

My ref:

Your ref:

Date: 14th July 2017

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Mrs Stevens
Sent by email

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Dear Emma,

Petition Response

Thank you for your letter of the 4th July in response to the letter to you from the Children and People Committee. I am aware that you have requested a separate response from officers. As officers have advised me on this matter, any response from them would be in line with this response. Therefore, please accept my response on behalf of members and officers. I have annotated the appendix in *blue italics* to address the comments made.

With regard to the information relating to plans for 2018, I am aware that we have not yet been able to share information on the proposal. We are negotiating with different land owners and developers, however these negotiations are ongoing and we are unable to provide details for reasons of commercial sensitivity and confidentiality. I can assure you that all factors are being considered in these negotiations and we will share the outcome with you as soon as we are able to. As and when plans come forward we will carry out a consultation where residents will have an opportunity to view plans and share their thoughts.

In regard to your point relating to the appeals, I have now had the opportunity to discuss this with officers and the appeals clerk. I have been informed that whilst at the appeal all parents were advised that they would not receive their letters on Monday 3rd and that it was most likely that they would receive them on the Tuesday 4th July. I can confirm that the letters were sent first class on Monday and therefore should have arrived with you on Tuesday as advised. The appeal process is carried out by an independent panel in line with the statutory School Admission Appeal Code panel. If you feel that the appeals process was not managed fairly or impartially you have every right to make a complaint to the ombudsman.

With regard to offering places over the infant class size (ICS) limit, this is not an offer that the Council can make. There are specific exemptions which mean an offer could be made in breach

of the ICS regulations, these are set out in the School Admissions Code. These exemptions would have been considered by the panel in their deliberations. None of the children for whom appeals were submitted would have met these exemptions and so we are unable to offer further places.

This matter has been reviewed by the CYP committee and officers on numerous occasions and the options have been thoroughly considered. Although I recognise your disappointment, the statutory guidance around school admissions means that we are unable to meet your request to offer additional reception places over ICS at the Round House School. This response alongside previous correspondence sets out the basis on which decisions were taken. I will continue to monitor the progress of the Places Planning Team on the delivery of new primary places for St. Neots' residents. However, as we now need to focus on places for future years I am keen that this letter brings a close discussions of the possibility of securing additional places for September 2017.

Kind regards,



Councillor Simon Bywater
Chairman, Children and Young People Committee
Cambridgeshire County Council

APPENDIX: Response to Points Raised in Appendix 1 of Letter from CYP Committee Chair to Round House Capacity Campaign Group on 26th June 2017

1 -The table at the top of the page includes data about applications made to The Round House Primary Academy (TRHPA). Unfortunately, the presentation of the data is misleading. The number of applications is stated as 113 with only 60 places offered. The 113 applications include those from parents who named the school as one of their three preferences, not just those who named the school as their first preference. There were in fact 78 applications received by the published deadline in which the school was named as the first preference. As you are aware as the school has a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 60, this did, however, mean that we were unable to meet 18 of those parents' preferences.

The mentioned table was copied straight from a FOI response provided by Cambridgeshire County Council on 2nd May 2017 (which it's worth pointing out was provided 1 week after the statutory deadline of 20 working days), see below.

If you believe the information provided in the FOI was incorrect or misleading then I would be grateful if you could make any necessary corrections and send me a revised copy ASAP.

We do believe that the information is correct but that the use of it in this instance may be misleading. It is prudent to note that the School Admissions Code requires authorities to consider all preferences equally when considering a school's oversubscription criteria. Of the 113 parents that expressed a preference that included the Round House as one of their 3 preferences 78 named it as their first preference. This means that for 35 applications the reason they did not receiving an offer of a place at the Round House was because an offer was made to one of their higher preferences. 17 parents who named the Round House as their first preference and one that named it as their second preference were not offered a place, not all of these were in catchment children.

2- Of the 18 children not offered a place at the school, 5 of live outside the catchment area.

