



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Determination

Case references:	ADA4604, ADA4627-9 and REF4630
Objectors:	Multiple objectors
Admission authority:	The Trumpington Federation
School:	Trumpington Meadows Primary School, Trumpington, Cambridgeshire
Date of decision:	17 September 2026

Determination

In accordance with section 88H(4) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I partially uphold the objection to the admission arrangements determined by The Trumpington Foundation for the Trumpington Meadows Primary School for September 2027.

I have also considered the arrangements under section 88I(5) and find that they do not comply with requirements relating to admission arrangements in the ways set out in this determination.

By virtue of section 88K(2) the adjudicator's decision is binding on the admission authority. The School Admissions Code requires the admission authority to revise its admission arrangements within two months of this determination, unless an alternative timescale is specified by the schools adjudicator. In this case, the admission authority is to revise its admission arrangements by the end of September 2026. This is so parents can take into account the revisions during the current admissions round.

The referral

1. Under section 88H(2) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (the Act), five objections have been referred to the adjudicator by multiple objectors (the Objectors).

2. The objections are about the admission arrangements (the Arrangements) for 2027/28 determined for Trumpington Meadows Primary School in Trumpington, Cambridgeshire (the School) by the governing body (the Governing Body) of The Trumpington Federation (the Federation).

3. The School is located in the Cambridgeshire County Council area (the Local Authority (LA) or CCC).

Jurisdiction

4. The School Admissions Code (the Code) requires objections to admission arrangements for 2027/28 to be made to the OSA by 15 May 2026. Five objections have been raised. One of the objections was not submitted by the required deadline. As this deadline was missed, the case cannot be treated as an objection. I have determined that this objection brought concerns to my attention that ought to be considered. I will consider them under section 88I of the Act. As this late submission cannot be treated as an objection, the objection is called a 'referral' and the Objector a 'Referrer' in this determination.

5. Table 1 sets out the case reference numbers, the reference for each Objector / Referrer and objection / referral, a description of the Objectors / Referrer, and the date each objection / referral was submitted. None of the Objectors / Referrer have requested anonymity.

Table 1: Information about the objections / referral

Case reference Number	Reference in determination	Description of Objectors / Referrer	Date objections / referral submitted
ADA4604	Objector / objection 1	Foundation governor of the Great and Little Shelford CofE (VA) Primary School	17 March 2026
ADA4627	Objector / objection 2	Co-chair of governors at Barton CofE (VA) Primary School	11 May 2026
ADA4628	Objector / objection 3	Area Education Officer for CCC	12 May 2026
ADA4629	Objector / objection 4	Chair of governors of the Great and Little Shelford CofE (VA) Primary School	14 May 2026
REF4630	Referrer / referral 5 ¹	Diocesan Director of Education for the Diocese of Ely (the Diocese)	19 May 2026

Key:

¹ Although this is the only referral, it is numbered 5 as the fifth of the group of objections about this matter.

6. The Objectors / Referrer are concerned that the Arrangements do not conform to the Code. The objections / referral raise concerns about disadvantage that the enlargement of

the catchment area for the School will have on other schools in the area and the flaws in the consultation process which preceded it.

7. The Arrangements were determined under section 88C of the Act on 10 February 2026 by the Federation, which is the Admission Authority for the School.

8. The LA is a party to this objection. Other parties to the objection are the Objectors / Referrer, the Federation, and the School.

9. I am satisfied the objections / referral have been properly referred to me in accordance with sections 88H and 88I of the Act and the concerns raised (as set out in 'The objections / referral' section below) are within my jurisdiction.

10. I have also used my power under section 88I of the Act to consider the arrangements as a whole and to determine whether or not they conform with the requirements relating to admissions and, if not, in what ways they do not so conform. I will refer to these as 'other matters' and these are covered in the section of the determination under that heading.

Procedure

11. In considering this matter I have had regard to all relevant legislation and the Code.

12. The documents I have considered in reaching my decision include:

- a. the Objectors' / Referrer's forms of objection and accompanying documentation and data;
- b. a copy of the minutes from the meeting of the Federation's Governing Body at which the Arrangements were determined;
- c. a copy of the determined arrangements;
- d. the response of parties to the objections / referral and additional information;
- e. the LA's online composite prospectus for admissions to primary schools;
- f. various online mapping tools, such as Google Maps;
- g. the NFER research study "School choice: The parent view" and the [schoolsguide.co.uk](https://www.schoolsguide.co.uk) article "Location is number 1 factor for choosing a school"; and
- h. information available on the websites of the LA (including catchment area maps), relevant schools in the CCC area, the Federation, the School, Ofsted, and the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website (particularly 'Get Information About Schools' (GIAS)).

13. The LA also provided relevant data in a format that I was able to use in a geographic information system called ArcGIS. This allowed me to look at and compare maps of the School's current and increased catchment areas.

14. I have been provided with information / data by parties which I have considered. I refer only to that which has a bearing on my decision in this determination.

15. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all parties for the way in which they presented their views and for their prompt responses to my requests for further information / data.

The objections / referral

16. I set out here a summary of the matters that the Objectors / Referrer have raised (I have put the number of the objection / referral in which each was raised in brackets after each concern):

A. The consultation process:

There were failings of the Federation's consultation process conducted prior to the determination of the Arrangements:

- i. The consultation information was sent only to the Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School office and not the Clerk to the Governors. (1)
- ii. There was no communication about the consultation with the Diocese and the Federation did not welcome meeting with the Diocese to discuss the proposed change to the catchment area. (1 / 5)
- iii. The original consultation was withdrawn and reissued in January 2026 with a slight modification to the extent of the proposed catchment area. (1)
- iv. Despite numerous objections, the Federation will base applications for September 2027 on the larger catchment area. (1)
- v. The letter informing people of their decision to proceed, although stating that objections could be lodged with the OSA, did not provide a link. (1)
- vi. The case for the change to the catchment area was not made by the Federation. (4)

B. Potential effects of the implementation of the increased catchment area:

- i. In respect of Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School:
 - a. The revised catchment area contravenes the natural catchment boundaries which follow the boundaries of the villages of Trumpington and Great Shelford respectively. (4)
 - b. Admission numbers will reduce and affect the school's financial viability. (1 / 4 / 5)

- c. Children who might be admitted to the School (and who might otherwise have been admitted to Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School) will suffer detrimental effects. (1)
 - ii. In respect of Barton CofE (VA) Primary School:
 - a. It is not reasonable for the catchment area to extend into the catchment area for Barton CofE (VA) Primary School in order that an oversupply of school places in Trumpington be addressed by seeking to attract children from Grantchester. (2 / 5)
 - b. Admission numbers will reduce and affect the school's financial viability. (2 / 3 / 5)
 - iii. Some areas of the revised catchment are more than two miles from the school by the shortest route, potentially causing the following issues:
 - a. creating significant transport cost implications for the LA; and
 - b. adversely impacting on existing transport arrangements for Barton CofE (VA) Primary School. (3 / 5).

17. I use this summary to structure my consideration of the concerns in the 'Consideration of case' section below.

18. In this determination, I will refer to A. and B. as 'concerns' and the parts thereof as 'sub-concerns'.

19. I offered parties the opportunity early in the process to suggest any amendments to the way I had set out the Objectors' / Referrer's concerns above. No party suggested any such amendments. However since, I have:

- changed the title of concern B. from "The effects of the catchment area change" to "Potential effects of the implementation of the increased catchment area" to, in my view, better reflect the concerns raised; and
- narrowed the scope of sub-concern B.iii.b. to focus on Barton CofE (VA) Primary School, rather than 'other schools' to reflect the referral more effectively.

20. I have determined that the following paragraphs of the Code are relevant to the concerns raised:

- 14. (part): "In drawing up their admission arrangements, admission authorities **must** ensure that the practices and the criteria used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear, and objective."

