

Little time to debate school plan

Child care cover 'poor'

Sir – On Tuesday, July 7, along with many other Richmond residents, I attended a Richmond Council debate at York House.

This was triggered by a petition signed by more than 1,200 local voters asking their elected representatives on the council to work with the Education Funding Authority (EFA) to find a more suitable location for the proposed Deer Park Free School for 420 infants, at the Manor Circus roundabout on the A316.

All parties acknowledge that the site is not ideal due to a high level of pollutants, congested roads, heavy traffic, lack of access for

deliveries and road safety.

The “debate” was rather disappointing, a perfunctory 15 minutes – all pre prepared, no vote, no questions.

In fact it was not a debate at all about the central issue; finding a more suitable site for a primary school.

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our community are impacted by the desperate shortage of school places in the borough.

We should not have been surprised by this clumsy attempt to discredit the petition and the 1,200 locals who signed it.

Since February, any concerns about the suitability of this location for an infant school have been dismissed as either nimbysism, naivety or lack of understanding of the real issues.

I can only think that the council wishes to shift the focus away from unsuitability of the site and their powerlessness to press the EFA to look at other locations.

This is further confirmed by the avoidance of acknowledgement on the public record to a number of alternative sites (see RTT letters page) helpfully proposed by residents (who were asked by the council and school representatives themselves to find and propose alternative sites).

Attempts for community involvement in the plans have also been quietly and politely rebuffed by the commercial organisation funding the school, Bellevue Education Group.

There are very real challenges in meeting the need for school places in Richmond; however, building a

school for 420 infants at the Manor Circus Roundabout is a poor solution.

The fact that the school is still advertising in order to fill its first year intake of only 30 children speaks volumes.

The glossy marketing brochures bring to mind the expression “lipstick on a pig”; the name Deer Park School is a futile attempt to disguise the true nature of this proposal; a sealed building with a play cage on the roof on a busy four-lane red route. The children deserve better.

LOUISE DUNN
Address supplied

Sir – One of the much trumpeted policies of David Cameron during the recent election campaign was the promise of 30 hours of free child care.

Currently Richmond Council only pays £3.50 an hour to child care providers whether state nurseries or private ones – an amount that does not even cover 50 per cent of the cost of employing staff let alone business rates, rents and other overheads associated with running a nursery.

Most children who attend nurseries do so at private ones as there are very few state nursery places. Private nurseries typically charge at least £7.50 to £8 an hour and often more.

So unless the Conservatives are prepared to more than double the existing hourly rate paid to nurseries there will be one of two consequences. If they force nurseries to not charge parents at all for the first 30 hours they will drive private nurseries out of business. Or if parents continue to have to fund the difference between the actual cost per hour and the £3.50 funding, they will have forgotten the dictionary definition of “free” which last time I checked was “without cost or payment”. That is what I would call trying to pull the wool over people’s eyes.

CHRIS KEY
Via email

My gratitude

Sir – Could I take the opportunity to thank the residents of Hampton Wick ward who placed their trust in me and elected me as their ward councillor on July 2.

This was a truly remarkable result. There has not been a Liberal Democrat candidate elected in the ward since 1998 and since 2002 the ward has been generally viewed as a safe Conservative seat. It will now be my task for the next three years to work hard on the behalf of my new ward constituents.

Coun GERALDINE LOCKE
Hampton Wick

Isis fears

Sir – Boris and the commissioner feel it is harmless and a mark of freedom to display the Isis flag in London.

These people may be recruiting to the Isis cause.

What a tragic day for the concept of multiculturalism.

I thought that at least Boris was intelligent.

I sincerely hope this is, at the very least, a strategy to allow the extremists to be picked up by surveillance.

TOM VENOUR
Hampton



Exhibits and history on display at the excellent newly-opened Eel Pie Island Museum, located above Twickenham library, as taken by Austin Allen. If you have a picture you would like published in our weekly Borough View slot, email it to lettersrtt@london.newsquest.co.uk.

Tree costs

Sir – Donald Craig complained about the high cost of local native trees (Letters, July 10).

There are several things to consider here. Obviously nurseries have high overheads. Very few nurseries in urban areas grow their own plants from scratch, they merely buy them in from wholesalers.

One less expensive option for your reader is to purchase smaller native trees online from wholesalers in winter time as small bare-rooted or potted whips, or feathered, and grow them on.

But they will likely be only about a metre high initially.

The larger trees in local nurseries two to three metres high may be four to eight years old, are often “guaranteed” for two years or so after planting (amazingly) and have been watered and fed in the interim.

Considering the time it takes for trees, shrubs and many indoor plants to grow I believe that they are all relatively inexpensive.

Mrs JOHNSON
Twickenham

RICHARD WARD
Kew

We need a vote on why lido plans not taken up by the council

Sir – We were enraged that Lord True and his cronies have apparently decided to brush aside residents’ plans for a lido in favour of ... an open space with shops.

It seems we cannot be trusted to make the right decision on this. So we will not be allowed to decide.

A shopping development with an empty square? Twickenham is full of vacant shops. The police say they cannot

provide any more cover to monitor existing open public spaces and a square would draw the drunks like a magnet on rugby days especially.

The council cannot provide additional rubbish clearance, so said square would look pretty terrible and be avoided by residents pretty often.

How the rugby sevens crowd would have loved it.

Lord True is clearly continuing with his fantasies about

developments which can only ever happen in Twickenham.

He sells these saying they will provide open spaces where the locals can hang out.

We remember the high rise on the station was sold because we were all going to enjoy hanging about the shops underneath it.

The Brewer’s Wharf development was going to provide an open space for all of us to enjoy (somebody needs to tell

the developer. The place is advertised as a gated community of luxury flats. Perhaps we can hang out next to the gates).

A lido would be a huge boon. It would be clean and secure. It would be a joy for residents of any age. Nursery and school groups, families and all would flock to it.

Look at the Hampton open air pool. It is open all year and is a joy to use. A lido

would bring into Twickenham exactly the people the local businesses need.

On what grounds are we being refused a choice on this? On one hand a lovely open air year round pool that we would all enjoy. On the other a square affording revellers an exciting new surface to throw up on. Could we vote on this?