulwich Academy; 520 Lordship Lane 2,800m² site owned by the Dulwich Estate (disused burnt out pub) or DCH. The DCH option may compromise the size of any new secondary school if 9,000m² is required for replacement health buildings.

How can the DfE and EFA work better with Southwark Council enabling a new secondary free school and a second Harris free primary school on suitable sites with recommended amounts of land to build upon?

We would also welcome a chance to meet with you to discuss these issues further.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Barber". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James Barber and Rosie Shimell

Liberal Democrat Councillors for East Dulwich ward, London Borough of Southwark.