- 1.8 (part): “Oversubscription criteria **must** be reasonable, [and] clear, [...] . Admission authorities **must** ensure that their arrangements will not disadvantage unfairly, either directly or indirectly, a child from a particular social [...] group, [...].”
- 1.14: “Catchment areas **must** be designed so that they are reasonable and clearly defined. Catchment areas do not prevent parents who live outside the catchment of a particular school from expressing a preference for the school.”
- 1.45 (part): “When changes are proposed to admission arrangements, all admission authorities **must** consult on their admission arrangements (including any supplementary information form) that will apply for admission applications the following school year. [...]”
- 1.46: “Consultation **must** last for a minimum of 6 weeks and **must** take place between 1 October and 31 January in the determination year.”
- 1.47 (part): “Admission authorities **must** consult with:
 [...]
 - b) other persons in the relevant area who in the opinion of the admission authority have an interest in the proposed admissions;
 - c) all other admission authorities within the relevant area [...];
 - [...]
 - f) in the case of schools designated with a religious character, the body or person representing the religion or religious denomination [...]”.

21. I will make clear which of these paragraphs are relevant to the various parts of the objections / referral in the ‘Consideration of case’ section below.

22. Public consultation processes in the UK must be conducted fairly. Although it is not explicitly referred to in the Code, the Gunning Principles (*R v London Borough of Brent ex parte Gunning (1985) 84 LGR 168*) provide a helpful guiding framework to ensure consultation is transparent, fair, and both listens to and considers consultee responses. The four Gunning Principles are:

- a. consultation must take place when the proposal is still at a formative stage;
- b. sufficient reasons must be put forward for the proposal to allow for intelligent consideration and response;
- c. adequate time must be given for consideration and response; and
- d. the results of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account.

23. I am of the view that applying these Gunning Principles is helpful in ensuring the requirements of paragraph 1.45 of the Code were met.

24. I will consider sub-concern A.iv. in the context of Gunning Principle d. and sub-concern A.vi. in the context of Gunning Principle b.

Background

25. The Federation is a hard federation comprising two primary schools: the School; and Fawcett Primary School, which is also located in Trumpington in Cambridge. According to GIAS, the schools are 1.26km apart (straight line distance). By road, Google Maps indicates a distance of 1.76km by the fastest route by car (around a 5-minute drive) between the two schools.

26. The GIAS website states that the School is a non-selective and co-educational foundation primary school for 4 to 11 year old children with no designated religious character.

27. The Arrangements state that if the School is oversubscribed, the oversubscription criteria, after the admission of children with education, health, and care (EHC) plans, will be:

1. Children in Care (CiC) and children previously in care.
2. Children living in the catchment area with a sibling at the School at the time of admission.
3. Children living in the catchment area.
4. Children living outside the catchment area who have a sibling at the School at the time of admission.
5. Children living outside the catchment area who have been unable to gain a place at their catchment school because of oversubscription.
6. Children who live outside the catchment area, but nearest the School as measured by a straight line.

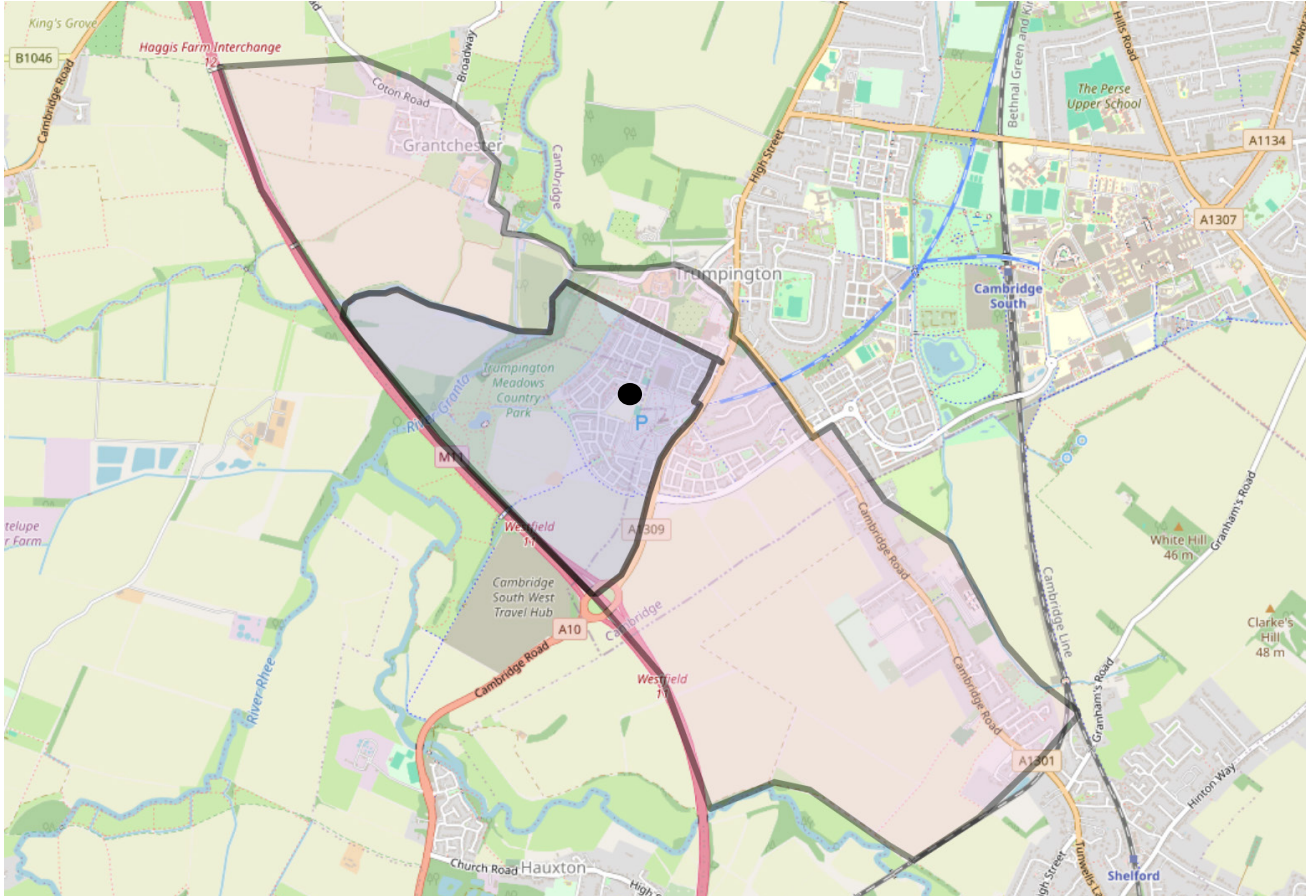
The Arrangements state that, “In cases of equal merit in each set of criteria, priority will go to children living nearest the school as measured by a straight line”.

28. The current catchment area and the increased catchment area to be implemented in 2027/28 are shown on figure 1. On figure 1:

- The location of the School is indicated by the black dot.
- The current catchment area is the light blue zone around the School. This area covers Trumpington Meadows and the Trumpington Meadows Country Park up to the M11 to the west.

- The increased catchment area to be implemented in 2027/28 is shown by the light pink area on the map. This extends the catchment from the Trumpington Meadows Country Park area to incorporate Grantchester to the north-west, a larger area of Trumpington to the immediate east and north, and the area stretching along the A1301 to Great Shelford to the south-east.

Figure 1: Current catchment area for the School and increased catchment area to be implemented in 2027/28



(Source: OpenStreetMap basemap in ArcGIS with catchment areas for 2026/27 (in light blue) and 2027/28 (in light pink) provided by the Federation)

29. The Foundation provided me with the number of children in each class at the School (as of May 2026). I have put that data into Table 2.

Table 2: Number of children in each class at the School (as of May 2026)

Classes	YR ²	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
1	19	19	26	26	28	26	24	-
2	16	19	28	24	26	25	20	-
Totals	35	38	54	50	54	51	44	326

Key:

² Reception Year.

30. The class structure as set out in Table 2 indicates there being a surplus of places in every year group (the published admission number (PAN) on entry for each year group was 60) and an increasing surplus in YR and Year 1. These year groups (and Year 2) will be subject to the provisions of the School Admissions (Infant Class Size) (England) Regulations 2012 (the infant class size regulations) which require that infant classes (those where the majority of children will reach the age of five, six or seven during the school year) must not contain more than 30 children with a single qualified teacher, except in specific exceptional circumstances. The uneconomic class sizes in YR and Year 1 were what prompted the decision of the Federation to increase the size of the catchment area in 2027/28.

