

MTB/SS

Gleneagles Avenue
Leicester
LE4 7GY

Principal : Mr M T Berry

Trevor Pringle
Catchment Area Review
Freepost 985/33
Leicester City Council
New Walk Centre
Leicester
LE1 7ZP

28th February 2013

Catchment Area Review – February 2013.

Soar Valley College, Gleneagles Avenue Leicester, LE4 7GY

Dear Trevor

I am writing in response to the Catchment Area Review consultation currently underway. I fully appreciate that primary schools who do not currently sit within a Priority Area must have a designated secondary school but I strongly oppose the current proposals.

Following numerous letters and meetings, ongoing since 2006, from myself, Governors and other Headteachers I am dismayed to find my school in exactly the same position as it was seven years ago with regard to the proposals.

Despite numerous assurances to address and respond to the issues that have been raised in previous papers, which I have attached again, there are still many questions that are left unanswered and in my judgement we are still without a clear rationale for the proposals other than a solution based purely on population densities and ill thought through 'boundaries' affecting certain schools including my own.

In particular I am still left wanting answers to the following questions;

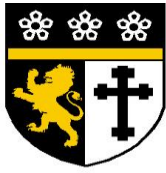
1. If distance to secondary schools was an original key criteria why is this apparently ignored ? If required I can give several examples of this regarding my own school and others.
2. Was anybody from Learning Services consulted regarding the proposals and if so who and what remit did they have?
3. I was informed that the final decisions on the lines delineating catchment areas, including that for my school, were based purely on an arbitrary basis relating purely to school numbers once the initial work on



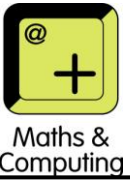
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centroids had been completed with no thought given to any other issue. Why was no local information

sought regarding long standing school links, staffing, development groups, communities, potential impact or previous assurances from the LA.?

4. When Soar Valley College was asked to increase its PAN some years ago this was specifically to accommodate students from Sandfield Close School. A public meeting was held at Sandfield, during which documents were produced for Unions who queried the increase, and there was the usual consultation process. Following this, over the past few years staffing has been shared e.g. we have provided their ICT support for a number of years and there are extremely strong links with regard to sport. It appears that years of development work and good links are to be undone with no consideration to the above. Why was this not considered in the proposals?
5. What thought, if any, was given to the revised catchment areas creating potential in-balances for example in prior achievement, ethnicity, deprivation between neighbouring schools ? I have argued very strongly in the past that where schools are adjacent, it is imperative that this is given very careful thought, but I see no evidence of this and nor have I been given any explanation as to why this is the case.
6. The main reason being given to the EIP as to why few if any changes could be made to the current proposals is that it would 'undo' the solution agreed last year for the Primary schools. What was the point of the many hours spent on trying to offer viable alternative solutions by the Secondary Headteachers / EIP if this was the case? We all feel that if this had been made clear at the start of the process we would not have wasted numerous hours of valuable time.
7. We were recently informed and this is implied in the consultation papers ,there were only two key issues to address - these being the issues of catchment areas in the east of the city and those of Rushey Mead and Soar Valley College. Was nothing else seriously considered despite numerous other issues being raised in the papers submitted previously for the LA consultation and in other meetings through the EIP?
8. It was the EIP and individual Headteachers who asked as to whether or not any work had been undertaken in looking at the impact of attainment on entry. This was eventually completed following the request and two schools including my own are disadvantaged [understanding that the data is based on all of the children attending one secondary school]. Should this not have been considered originally as a key factor and how can such a shift, especially for one school, be justified where schools are so geographically close and compared by the local community?
9. How do these proposals relate to the BSF strategic planning around numbers and also how this relates to the growing primary population and the potential for new Primary and / or Secondary Schools.



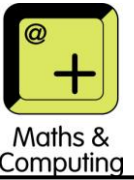
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I feel strongly that there are many questions left unanswered with very little thought given to key issues as illustrated above that will have a serious impact on my school and others across parts of the city.

I have over many years been a strong advocate of supporting the LA and Council in its planning and provision but on this occasion I can find very little that from my viewpoint has been positive about the whole process.

On a related matter the northern part of the city will soon be facing very different pressures from recently formed Academies and all-through schools in the county at a time of falling secondary numbers. I feel that this will impact on the city for the next few years at a time when the proposed changes to catchment areas come in to force that will create further uncertainties. There is also the issue of Rushey Mead School being allowed to significantly increase its PAN. I shall now be discussing with Governors as to how we can address such concerns / issues in the best interests of Soar Valley College.

As can be surmised I have found the whole process frustrating and I would be extremely disappointed if this was fait accompli and I would welcome the opportunity for further constructive dialogue.

Yours sincerely

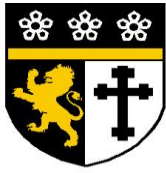
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Catchment Area Review – Governing Body February 2013.

Dear Trevor

This letter relates to the latest consultation regarding the Catchment Area Review and is sent on behalf of the Governing Body at Soar Valley College.

We were extremely disappointed to find that the original catchment area proposals had been resubmitted without amendment along with the fact that we had received no response to the specific issues raised in our previous letter dated 8 February 2012.

