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Wednesday November 16 2016

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By Clare Casey

newsdesk@nlhnews.co.uk

PARENTS are in limbo about the location of a new secondary school in Enfield.

Earlier this year, the government approved Wren Academy's planning application and Enfield Council's school places report, out this week, makes it clear that education chiefs are relying on it to plug a black hole in provision.

The Wren Academy Trust, which already runs an all-through primary and secondary school in Hilton Avenue, North Finchley, is set to open the new academy in 2018.

The trust has suggested three possible sites to the government's Education Funding Agency (EFA), which is responsible for acquiring the site and building the school.

It has said its favoured spot is open space in Enfield Road, Oakwood - but to date, neither the location nor the selection criteria has been confirmed, leaving scores of

parents in the dark about their children's education.

Nick Dines, Conservative councillor for Chase ward, said: "I am deeply concerned that the cabinet member responsible for secondary school provision says she is 'happy' that she has not spoken to the Wren Academy."

"She is letting down parents in Chase ward, given it is clear that the Wren Academy is expected to fill the gap there is in school provision."

Free schools and academies are state schools, funded directly by central government, but run independently from the council.

Ayfer Orhan, the council's cabinet member for education, children services and protection, said: "I am extremely surprised that he [Nick Dines] fails to understand the very basic legislation on the role of the council in approving academy funding."

"The council is legally prohibited from opening a secondary school. It is the government, through its acad-

emies and free schools programme, who have approved Wren and it is their responsibility to secure the site, and the school itself will decide its own admissions criteria."

The new school will be "based on Christian values" and be open to the whole community, but will give preference to those living closest to it, with half the places for church-going families and the other half "open" places.

Michael Whitworth, executive principal of Wren Academy Trust, said: "We expect to start the admissions process in September 2017."

"Parents of Year 3 and 4 children will have another choice when their children reach secondary transfer age."

"We are confident that the special atmosphere at Wren Academy is something parents will want for Enfield."

The school will be eight-form entry, with 240 places in each year group.

The EFA declined to comment.



Carbon copy: Wren Academy Trust already runs a similar school in North Finchley

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