Consideration of case

31. I will now set out my consideration of the matters raised by the Objectors / Referrer. I will conclude each section with a statement as to whether or not I uphold that particular aspect of the objections / referral, preceded by my reasons for that conclusion. Where I state that I uphold an aspect of the objections / referral, that does not necessarily imply that I fully endorse the reasoning expressed by the Objectors / Referrer, nor that the Objectors / Referrer have necessarily correctly interpreted which Code provision applies. Rather, it means that I have found that the particular aspect of the Arrangements drawn to my attention by the Objectors / Referrer does not conform with a requirement of the Code identified by me and is in breach of the Code for the reasons I have given.

A. The consultation process

32. In this section, I will consider the concerns raised about the consultation process conducted by the Federation in respect of the then-proposed changes to the Arrangements.

33. I only have jurisdiction to consider whether the Admission Authority followed the statutory process (specifically, in the areas raised by the Objectors / Referrer) when making changes to its arrangements for 2027/28. I record here that if I was to find that those parts of the consultation process did not follow the statutory process in any way, it would not automatically follow that the changes made would not be concordant with the Code. It is also not in my gift to direct that the Admission Authority run a consultation process again if it has been found that it did not conform to the Code.

34. The Federation conducted two consultation processes. The first was between 24 October and 5 December 2025 and the second between 12 December 2025 to 23 January 2026. Changes to the catchment areas for both schools in the Federation were proposed; after the consultation, the Federation only proceeded with the proposed increase to the School's catchment area. The catchment area for Fawcett Primary School remains unchanged.

35. I will now take each of the sub-concerns under concern A. in turn.

i. The consultation information was sent only to the Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School office and not the Clerk to the Governors.

36. This sub-concern was raised by Objector 1. About this, the Federation responded:

“We did not note from the Admissions Code that we were required to send the correspondence to the clerk to governors. Our assumption was that the most efficient central point to send it to was the office for each school.”

37. Paragraph 1.47 c) of the Code sets out the requirement to consult with all other admission authorities in the relevant area. It does not set out how it should do that or to where any invitations to consult should be sent.

38. I take on board Objector 1’s later comment that “This is a concern because Shelford School is a Voluntary Aided school and, as such, the Governing Board determines the admission arrangements”. However, the Federation stated that it sent the consultation information to each of the relevant schools’ offices. I am of the view that the Federation could, quite reasonably, have expected the central school office to have distributed the correspondence about the consultation to the clerk to the Governing Body; the central school office will doubtless deal with all manner of communication and will be well versed in forwarding such to the right person in the institution. This appeared to be more of an issue for Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School and not for the Federation.

39. It is my view that the Federation met the requirements in this regard. I, therefore, do not uphold this sub-concern.

ii. There was no communication about the consultation with the Diocese, and the Federation did not welcome meeting with the Diocese to discuss the proposed change to the catchment area.

40. Objector 1 raised that the Diocese had not been consulted. Referrer 5 stated that:

“Please note that as a Diocese we expected to have been formally consulted given the impact on Barton CE Primary and Great and Little Shelford CE Primary, however despite contacting the Headteacher of [TMPS] twice, we were not formally included. We liaised with Cambridgeshire County Council during the first and second consultation period, to seek a round table meeting with the Head and Governors of [TMPS] and those schools their proposed changes detrimentally impact on, but this was not welcomed.”

41. In its responses, the Federation told me that:

“We were not aware that we were required to send the correspondence to the Diocese as our schools have no religious character. This was possibly an oversight on our part. The school could have, and did, forward the details to the Diocese.”

and

“The Diocese of Ely has stated in their objection that they were not included in the consultation process despite contacting the Headteacher at [TMPS] twice.

We acknowledge that we could have contacted the Diocese ourselves, but it was not our deliberate intention to omit them. Governors feel that it is important to state that once we were contacted by a Diocese representative, we were very happy to engage. However, it should also be noted that the Headteacher had only one informal conversation with the Diocese, during which the Diocese representative said they would share an email address to which the consultation paperwork could be sent. This email contact was never received.”

42. I pause to note that paragraph 1.47 f) requires any school with a religious character to consult with the body or person representing the religion or religious denomination. However, the School does not have a religious character and so paragraph 1.47 f) was not relevant.

43. Paragraph 1.47 b) requires an admission authority to consult with “other persons in the relevant area who in the opinion of the admission authority have an interest in the proposed admissions”.

44. Although the Diocese was not on the list of consultees provided by the Federation, I have seen evidence that the Diocesan Director of Education responded to the consultation twice during the consultation period (on 5 December 2025 and 23 January 2026), once in each of the two consultation periods. It was evident that the Diocese had to have known about the consultation in order to respond to it. Whilst the Diocese was not included on the consultee mailing list initially, the Diocese was clearly subsequently informed of the consultation by the Federation (who told me that it had forwarded the information to it) such that it was able to respond twice. I do not, therefore, find that it could be argued that the Diocese was not consulted or was put at a disadvantage.

45. There are no requirements set out in the relevant paragraphs of the Code (as pertain to consultations) that required the Federation or School to meet with the Diocese – or any consultees in fact – in respect of the proposed changes to the Arrangements, though it could be argued that providing as many opportunities as reasonably possible for consultees to have their say would be good practice. However, I have seen copies of letters sent by the Federation during the consultation process in which a meeting was offered to consultees. I have not been presented with any evidence that any meeting that was requested by the Diocese ‘was not welcomed’ by the Federation.

46. For the most part, I find that the Federation acted as required. However, I find it was reasonable to have expected that the Diocese, being the religious authority for schools that could potentially be affected by the proposed changes to the Arrangements, ought to have been included as a consultee from the outset, as required under paragraph 1.47 b) of the Code.

47. I, therefore, partially uphold this sub-concern.

iii. The original consultation was withdrawn and reissued in January 2026 with a slight modification to the extent of the proposed catchment area.

48. This sub-concern was raised by Objector 1.

49. About this, the Federation told me:

“The consultation was not withdrawn. A second consultation was issued once the Local Authority had advised, after the initial consultation was in process, that catchment areas should have a maximum 2-mile walking distance from home to school. This prompted us to alter the catchment area for [TMPS]. The second consultation reduced the ingress into Great and Little Shelford’s catchment.”

50. Information about the second consultation provided to consultees by the Federation stated that the reason for second consultation period was:

“Further to our letter sent on 24th October 2025, the Trumpington Federation is issuing an amended catchment area consultation. This is as a result of feedback from local colleagues and additional advice provided after the original consultation documentation was issued.”

51. Paragraph 1.46 of the Code requires that a consultation is required to be run for a minimum of six weeks “between 1 October and 31 January in the determination year”. This requirement was met. The reason given for conducting the second consultation period appeared to me to demonstrate that the Federation had taken on board comments received during the first consultation period and had offered consultees another opportunity to comment on the subsequently revised proposal.

52. I do not find that the Federation had ‘withdrawn’ the consultation but had reacted to what it had been told about the original proposals. The Federation had, in fact, provided twice the minimum consultation period as required under paragraph 1.46 of the Code.

53. I, therefore, do not uphold this sub-concern.

iv. Despite numerous objections, the Federation will base applications for September 2027 on the larger catchment area.

54. This sub-concern was raised by Objector 1, who was concerned that the Federation has proceeded with increasing the catchment area for the School despite there being ‘numerous objections’.

55. In its initial response, the Federation told me that:

“The consultation did raise objections as we expected, which is surely part of the process.

We did consider all objections, and recognised concerns raised by local colleagues, however reasonable we felt they were; however nothing negates the fact that the

catchment area for [TMPS] remains extremely small and entirely covered by that of a neighbouring school.

Indeed, we have received an objection that increasing the catchment size may impede a neighbouring school from taking children from outside their catchment area, which seems unfair at best. We do not view this as a reason not to expand the catchment.