I received an email response from CCC admissions on 20th June 2017 providing details on how the TRHPA reserve list has been managed (see attached document: 'Round House 2017 allocations tables 14 06 17.docx'). It clearly states that out of the 18 children placed onto the reserve list on 18th April 2017, 16 of them were in-catchment children, and 2 were out of catchment but with siblings at the school.

If you believe that this is incorrect, and actually 5 out of the 18 live out of the catchment area, then I'm very concerned that the reserve list has not been managed correctly as on 18th April 2017 my son was number 15 on the reserve list. If there were only 13 in-catchment children on the list then out of catchment children must have been given places higher up the list than my son. Please can you investigate ASAP and confirm if the numbers you quoted in your letter are incorrect, or if it is the reserve list that has been managed incorrectly.

I can confirm that there have always been and still are only two out of catchment children with siblings at the school that are on the reserve list. The 5 quoted was a typographical error

3- The comment under the second table states that the school has the smallest admission area in the County. There are in fact 2 other schools with smaller admission areas (Millfield Primary and Chesterton Primary) although it is recognised that these schools are smaller.

The comment does say that the admission area of TRHPA is the smallest across the County based on the size of the school:

As our response states, 'it is recognised that these schools are smaller'.

Page 4

The paragraph in the middle of the page states that only 70% of children living in Loves Farm received their first choice. As there were 73 applications for children living in the school's catchment which were received on time which named the Round House as their parents' first preference for the 60 places available (all of which were allocated to children in the catchment area), this means that 82.1% of parents were offered their first preference. I appreciate that this is still well below the percentage achieved across Cambridgeshire.

From the information provided by Keith Grimwade on 9th May 2017 in response to questions asked by email (appendix 9 of the business case), points 13, 14, and 15 state that there were a total of 85 in-catchment children who named TRHPA as one of their three choices. I recognise that the statement made on page 4 may need re-wording as not all of these children named TRHPA as their first choice, but there are at least 25 children living on Love's Farm due to start school in September 2017 who were not offered a place at TRHPA. This means that less than 70% of children within the catchment area were offered a place at the school. I believe this figure could be even lower as we know of several families living on Love's Farm who didn't even name TRHPA as one of their choices as they knew they would not get a place for their child.

Thank you for recognising that your statement may require re-wording. As stated in a previous point (1) although parents who named the Round House as a second or third preference were not offered a place at the Round House, they would have been successful in securing a place at a one of their higher preferences and therefore would not require a place at the Round House. As stated above 83.2% of the parents applied on time and who named the Round House as their first preference were offered their first preference.

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The second paragraph states that there is 20% more housing than was originally planned on the Loves Farm estate and that the level of social housing has also increased. It is worth noting that the school was planned and built based on the numbers and housing mix in the original planning application. It is likely that the additional housing may have contributed to the pressure on places.

It was stated in the business case that the increase in the number of houses and the higher proportion of social housing are two factors that have contributed significantly to the additional demand for places at The Round House.

This does raise the question of why has this not been reviewed, particularly when phase 2 was built in 2013. If the school was planned and built based on the numbers and housing mix in the original planning application and has never been reviewed, then I'm not surprised at all that we're in this terrible situation where TRHPA can provide spaces for less than 70% of four-year old children living on Love's Farm. Love's Farm is a very different place now compared to what was proposed in the original planning application and it's very disappointing that CCC have not reviewed the situation to ensure TRHPR is still able to provide enough spaces for the community it serves.

The demographics are regularly reviewed as are the parental preferences and trends. School place planning considers school places across an area rather than by individual school. In this case although there is a shortage of places at The Round House, there are places at other local schools, therefore there are sufficient places to meet the needs of all families at schools within the statutory walking distance. This approach is in line with Council policy.

The Campaign Group's impact analysis states that the alternative school places offered to parents is over 2 miles away and the distance will cause them difficulty. The walking distance is under the 2 miles statutory walking limit and the routes have been assessed as being suitable for a child to use to walk to school accompanied by an adult as necessary. In addition, our data show that a number of parents who have not been successful in gaining a place at the school have in fact chosen a school which is beyond that 2 mile walking distance. This suggests that for some parents, the distance from a school and the associated need for transport is not a concern.

