

School of shock

Concerns raised over decision to house school in Whitton

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Loss of green space, increased strain on the transport network and a “destabilising” effect on nearby schools are some of the concerns raised against the decision to make Whitton the permanent home for Turing House School.

The Education Funding Agency is negotiating with Hounslow Council over the purchase of the Hospital Bridge Road site for a school that will predominantly take children from Teddington, the Russell Education Trust said on Friday, August 21.

The move has sparked almost 2,000 people, and has been backed by former Twickenham MP Vince Cable, to sign a petition against the Whitton location for the school, that will be temporarily based in Livingston House, Teddington, for three years.

The petition’s creator, who asked not to be named, said not enough consideration had been given to the people who live in Whitton.

He said: “The road infrastructure is inadequate as it is with constant gridlock at rush hour. The roads are narrow surrounding the site.

“There are six schools within the immediate vicinity of the Whitton site, not to mention the Heathfield School, less than a mile over in Hounslow, with 1,800 pupils.

“The only viable entrance would

cut across Heathfield recreation ground, another open green space. “Twickenham Academy, just 1,000 feet down the road from the proposed site, is undersubscribed by about 200 pupils and would be destabilised, just when it is beginning to improve.”

He suggested alternative locations, including Fulwell Golf Club and the section of land behind David Lloyd leisure centre in Hampton, as more suitable.

Jenna O’Carroll, who has also campaigned against the Whitton site, raised concerns about its admissions policy, believed to be an 80:20 split between children from Teddington and Whitton.

She said: “Turing House was a school for Teddington – it should be near Teddington, not several miles away with no adequate public transport between the two. It is insane.”

The school’s headmaster, Colin Mackinlay, pictured left, said they consulted about its admissions policy and the governing body will be discussing the September 2017 intake again now the location is clearer.

He said the 20 per cent intake from the Whitton area should come into effect from 2017, rather than a year later when the school moves.

Mr Mackinlay said: “The ratio of 80:20 is the same one that we have at two of our other schools, where the site is some distance from the original area of demand and, so far,



Base: The school’s temporary site in Teddington

TE89880

it has served those schools and communities well.

“It was chosen for Turing House for that reason but I know that governors will want to consider the strength of arguments on all the various possibilities that arise in the consultation.”

Twickenham MP Tania Mathias also expressed her disappointment that Whitton had been chosen.

She said: “I know the council has worked with the EFA to find sites in our area, but I expect other sites closer to the areas needing school places will be needed for more schools in the future.”

Dr Mathias said she will be discussing the situation with council

cabinet member for schools Paul Hodgins, and said she is in favour of councils retaining greater power to reserve sites for school buildings where there is an urgent need.

Coun Hodgins said he recognised there were a number of concerns about the site but Hospital Bridge Road was the “only practicable location.”

A spokesman from the EFA said negotiations were ongoing and could not comment.

To view the petition, which at the time of going to press had 1,766 signatures, visit tinyurl.com/turinghouse.

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