The implication of this objection is that a catchment area cannot be changed under any circumstances.”

56. In a later response, the Federation stated:

“As previously stated, the consultation was not withdrawn. A second consultation was issued once the Local Authority had advised, after the initial consultation was in process, that catchment areas should have a maximum 2-mile walking distance from home to school. This prompted us to alter the catchment area for Trumpington Meadows. The second consultation reduced the ingress into Great and Little Shelford’s catchment.”

57. Earlier, I said that I would consider this sub-concern in the context of Gunning Principle d. which states that “the results of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account”. In the absence of any such definition in the Code, I have adopted the dictionary definition of ‘conscientiously’ as being ‘in a thorough and responsible way’. Under this principle, decision-makers should be able to provide evidence that they took consultation responses into account.

58. The Federation provided copies of the responses from both periods of consultation. During the first period, 14 responses were received (though two were from the same person). Out of those responses, three were in favour, eight raised concerns, and three asked questions about potential impacts rather than stating a view either way. In the second consultation period, 23 responses were received. Out of those responses, two were in favour of the change and 20 objected (two objectors submitted two responses each).

59. A large proportion of responses received raised objections to the proposed increase to the catchment area for the School. However, I note here that a consultation process is not a referendum or a negotiation; it is a process, with a legal framework, by which views can be sought on a proposal. Following a consultation period, the proposer has a broad discretion as to how to act; it does not have to amend its proposal, even if there is an overwhelming response against it, though there should be good reasons for not doing so.

60. It was evident, by the Federation having run two consultation periods, that it had taken into account responses and feedback during the first period to make amendments about which it then consulted again during the second. Consultees had two opportunities to comment on the proposals over twice the minimum period required by the Code.

61. At the end of the consultation process, the Federation considered the responses received. It provided me a copy of the minutes of the Governing Body meeting which took place on 10 February 2026 in which the proposed Arrangements were then determined. I can see that governors discussed the consultation responses for both schools arising from both consultation periods. This included the responses in support and the objections raised. It was noted that some of the responses from local schools had raised 'valid issues' and that there were other responses in which there had been "misunderstanding regarding shared catchment areas and [the School] being in the city boundaries". The governors agreed that letters should be written to those respondents to address those misunderstandings and this formed an action documented in the minutes. I have seen copies of these letters. It was also noted that there had been some support for extending the School's catchment area and the frustration that "the parameters set by the LA seemed to change throughout the process". As a consequence of the discussion at the Governing Body meeting, the governors determined not to proceed with the proposed change to the catchment area for Fawcett Primary School and to implement the proposed change to the catchment area for the School that had been revised for the second consultation period.

62. It was evident that Federation governors had given consideration to the consultation responses; amendments to the original proposals were made through the consultation process in response to comments made and advice received, and in the Governing Body meeting on 10 February 2026 prior to making the final decision. Letters to consultees about matters raised during the consultation were detailed and addressed what the governors considered to be misunderstandings with the proposed changes.

63. I consider there to be evidence that the Federation acted conscientiously in taking into account the results of the consultation. Consequently, I do not uphold this sub-concern.

64. I stress that this is a finding about the outcome of the consultation process. I will be looking at the potential effect of the implementation of the increased catchment area when considering concern B.

v. The letter informing people of their decision to proceed, although stating that objections could be lodged with the OSA, did not provide a link.

65. This sub-concern was raised by Objector 1.

66. About this matter, the Federation told me that:

"We did not intentionally neglect to provide a link for any reason. It is a simple task to find the information online."

67. Paragraph 1.48 states (in part) that "Failure to consult effectively may be grounds for subsequent complaints and appeals." However, it is not a requirement of the Code that, during a consultation, an admission authority must provide any link to the OSA. Indeed, it is not a requirement, during a consultation, that any mention is to be made of a consultee's recourse to the OSA in the event of needing to complain or appeal the outcome of a consultation process.

68. A simple online search provides this information. It would appear that the lack of a link did not hinder the Objectors / Referrer from finding this information in order to submit their objections / referral to the OSA.

69. I do not find this breached the Code, and, therefore, do not uphold this sub-concern.

vi. The case for the change to the catchment area was not made by the Federation.

70. This sub-concern was raised by Objector 4 who stated:

“It is our view as governors at Shelford that extending the catchment of [TMPS] so far into our existing catchment is likely to be detrimental to pupil numbers at Shelford in the future, and that the case for making this extension has not been made by The Trumpington Federation in their justification for this proposal and decision.”

71. I said earlier that I would consider Principle b. of the Gunning Principles when considering this part of the objection. Public bodies undertaking a consultation should provide ‘sufficient reasons’ for the changes proposed ‘to allow for intelligent consideration and response’.

72. In respect of this sub-concern, the Federation told me:

“We feel that the rationale was explained in the letters from the Federation outlining our consultation process:

Consultation October 2025

1. The current catchment area for [TMPS], decided in 2012, is small and partly uninhabited; it does not support the number of residences needed to ensure the school is full. The proposed catchment area extends further north and south to better reflect where children attending our school live.

2. Fawcett Primary School’s catchment area currently extends into an area to the north of Trumpington which is adequately served by other schools and so does not attract families from that part of Cambridge. The proposed catchment area extends further east and south.

3. The proposed amendments would ensure greater equity with regards to catchment areas amongst local schools.

Consultation December 2025:

Governors and leaders at the Federation understand the impact that low pupil numbers are having on all schools locally and further afield, however we wish to address the inequity of catchment area size, especially for [TMPS], compared to schools in our vicinity.

The catchment area for [TMPS] is extremely small, currently standing at 1.29km², in comparison to examples for neighbouring schools of the same or smaller Published

Admission Numbers (PAN) with catchment areas of 12km² and 6.6 km². Half of the catchment area is green space. In addition, the catchment area is overlapped in its entirety by that of a neighbouring school.

We feel that this would partly be addressed by its extension north and south. We have shortened the proposed distance that the catchment extends south in this iteration, in order not to impose too greatly on schools to the south of our setting and in order to ensure a walking distance to school of less than two miles.

Determined Admissions Arrangements letter March 2026:

Below is a section from the letter sent to all those who responded to our consultation process, following the Governing Body's decision on 2027-28 catchment areas on 10 February [2026].

Our desire to amend catchment areas, especially for [TMPS], was to ensure that it covers an area that sustains the running of our schools. The current extremely small [TMPS] catchment is a barrier to this; children who live closer to [TMPS] than to neighbouring schools are currently outside our catchment, and at present not even the full Trumpington Meadows development is in the school catchment. As we found a clear need to consult on the [TMPS] catchment area in order to rectify this, we went through a process of considering changes for Fawcett's catchment area at the same time. However, points raised by other stakeholders throughout the consultation process have made us reconsider this, and we hope that our decision to reject the proposed changes for the Fawcett catchment area will allay some concerns.

The decision to publish [TMPS]'s catchment area for 2027-2028 as was proposed in our consultation dated 12 December 2025 comes from a continued belief that there is currently inequity between schools in the local area. Neighbouring schools have raised concerns around shared catchment areas, but we understand that schools often share catchment areas, and indeed the Federation schools have shared catchment areas with a neighbouring school for a number of years now, as the catchments of both of our schools fully overlap with another local school. We hope that colleagues in our neighbouring schools will understand our desire to protect and sustain [TMPS] through an increased catchment area; we aim to do this in a way that is not unnecessarily detrimental to our neighbours and have reduced the catchment area to the south of the school since our initial proposal in October 2025."

73. I have carefully considered the consultation information provided by the Federation along with the responses to both periods of consultation.

74. I find that the information provided was open and honest about the reasons for the proposed change to the School's catchment area. The reasons given were clear and consistent throughout the consultation period. Looking at the responses received by the Federation through both periods of consultation, it was evident that consultees were able to understand the purpose of the changes such that they were able to engage in 'intelligent consideration and response'.

75. I, therefore, do not uphold this sub-concern.

B. Potential effects of the implementation of the increased catchment area

76. The matters raised by the Objectors / Referrer in respect of the effect of the increase to the School's catchment area can broadly be categorised as concerns about the potential for 'significant disadvantage' to specific groups. Paragraph 1.8 of the Code refers to this as 'disadvantaging unfairly'.