The Campaign Group have never said that we cannot get our children to alternative schools, and we have also stated several times in the business case that we recognise that Priory Park Infants is within the statutory walking distance. However despite 2 miles being the statutory walking limit, most parents living on Love's Farm believe this is too far for a four year old child to walk twice a day, and as many parents work it simple won't be possible to spend 40 minutes walking their child to school, then walking 40 minutes back home so they can travel onto work, and then having to repeat the 80 minute walk again when collecting their child. This leaves many parents with no choice but to drive their children to school, a decision that many feel deeply saddened about. The campaign group felt it was important for officers and Councillors to understand this, and recognise the negative impact this has on the effected families and the wider community.

Travelling to an alternative school 1, 2, or 3 miles away is obviously going to be more difficult, expensive, and time consuming than travelling to school a few hundred metres away, but this has never been the focus of the campaign. The campaign is all about community cohesion. You are correct in saying that the distance from a school and the associated need for transport is not a concern, but going to the local community school is a huge concern to all of us. The campaign is not about travel routes, walking or driving distances, this is about children being given the opportunity to go to their local community school,

the one near the parks they play at, the one connected to their pre-school, the one they regularly walk past, and the one their friends and neighbours are going to.

Thank you for your comments, we understand that your concern is not about travel or travel routes but about the community.

The Campaign Group's analysis also suggests that the only driving route to an alternative school takes cars past the Round House. It is worth noting that there is an alternative route available to parents which does not require parents to drive past the school.

I agree there is an alternative driving route which parents could take to leave Love's Farm, but this is a longer route and is also usually very busy during peak times with so many residents leaving Love's Farm to get into Cambridge. And whilst this route doesn't go directly past the school, it goes very close to the school. Whichever of the two routes parents choose to take, the majority will still be forced to travel from the North of the estate, past the school in the middle, to exit the estate on the South side. Whether the route they choose takes them literally past the school or not is arguably irrelevant.

The comment was in response to the suggestion on pages 8 and 9 that cars would need to drive past the Round House School to exit the estate, which is not the case. The point was considered relevant by the campaign group as it related to safety issues.

The last paragraph lists the schools in St Neots that are full for September '17. Although this is factually correct, there are schools both north and south of the river in St Neots with reception places available for 2017 entry.

The campaign group have never said that all schools in St Neots are full and we recognise that all children living within St Neots due to start school in September 2017 have been offered a reception place, with places still available at some schools. However it is important for officers and Councillors to recognise that many schools in St Neots are oversubscribed, and the lack of provision at TRHPA contributes enormously to this problem with at least 25 children from Love's Farm having to go to alternative schools in the town.

We are aware of the schools that are full in St Neots, this is the case with many schools across the County. Of the 25 parents you mention 18 were unsuccessful in obtaining a place at the Round House, the remaining parents have chosen to attend schools outside their catchment area. The Admissions Code ensures that if there are places at a school then parents can apply to attend that school and places cannot be reserved for the possibility of children arriving in catchment in the coming year.

One of the school's governors states that the expansion of the school would be cost effective for the County Council. We do not believe this to be the case for the reasons set out in the analysis of the three options put forward by the Campaign Group detailed below.

I feel hugely disappointed that the one line that's been taken from the governor's letter is about the cost effectiveness of a solution. Whether you believe a solution to be cost effective or not depends largely on how much value you place on community cohesion and the well-being of local families and children. I think there are lots of very valid points in the letter about the importance of ensuring TRHPA is large enough for all children on Love's Farm and I really hope you have taken these on board and not just focused on the point about cost.

I am sorry that you feel disappointed in this comment. We felt it necessary to address all aspects of your document to ensure that this is a clear understanding of the challenges and issue. Cost is one of the considerations when considering the options.