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**Lord Nash**  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools

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8 April 2016

Thank you for your letter of 23 March, addressed to the Minister of State for Schools, about the International Academy of Greenwich (IAG) in your constituency. I am replying as the minister responsible for this policy area.

Under Section 10 of the Academies Act 2010 it is the responsibility of the Trust proposing a free school (in this case the Greenwich Academy Trust) to 'consult such persons as the person thinks appropriate' on 'whether the arrangements should be entered into'. The department and the Education Funding Agency (EFA) are, therefore, not responsible in law for specifying how consultations should be conducted or deciding if the consultation is adequate – this is at the discretion of the Trust.

In the case of IAG the consultation ran from 18 December 2015 to 8 February 2016, a period of just under 8 weeks. The legislation does not specify the length of any consultation period, which is for the Trust to determine; however similar consultations conducted by other proposed free schools typically last between four to eight weeks. After allowing for a two week holiday period in this case, it is within the typical range.

Regarding the opportunity for local residents to comment on the proposals, the Trust used a number of methods of communication, including a link to a consultation questionnaire on the IAG website, approximately 1000 emails sent out to local groups and individuals who had registered an interest, leaflet distribution, adverts in local media and two public meetings held on 21 January and 1 February. Again, the legislation does not prescribe how academy trusts should consult; however the above methods are typical of those used by other trusts to undertake similar exercises. The Trust has also published a copy of the consultation report on their website, which can be found at:  
<http://tinyurl.com/jeq8yg9>.

In terms of consulting local residents on the temporary site, all parties were bound by commercial confidentiality until negotiations were complete and so the Trust was unable to announce the exact location of the temporary site for the school until mid-January. There is a balancing act in trying to provide

information as early as possible to local residents and prospective parents, whilst maintaining commercial confidentiality during site negotiations. This is why the Trust initially specified a general location within walking distance of the Lee Green traffic lights where Lee Road meets Lee High Road / Eltham Road and announced the exact site as soon as they were able to.

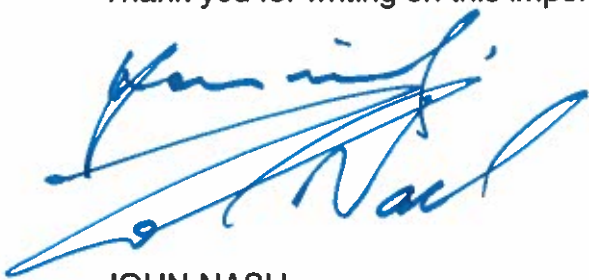
Regarding whether it is appropriate for IAG pupils to be educated on the same site as the social action project, the residential premises are adjacent to the Church building, but do not share the same access as the proposed school. All new free schools are subject to a pre-opening inspection by Ofsted and are required to have robust pupil safeguarding procedures in place. This will ensure that the site is secure against entry from anyone not authorised to be on the premises.

The Trust has confirmed its commitment to work with local residents to try and minimise any inconvenience caused whilst the school occupies the temporary site. This includes developing a school travel plan for students, staff and visitors to the site, which will promote sustainable transport initiatives to reduce the impact of the school on the local area. The plan will need to consider pick up and drop off locations for students. A travel plan is also required for the proposed permanent site.

In terms of the proposed permanent site, the department has exchanged contracts and completion is subject to obtaining planning permission. The EFA is in the process of developing a feasibility study which involves carrying out a variety of surveys and drawing up outline plans to check that a school building of the required size can fit on the site. Once this is completed and assuming that the site is found feasible, the EFA will enter into a detailed design stage during which local residents will be consulted. This pre-planning consultation with residents will take place this summer. This is in addition to the statutory planning consultation that forms part of the planning application process. Subject to negotiation, the EFA could extend the lease on the temporary site if delays are incurred on the permanent site, to provide continuity for the school.

The department is committed to delivering the free schools programme, particularly in areas such as Greenwich, where there is a growing need to provide new pupil places. We remain supportive of the proposals to open the International Academy of Greenwich as soon as possible.

Thank you for writing on this important matter.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Nash', with a stylized flourish underneath.

JOHN NASH