77. Fairness is a concept that is used in the Code but is not defined. I understand that 'fairness' can be described as a 'protean concept', in that it cannot be defined in universal terms, but its requirements will depend on the circumstances. Fairness is focussed on the effect of the arrangements on any relevant group.

78. Arising from the matters raised in the objections / referral, I have identified the potentially significantly disadvantaged groups as those who would be affected negatively by the increase in the School's catchment area in respect of the sub-concerns under B.i. (those affected negatively by any effect on Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School) and the sub-concerns under B.ii. (those affected negatively by any effect on Barton CofE (VA) Primary School).

79. In respect of the sub-concerns under B.iii. as raised by Objector 3 (the LA), I make the point that the LA is not a 'social group' as defined under paragraph 1.8. However, Referrer 5 raised the issue that children currently attending Barton CofE (VA) Primary School who are in receipt of home to school transport provided by the LA could be affected if the LA withdrew such should it be the case that the 'demand was not there'. I determined that this could be the potentially significantly disadvantaged group and consider this in respect of the sub-concerns under B.iii.

80. I state here that it is the purpose of oversubscription criteria to create advantage for some applicants and disadvantage to others; that is, in fact, their purpose. A factor which is relevant in the consideration of substantive unfairness is the rationale (or justification) for adopting, removing, or amending a particular oversubscription criterion. This must be considered in context. It may be the case that the justification for the adoption, removal, or amendment of a particular oversubscription criterion could override any unfairness. I should also add that where the available evidence does not establish disadvantage, there cannot be any unfairness.

81. Paragraph 1.8 of the Code also requires that oversubscription criteria be reasonable. Paragraph 1.14, which permits the use of a catchment area as an oversubscription criterion to prioritise admission, requires that catchment areas must be reasonable and clearly defined.

82. Whilst no concerns have been raised about the clarity of its definition, I find that the catchment area has been clearly defined. This was evident from the fact that the Objectors / Referrer have been able to determine the extent of the increased catchment area such that they have been able to submit their concerns about it.

83. As for fairness, the Code uses the term ‘reasonable’ but does not define it. I, therefore, adopt an everyday definition. This is one of having sound judgement; being sensible and rational. It is the requirement of public bodies, including admission authorities, that they must act reasonably in adopting any policy or making any decision.

84. To determine whether a part of the Arrangements identified within the objections is reasonable or not, it is necessary first to consider the rationale for adopting it.

85. By virtue of having considered the consultation process in respect of the proposal to increase the catchment area under concern A., I have already set out the reasons why the Federation determined to increase the catchment area of the School. In a later response from the Federation, it provided more detail about the rationale for the increase in the School’s catchment area:

“The rationale behind this consultation change is that the current catchment for [TMPS] is extremely small, and disproportionately so compared to other local primaries. Moreover, it does not cover even the whole Trumpington Meadows development, and, unlike other local schools, has no independent catchment area other than a small area of uninhabited land. Consequently, the governors felt it was imperative that this inequity was addressed. [...] We do not consider the scale of the catchment [area] [...] to be noticeably different to another local primary, which has houses right on the 2-mile walking boundary and areas of land which clearly exceed this.”

86. I consider that having ‘a small catchment area’ or determining there to be a need to have ‘a catchment area which is the same size as that of another school’ are not, in and of themselves, justifiable reasons for increasing the size of catchment area of the School. However, I do consider the following reasons provided by the Federation (throughout the consultation and in its responses to the objections / referral) to be rational: the number of children being admitted to the School is decreasing; the majority of the current catchment area does not contain any housing and will not be built on such that it could provide increased admission numbers; and the current catchment area does not cover the entirety of the area the school was built to serve.

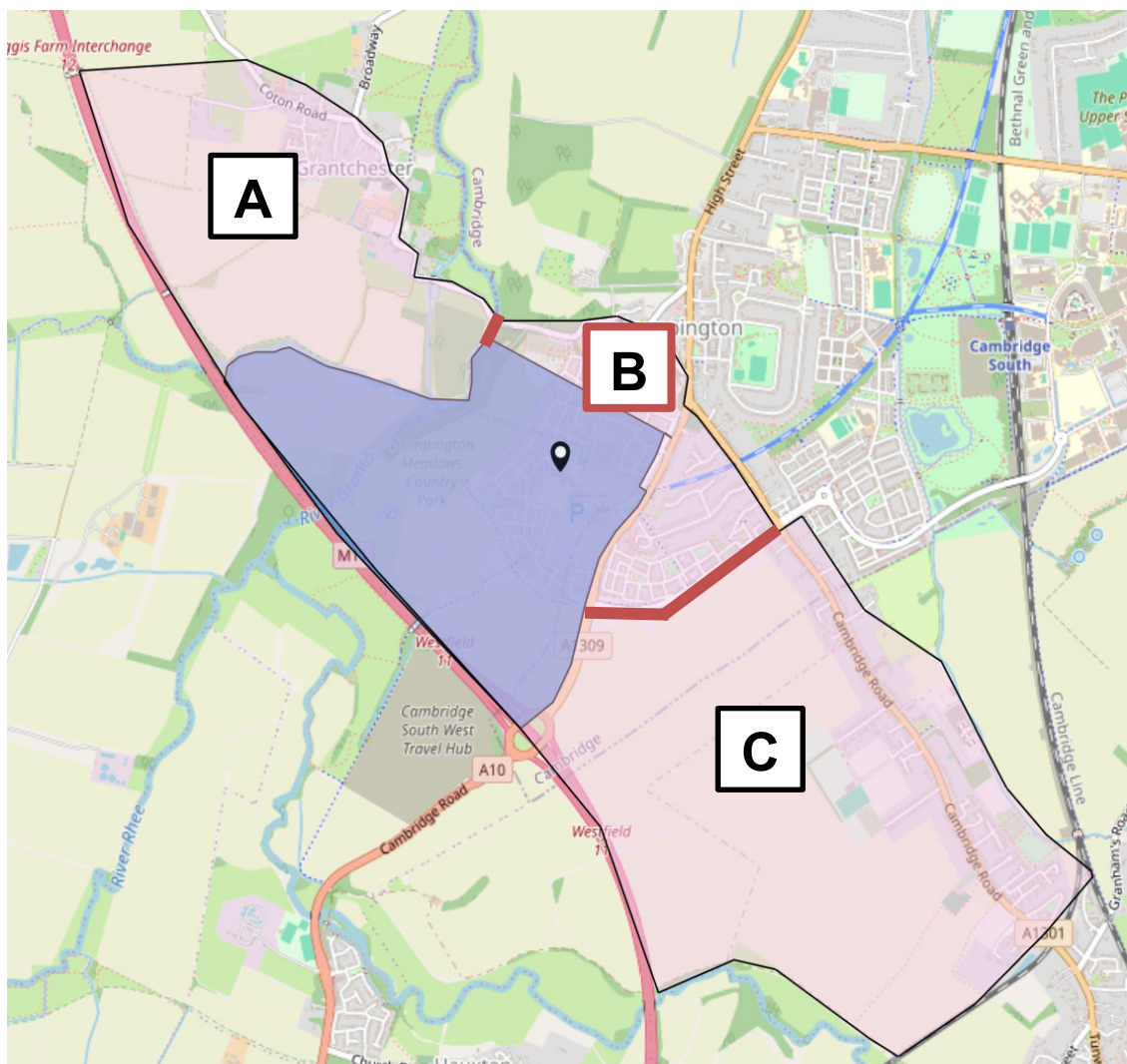
87. I can see from Table 2 that the number of children admitted to the School over time is decreasing. This will have had the effect of reducing income, as schools are largely funded by the number of children admitted whilst still having to maintain costs (such as teachers and classroom assistants for example). Doubtless, this will have put pressure on the School’s finances, and the Federation is understandably seeking to address this issue, as is its fiscal responsibility. The Federation could have chosen to reduce the PAN for YR and / or employ mixed-age teaching to reduce the number of classes (just some of the potential ways of addressing the issue), but has sought, instead, to attempt to increase the number of children being admitted to the School, and hence increase income, by increasing the area from which admission will be prioritised.

