

Dear members,

Our fellow ward councillor, Cllr Simon Jeal will be speaking on the Kentwood item tonight. We, as the other two councillors in Penge and Cator ward have written this statement to also support his comments.

Firstly, we would like to stress that we are not against having a secondary school in the north of the borough. However, we believe that not enough consideration has been put on where the site should be. There are at least two other local sites which could also be considered.

Residents are very upset as to the process of this application. The north of the borough is already dominated by Harris Academy schools and many parents of school age children have stressed they would prefer a choice. There has been a lack of public engagement in this matter. Indeed, it comes across as a behind the scenes decision directly with the Department of Education. With other sites that could be considered, the option of a fair, open tender would have been much more welcome.

Whilst we appreciate that this is not at planning application stage, we believe that any decision should be deferred to allow the feasibility study to be completed and for a full public consultation to be undertaken. Residents are worried about the potential size of the school, where parking and access routes would be and safety issues with the school being on a busy main road. On such a potentially huge application residents must be able to be consulted.

Another common comment from residents and a potential problem of having a Harris School in the site is that more than likely it will become a feeder school. The precedent has already been set with Beckenham Harris and as we speak Langley Park is undergoing a consultation to alter its admissions policy. Such a policy would be hugely unfair to other primary schools and its parents and pupils.

Our comments are not those of Labour councillors but instead as representatives of all the residents we have spoken to. So please listen to them for as well as considering education provision we must care for peoples' amenities, living conditions and provision of choice. We support a school but it needs to be appropriate to the site. We ask you to support this decision to be deferred and to be referred back to the executive to allow for greater study of the feasibility report and have a greater public consultation. Would you not want to have a comprehensive consultation if it was in your ward or adjoining your street. Surely this is not too much to ask so please support.

Thank you

Councillor Kathy Bance,

Councillor Kevin Kennedy-Brooks