As you are aware we have engaged with this discussion around revised catchment areas for some considerable time. For example the person leading the Review in 2006-7 attended one of our meetings to hear at first hand our views as to the proposals and the Principal received a letter from the then Director, Shelia Lock, in February 2007 assuring us that the exemplar issued in part 2 of the consultation document at the time 'is only intended to form the basis for future discussion' and that 'we need to give consideration to a wide range of issues such as our existing specialist college groupings ...etc'. The exemplar does in fact mirror the current proposal and we feel that the wide range of issues highlighted at the time and in more recent correspondence have still not been fully addressed.

I have attached a copy of the previous paper sent by myself in response to the last consultation , dated 8 February 2012. I would like to draw your attention to page 2 of the document and in particular to the six bullet points that are highlighted as concerns specific to Soar Valley College. My understanding is that the Principal has received no adequate response to these specific matters.

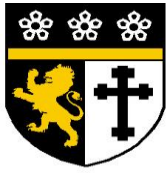
On a wider matter we are still concerned that parents would find the proposals extremely confusing and difficult to comprehend and access.



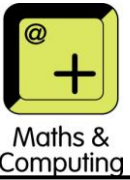
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Whereas we fully appreciate the complexities surrounding the issue and the work that has been undertaken so far we cannot support the proposals in their current format. Before any final decisions are made regarding the proposals we would ask for a meeting with a representative from the LA who can respond to our specific concerns.

I look forward to hearing from you with regard to these matters in the near future,

Yours sincerely

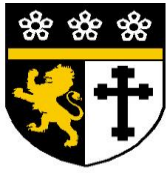
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Chair Of Governors



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8th February 2012

Letter re Catchment Area Review from the Governing Body, January 2012.

Dear Mr Pringle

This letter relates to the consultation regarding the Catchment Area Review and is sent on behalf of the Governing Body at Soar Valley College.

I understand that our Principal, Mel Berry, has recently met with yourself and Rachel Dickinson regarding his many and serious concerns relating to the review and has already submitted a detailed paper, taking an objective city wide perspective, that was also shared with Governors.

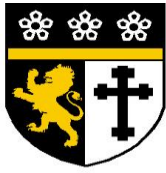
These concerns are shared by ourselves and we do not wish to simply reiterate what has already been submitted. We would however like to add and stress the following points.

- We are very concerned that the proposals were put in the public domain before being discussed and explained in detail with school leaders. Surely this should not happen if we are working in a genuine partnership?
- The aims for the exercise are given but very little, if anything, in the way of a rationale for the solutions. We would also be interested to know if any account has been taken of bus routes, travel costs, exiting links between schools, community issues , standards etc .
- When the last consultation occurred we met as a Governing Body with an LA representative to discuss the proposals. The proposals were in the end 'shelved' due to a number of issues and concerns. We feel however that many of the issues and concerns we expressed then still exist and the assurances given to the Principal about any future process have not been met.

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- We are very concerned about the timeframe for the process especially if it is a genuine consultation – particularly concerning the capacity to take concerns in to account, review the proposals and still meet LA deadlines.
- We wonder how intelligible the details are, especially the complicated mapping, to the majority of parents.
- We also simply cannot understand why it is that certain primary schools very close to secondary schools are not always 'linked'. [eg Coleman Road to Crown Hills]

As a Governing Body we have a number of concerns relating to the proposals that are specific to Soar Valley College, some of which relate to the issues outlined above.

- If one of the methodologies is based on centroids then for example Sandfield school is 0.8 miles and a 9 minute walk from Soar Valley. We believe ourselves to be the nearest secondary school to Sandfield yet this is not one of the schools linked. In contrast a school that we have no links with either through Development Groups, staffing or community is 1.8 miles away but has been linked with our school. Where is the rationale?
- No regard has been given to existing community issues or school links. We have developed extremely strong links through Development Groups , provide ICT staffing for several schools and also for example have many ex and current Governors from certain schools plus community users. Years of hard work and development issues have just been disregarded.
- With Soar valley and Rushey Mead sitting next to each other has any thought been given to ensuring a balanced intake for both academically and socio-economically? The two school cooperate extremely well and what we do not want to do is to force 'competition' at a time when cooperation is more important than ever. If one school feels disadvantaged or unfairly treated then this will have an adverse effect.
- We would also like to see the evidence and planning re PANs linked to the BSF strategy and the most recent estimates on student numbers from this exercise for both schools.
- Has any other model been considered for the north of Leicester which is an ever increasing complex scenario especially given the likelihood of nearby county schools becoming 11-16 academies?
- Has any risk analysis of any kind been undertaken at all for the medium term ?

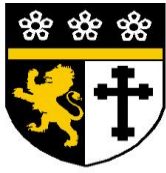
In light of what are significant issues raised in this letter, plus the additional concerns raised by the Principal, Mel Berry, we feel that the process should be halted followed by a far more detailed explanation and responses to the specific issues raised.



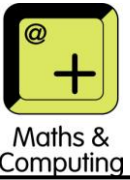
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We fully appreciate that the issue is a complex one and there are no 'easy answers' but in the current format there are far too many issues and questions left unanswered for us to give any support to the proposals.

We look forward to hearing from you in response to this letter,

Yours sincerely,

Indy Singh Panesar
Chair of Governors



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