88. Although the rationale for increasing the catchment area of the School, as set out by the Federation, appears to be a rational response to the pressures that the School is facing,

it is through considering its practical operation that I can evaluate how reasonable and fair this change might be. Clearly, the increase in the catchment area will not be implemented until 2027/28 and so there will be no data available from its practical operation. I will, therefore, use current data, insofar as it is relevant, to test the potential effect of its implementation in respect of the areas raised by the Objectors / Referrer.

89. Throughout the sections to follow, I will refer to the 'current catchment area' (which is the catchment area shown in light blue on figure 1), the 'increased catchment area' (which is the catchment area from 2027/28 shown in light pink on figure 1, and which incorporates the current catchment area). I will also refer to three specific zones (set out on figure 2):

Figure 2: The three zones of the increased catchment area



(Source: OpenStreetMap basemap in ArcGIS with catchment areas for 2026/27 (in light blue) and 2027/28 (in light pink) provided by the Federation)

Key:

- Zone A – the part of the increased catchment area to the north-west of the current catchment area. This is most relevant to the concerns raised in respect of the effect on Barton CofE (VA) Primary School.

- Zone B – the part of the increased catchment area immediately adjacent to the current catchment area (to the north and east of the School).
- Zone C – the part of the increased catchment area to the south-east of the current catchment area. This is most relevant to the concerns raised in respect of the effect on Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School.

90. Throughout my consideration of the concerns in section B.i., I have taken into account the LA's view that there is unlikely to be any impact of the increased catchment area on admission to Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School:

"It is difficult to estimate the precise impact of the proposed change, as parental preference remains a significant factor in school choice. While a theoretical scenario in which all children from this area opted to attend TMPS would have a notable impact on [Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School], the current distribution of pupils across several schools suggests that such a shift is unlikely. On that basis, the impact of the proposed change is likely to be limited."

i. In respect of Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School:

a. The revised catchment area contravenes the natural catchment boundaries which follow the boundaries of the villages of Trumpington and Great Shelford respectively.

91. This sub-concern was raised by Objector 4.

92. It appeared to me that this sub-concern exemplifies a general and fundamental misunderstanding about the use of catchment areas in prioritising admission. When originally employed by local authorities to allocate children to schools after the 1944 Education Act, catchments (as in hydrology, where the term refers to the area in which all water in that area is collected into a river system) were drawn for each school and children within that area went to that school. Each local authority effectively divided up its area amongst its primary and secondary schools (a separate process for each) into abutting catchments. However, whilst the same term is used today, the primacy of catchment areas in school admission has long since disappeared; a more representative term for what can be implemented in admission arrangements today would be 'priority admission areas'.

93. The requirements in respect of catchment areas are set out in paragraph 1.14 of the Code. The Code does not specify the size or dimensions that a catchment area should be; it does, however, stipulate that children should not be discriminated against in relation to admission to a school simply because they reside outside the local authority area in which a school is situated. Parents can still apply for a place for their children in a school even if they reside outside the catchment. Additionally, there is nothing in the Code which explicitly states that the boundary of one school's catchment area cannot overlap another school's catchment area. Indeed, there are many cases of shared and overlapping catchment areas and, consequently, children living in the catchment area of more than one school. Finally, there is nothing in the Code which expressly prohibits an admission authority increasing its

catchment area in principle (save that it must not be unreasonable or create unfair disadvantage, which I go on to look at under the sub-concerns to follow).

94. I do not uphold this sub-concern.

i. In respect of Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School:

b. Admission numbers will reduce and affect the school's financial viability.

95. This concern was raised by Objectors 1 and 4 and Referrer 5. Objector 4 wrote:

"It is our view as governors at Shelford that extending the catchment of [TMPS] so far into our existing catchment is likely to be detrimental to pupil numbers at Shelford in the future".

96. Referrer 5 stated:

"On the basis of this understanding of the proposals, we object to the proposed catchment area changes for the following reasons:

1. Both Barton and Shelford schools are small. Thus, even a small reduction in pupil numbers could have a significant impact on their budgets and ability to employ staff, manage resources and provide the best quality of education for their pupils. We are extremely concerned that the proposed impact on catchment areas could lead to a reduction in pupil numbers over time, potentially sending the schools into a deficit budget and threatening sustainability.

2. We are concerned about any potential impact on the long-term sustainability of the church schools insofar as they meet a need for those parents electing to send their children to a school with a distinctive Christian ethos, serving families of all faiths and none."

97. I note the use of phrases such as 'could have' and 'potential impact' in Referrer 5's concern. No data or other evidence was provided by any of the Objectors / Referrer to illustrate their points about how they fear the catchment area will impact on admission in practice.

98. Referrer 5 referred to 'the proposed catchment area changes'. I also noted in its responses that the Federation also referred to the increased catchment area as being 'proposed'. I record here that the Arrangements have been determined and the increase to the catchment area is no longer 'proposed'.

99. The Federation's initial response to the objections / referral repeated a point in respect of the change aiming to achieve equity in catchment area size with neighbouring schools. I dealt with this point earlier. However, in a later response, the Federation told me:

"The Diocese of Ely has expressed concern that the changes to [TMPS]'s catchment area could negatively impact the ability of parents to choose a CofE school for their child. Throughout the consultation process, we have sought to ensure that

stakeholders understand that the changes will offer more, not less, choice, with overlapping catchment areas allowing parents to choose which school to put as their first choice.”

100. There may be parents who, as a consequence of now living in the School’s catchment area after it is increased for 2027/28, might choose to express a preference for places for their children at the School who might not have ordinarily considered it. Although, it is not yet possible to determine if that would be the case, I have considered whether this would be more likely or not based on the data available to me at this time.

101. There are a number of research studies and surveys (I have listed two such in the list of documents in the ‘Procedure’ section of the determination) which have determined that either the most important or one of the most important factors in the decisions parents of primary aged children make about the school they want their child(ren) to attend is location, particularly that the school is close to home (whether the home is in the catchment area for the school appears to take on more importance for parents when choosing a secondary school). In my view, it is more likely that distance is a determining factor in whether a parent expresses a preference for a primary school place than whether the home is in the catchment area of that school. I asked Objector 3 in its capacity as the LA whether it had any comments on the factors – from any research or survey it may have carried out / other data – that it understands affect the preferences that parents make in its area. The LA’s response was:

“The LA carries out an annual analysis of where pupils live compared to the schools they attend. It notes that [TMPS] admits a relatively low proportion of children living in its catchment. In January 2025, 166 (58%) of the 285 primary-aged children living in the catchment attended the school. Of the others, 58 children attended Fawcett and Trumpington Park, 35 other primary schools in the city and the remainder spread across other neighbouring schools. On the other hand, 68 of the 234 children on roll at TMPS lived outside the school’s catchment with 45 of these coming from the joint Fawcett/Trumpington Park catchment.

