

**Brentry Park Development Management Company Limited,
P.O. Box 371, Bristol, BS9 0BH**

FAO Mrs K Lynch
Russell Education Trust
Manor House
1 The Crescent
Leatherhead
KT22 8DY

Dear Mrs Lynch

Bristol Free School Consultation

Thank you for your letter dated 28th April 2016. We have taken some time to consider the rationale and points made in your letter. Naturally we were deeply disappointed with the content and are unwilling to accept it as a fair basis for rejecting our request.

We request that you consider the following points below which highlight some material inaccuracies in your response and which we believe warrant reconsideration of our request to be included in the APA.

Reviewing Our Application On Its Merits

We engaged with the consultation and provided our case on the understanding that our case would be considered on its merits. We had good grounds for believing that our case would be considered:

We met with the Headmaster (Mr Clutterbuck) about our application to be included in the APA on 11th December 2015. He recommended a two pronged approach, the first via a community voice (i.e. our Residents Association) to put forward factual arguments, and a second approach to encourage residents to write their own submissions to the consultation putting their own views and arguments forward in support of inclusion of our estate.

What we were guided to do to prepare the factual arguments side of our case was very clear and specific:

- Collect statistical evidence of how many children are of school age on our estate and current schools and the likely choice for secondary/sixth form.
- Include information about the education choices of those children who would have been in the school since 2011 if they had been in the catchment.
- Include information about how those children are transported to their school
- Include a summary detailing the effect on community cohesion of children from our estate having to go to other schools
- Include information from prospective parents as to when, if at all, they would be looking to apply to the Free School if our estate was in the catchment area.

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We were expected to be able to demonstrate several things:

- The impact on the next nearest secondary schools e.g, Henbury, Monks Park and Abbeywood.
- The extent to which children in our estate are being transported across the city to other schools, placing them under more pressure. On this point it was highlighted that if Bristol Free School were able to evidence to the council and other stakeholders that by including our estate they are helping to alleviate that pressure, then that would put the School in a strong position for further support and money.
- That including our estate within the catchment would have a balanced impact i.e. it would not overload the school with new applications, but would provide a fair and needed option for secondary school education for the children of this community.
- That the decision not to include our estate in the APA when we are c400 metres away would run against the core values of BFS in terms of The Ethos of Fairness, Equality and Community.

We entered into the consultation and prepared our case on the clear understanding that it would be considered on its merits. We have done all of the things requested, taking the time and trouble to address each of these points in time for the consultation deadline and preparing detailed supporting evidence from our survey.

In addition to the numerous emails and our submissions to the consultation, two representatives of our group also met with the new Headmaster (Mr Jones) and one of the other members of the Board of Governors on 10Feb16 after the consultation closed, to share the work we had done and to talk through the next steps. If at any time the school were not willing to consider our case on its merits, then there were ample opportunities to say so.

To now say that our case has not been considered because you never consulted on it is at odds with the clear steer we received on what we would need to include in our case, what we would need to demonstrate to show a strong case, and ignores the engagement we had with yourselves both before, during and after the consultation. On this point alone we would ask that you look again at our application and review it on its merits.

Royal Victoria Park Estate and Bristol Free School are 400m apart and in the same Neighbourhood Partnership Area

Your letter states that *“the governors have not at any point considered changing the Bristol Free School APA because it has a natural boundary which follows that of the Bristol City Council Neighbourhood Partnership area.”*

We believe your understanding of the boundary line is now out of date given the recent review of Bristol City Council Neighbourhood Partnership area boundary lines. We

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consulted on this issue with our local Councillor, Mark Weston. Councillor Weston has confirmed that our estate and Bristol Free School are all in the same Neighbourhood Partnership Area, ie Henbury and Southmead Neighbourhood partnership area.