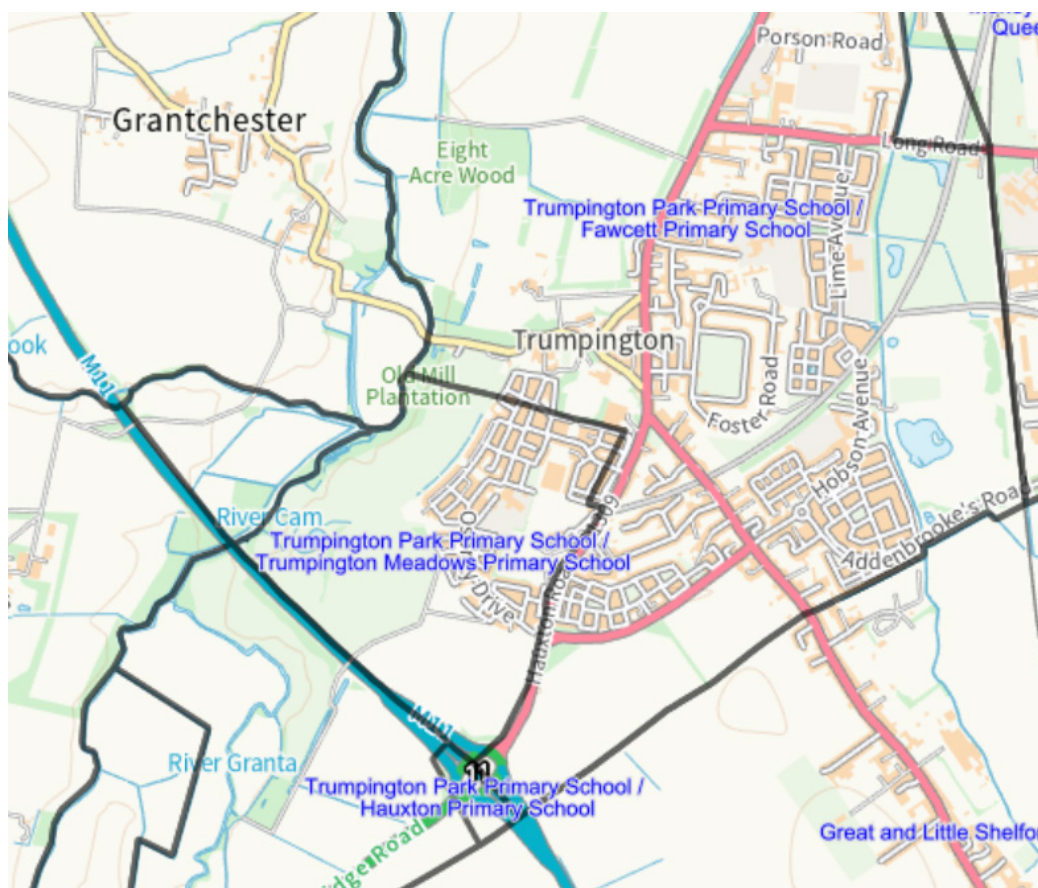
On a more general point admissions in the city are fluid with a lot of movement between schools and catchments largely because of the transient population linked to the universities, science parks and biomedical campus.”

102. I note, but find not relevant, the point about the fluidity of admissions. Whilst this may explain pupil mobility rates and rates of in-year admission in the CCC area, it does not assist with the consideration of the matter raised under this sub-concern. However, from the LA’s response it is useful to note that:

- It is apparent from the data provided that proximity of the school to the home appears to have been a factor for a considerable number of parents.
- Whilst parents of children who live outside the current catchment area have expressed preferences for places at the School, a sizeable proportion of children attending TMPS come from the joint Fawcett Primary School / Trumpington Park

Primary School catchment area (66.2 per cent of those living outside the current catchment area who have places at the School) which is in Zone B (figure 2) and beyond. Houses in Zone B are closer to the School than those in the catchment area for the Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School (overlapping with Zone C). Figure 3 shows the proximity of the Fawcett Primary School / Trumpington Park Primary School catchment to the School's current catchment area.

Figure 3: Proximity of the Fawcett Primary School / Trumpington Park Primary School catchment to the School's current catchment area



(Source: <https://maps.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/>)

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- The School already admits children from outside its current catchment area who are likely to live in the area covered by the increased catchment area. The impact of the increased catchment area in terms of the admission of children from those areas outside the current catchment area and inside Zone C (where it might affect admission to the Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School in 2027/28) is likely to be considerably less than the relevant Objectors / Referrer have asserted. Given the number of primary-aged children has been decreasing rapidly in this area and across the country for a number of years, I find it unlikely

that the number of children who would be admitted in 2027/28 from outside the current catchment area will increase.

103. I note that CCC allows parents to express preferences for up to three schools in the Common Application Form (CAF). Using GIAS, I noted that the two closest primary schools to Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School are Stapleford Community Primary School (0.83 miles straight line distance) and Hauxton Primary School (1.19 miles). Parents in this area, prioritising location as a factor in which primary school they would prefer their child(ren) to be admitted to, would be less likely to choose TMPS (which is 1.96 miles away from Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School and further away than Trumpington Park Primary School which is 1.75 miles away) regardless of whether their home is in the increased catchment area.

104. To assess the potential impact of there being increased numbers of children being admitted to the School from Zone C, I put aside that there may be admission from Zones A and B, though I return to look at the totality of the potential admissions in due course. Parents who live in Zone C applying for a place at the School in 2027/28 for their children would be prioritised for admission to TMPS because that area will be part of the increased catchment area. However, given the School has not been oversubscribed for a number of years, those children would be admitted regardless of the increase to the School's catchment area. In fact, taking into account the number of children in YR at the School (see Table 2), there would have to be at least 25 additional preferences expressed for places in order for the oversubscription criteria to have to be engaged in order to prioritise admission. The LA told me that, in respect of the number of children aged 2 as of 31 August 2025, there are 10 children of that age living in Zone C and <10 in Zone B/C (where the postcode of a street intersects with Zone C and so cannot be determined which of the two zones, they live in) who would need places in YR in 2027/28. By way of explanation, the LA told me that it could not specify the exact figure when the number in an area is less than 10 so that the location of individual children cannot be identified. Therefore, there must be between one and nine children in Zone B/C and a total of between 11 and 19 between Zones C and B/C. If the parents of those children were to express preferences for places at the School in addition to a similar number as has been the case for the last two years, then all be admitted without recourse to the use of the oversubscription criteria.

105. I will now deal with the potential for the admission of children who reside in Zone A (and which will have to be taken into account in addition to the potential admission numbers from Zones C and B/C as set out earlier). I note that the LA told me that there are 49 children aged 2 as of 31 August 2025 who would need places in YR in 2027/28 who live in Zone B. As can be seen from figure 2, the housing in this zone is closer to the School's location than the housing in Zones A and C. It was evident that there is the potential for a greater number of applications for places from children living in Zone B than the other zones, and the potential for the number of applications to be such that it would mean there would either be no places available for those applying from Zones A and C or that the number of places would be very small. This would have the effect of reducing the impact of the increased catchment area on admission to Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School. I note that there may be an effect that the number of preferences

expressed for places at Fawcett Primary School and Trumpington Park Primary School is reduced. However, these schools are not the subject of the objections / referral and so I have not pursued this further.

106. For the avoidance of doubt, I record here my awareness of the weight that parents could place on a school's Ofsted inspection outcomes when deciding on a school for their children. I have checked the latest outcomes for all of the primary schools I refer to in this determination. Aside from 'behaviour and attitudes' being graded 'Requires Improvement' at the last inspection of Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School and 'achievement' being graded as 'Needing Attention' at Fawcett Primary School (all other areas inspected were graded 'Good' or 'Expected Standard' respectively), all schools were graded 'Good'. It is possible that the 'Requires Improvement' judgement at Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School may act as a push for parents to express preferences for other schools. However, I have no evidence of this, and given the consistency in grading across all of the primary schools named in this determination, I have discounted it as an influencing factor in respect of the sub-concerns raised under concern B.

107. In respect of Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School, I do not find there to be any group that would be significantly disadvantaged or that there is an indication that there would be any 'unfair disadvantage' from the increase in the catchment area in respect of this sub-concern.

108. I, therefore, do not uphold this sub-concern.

i. In respect of Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School:

c. Children who might be admitted to the School (and who might otherwise have been admitted to Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School) will suffer detrimental effects.

109. This sub-concern was raised by Objector 1 who wrote that:

"Apart from the potential impact to applications to Shelford School itself I believe it will have a detrimental effect on any children from Shelford. They will be educated with children whom they will not meet in other local settings – cubs, brownies, etc. Also, they will be in a school which is out of catchment for Sawston Village College (the catchment secondary school for Shelford) and they will be living out of catchment for the Trumpington secondary schools."

110. The Federation's initial response to this was:

"The catchment areas for the two schools would overlap, providing greater choice. Further, families who do not wish to send their child to a church school would gain choice by the extension of [TMPS's] catchment area."

Great and Little Shelford school is usually oversubscribed, and certainly full in the majority of year groups, so some children must necessarily be allocated places at neighbouring schools.