We have enclosed a link showing the current boundary lines:

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/34308/1.e+Changes+to+neighbourhood+boundries+changes/299d1f2d-b84f-47f4-bbea-6b0a5e56a1a6>

We have also enclosed a link to the current Bristol Free School APA:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?ll=51.49421%2C-2.621098&spn=0.050897%2C0.06121&hl=en&t=m&vpsrc=1&msa=0&source=embed&ie=UTF8&mid=1fxQKGAefo2l2y889XjBYk08AuFM>

Any reading of the maps in the links confirms Councillor Weston's understanding and shows;

- both Bristol Free School and Royal Victoria Park Estate are both located in the Henbury and Southmead NPA (ie the same NPA) and
- the Bristol Free School APA covers parts of at least two NPAs; Henbury and Southmead, plus Henleaze Stoke Bishop and Westbury in Trym.

As the estate and the school are in the same NPA c 400 meters apart and as Charlton Road does not form any NPA boundary justifying exclusion, rejecting our case for inclusion on the basis of a non existent boundary line is not a credible reason for rejecting our application. We would ask that you include our estate in the APA on the basis that we are in the same NPA and are only 400 meters apart.

Establish An Objective Criteria For Reviewing Our Case for Inclusion

It seems likely that from time to time requests will be made (such as ours) for amendments to the school's APA, particularly when circumstances change. The Board of Governors will no doubt be aware that other schools adjust and amend their APA to reflect evolving circumstances. The changes to the APA for Redland Green School since its inception are an example of such change.

Bristol Free School's circumstances have clearly changed since the the original business case was prepared. Some of the key changes include;

- Bristol Free School being located in BS10 rather than on the St Ursulas site in BS9. The original Bristol Free School business case was based upon a target site of St Ursulas and an APA catchment area centred on that site, serving the local community. As a result of not getting the St Ursulas site the circumstances on the ground are now different.

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- Changes to the Neighbourhood Partnership Area boundary lines which show our estate and BFS in the same NPA, 400 meters apart
- The desire of the school to expand Year 7 intake reflects evident demand across the city, particularly in North West Bristol. The expanded intake of 50 additional pupils each year would represent 250 over a five year period. We have evidenced that demand from Royal Victoria Park in that same five year period would take only 21 of those additional 250 places. This represents less than 10% of the planned increase in intake, and 2.1% of the total intake over the five year period.
- The desire of the school to develop a sixth form that takes pupils from outside the APA also reflects new circumstances

We would suggest that the fairest and most transparent way to assess any requests for inclusion is to consider any requests against an objective criteria that can be articulated. Our view is that whilst an evaluation criteria for requests to amend the APA such as ours may not currently be formally documented, the steer we were provided with is in effect a fair and objective evaluation criteria, as it has required us to evidence the following:

- Clear local demand
- Clear Proximity to the School
- Promotion of Social Inclusion
- Positive environmental impact

On each of these points we have presented a strong case - we have demonstrated clear need, very close proximity, and clear positive benefits to the school and the environment.

Our view is that amending the APA to include our estate is not selective and unfair, rather it would reflect a fair evaluation of the case presented against a criteria that is clearly articulated, and an objective consideration of the positive environmental and social impacts of including our estate.

Our survey evidence demonstrates that other schools such as Henbury, Abbeywood and Monks Park would find it difficult to argue they are detrimentally impacted by the amendment we have requested.

Bristol Free School is clearly our local secondary school and we wish to be part of our local community group supporting our local secondary school. In our survey we asked the question about the level of support a pedestrian crossing on Concorde Drive would have. We asked this question for multiple reasons:

- To illustrate we recognised the local issues
- To highlight the level of local support there would be around issues affecting the safety and development of the school.
- To illustrate to you that by including us, you would be acquiring a highly motivated and hugely supportive local residents group that could be mobilised around issues of concern

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The survey results on this question alone illustrate how effective we would be in supporting the school.

Summary

As we have said in our case and correspondence, we fully appreciate the hard work and commitment the Parents Voice group, together with the Russell Education Trust and the teaching staff have put into getting the school established. Our view on this remains unchanged.

We would ask that you reconsider our case for inclusion on the basis of the points above and we request a meeting with you and the board of governors about our application at a mutually convenient time within the next four weeks.

Yours sincerely

Gill Brooks
BPDMCL Director

For and on Behalf of
BPDMCL
admin@bpdmcl.co.uk

cc Mark Weston - Councillor
cc Charlotte Leslie - MP