As far as we are aware, extra-curricular activity clubs are not based on school catchment areas, so it is likely that children already attend leisure settings with children that they do not go to school with.

Parents who choose to send their children to a school other than Great and Little Shelford will presumably research the options for secondary education and be aware of the implication of choosing different schools. We are aware of a number of children from [TMPS] who have attended the feeder secondary for Great and Little Shelford and vice versa.”

111. I note from GIAS that there are three secondary schools admitting to Year 7 (Sawston Village College, Trumpington Community College, and The Netherhall School) within three miles of the postcode on which Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School is situated. Sawston Village College is, therefore, not the only school parents can express a preference for when their children reach secondary age. Looking at Sawston Village College’s admission arrangements for 2027/28, I can see the following oversubscription criteria:

1. Children In Care, sometimes known as Looked After Children, and previously Looked After Children.
2. Children who live in our catchment, who attend one of our feeder schools, and who have a sibling already here.
3. Children who live in our catchment, and who have a sibling already here.
4. Children who live in our catchment and attend one of our feeder schools.
5. All other children who live in our catchment.
6. Children of school staff members.
7. Children who live outside our catchment but attend one of our feeders and already have a sibling here.
8. Children who live outside our catchment but have a sibling here.
9. Children who live outside our catchment but attend one of our feeder schools.
10. Any other children, ranked according to distance.

112. I can see that a child who lived in the catchment for Sawston Village College and who attended TMPS would be a lower priority for admission to this school (if not under oversubscription criterion 1., the first criterion of relevance would be 5.). To that extent, there would be a detriment in that there was a risk that they might not have as much of a

chance of being admitted to Sawston Village College than if a child attended Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School. However, after checking the admission data for the three years between 2024/25 and 2026/27 on the CCC website, I can see that:

- In 2024/25 – the last place was allocated under criterion 10.
- In 2025/26 – the last place was allocated under criterion 8.
- In 2026/27 – the last place was allocated under criterion 10.

113. I have checked the admission arrangements for Sawston Village College for all three of these years and found that the oversubscription criteria have not changed in that time. The admission data clearly shows that despite being given a lower priority, it has not been the case that a child who resided in the catchment area of Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School but did not attend that school and who expressed a preference for a place in Year 7 at Sawston Village College was not admitted.

114. In respect of the Trumpington Community College and The Netherhall School, I have conducted the same check. I have been unable to find a copy of the 2024/25 admission arrangements on either of the school's websites or elsewhere online. Regardless, admission data on the CCC website recorded that for both schools, the last place allocated in each of 2024/25, 2025/26, and 2026/27 was to the last criterion on each schools' oversubscription criteria list. This, again, indicates that the concern of Objector 1 in this regard is not borne out by the evidence from the previous three years.

115. Objector 1 has not provided any evidence for the assertion that having different groups of friends through school and extra-curricular would be a detrimental effect of children attending TMPS. I can find no evidence myself. I am, therefore, unable to take this part of the sub-concern further.

116. I have not found there to be any detriment, let alone any significant disadvantage, in the way that Objector 1 asserts.

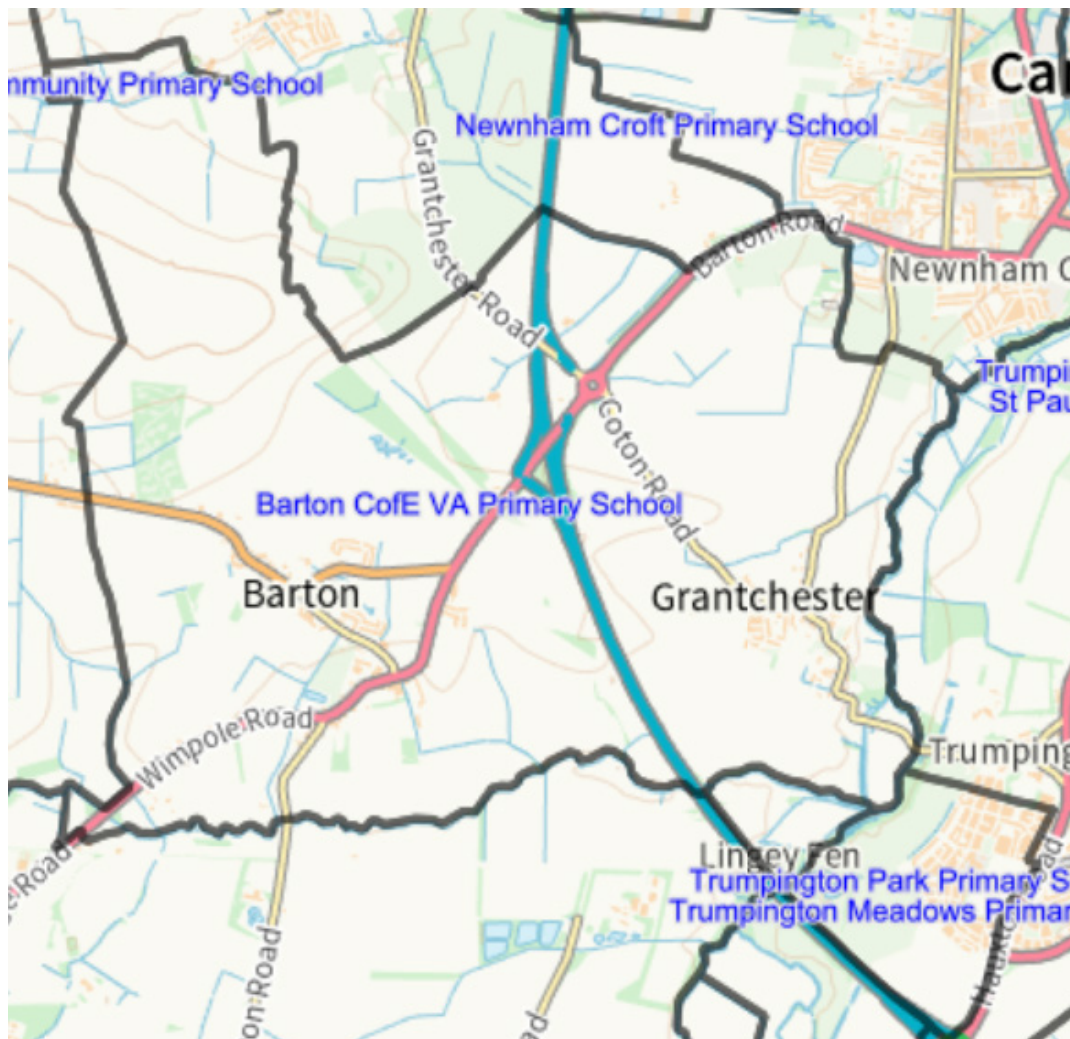
117. I, therefore, do not uphold this sub-concern.

ii. In respect of Barton CofE (VA) Primary School:

a. It is not reasonable for the catchment area to extend into the catchment area for Barton CofE (VA) Primary School in order that an oversupply of school places in Trumpington be addressed by seeking to attract children from Grantchester.

118. For reference, figure 4 shows the proximity of the Barton CofE (VA) Primary School catchment to the School's current catchment area. From Figure 2, the zone relevant to this sub-concern is Zone A.

Figure 4: Proximity of the Barton CofE (VA) Primary School catchment to the School's current catchment area



(Source: <https://maps.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/>)

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119. This sub-concern was raised by Objector 2 and Referrer 5.

120. Referrer 5 stated that:

“Barton Primary’s catchment area is smaller than [TMPS’s]. Its catchment contains only the two small villages of Barton and Grantchester and the surrounding farmland/green space within which there is little to no prospect of significant residential development. The draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan identifies Barton as a “group village” and Grantchester as an “infill village”, the lowest in the settlement hierarchy for new development, while Trumpington Meadows sits within the established Cambridge city boundary, at the top of the settlement hierarchy and where there is greater prospect for new residential development. Accordingly, there is very little prospect of pupil numbers increasing within Barton Primary’s existing catchment to balance out any reduction from a shared Grantchester catchment, whereas the prospect of development around Trumpington Meadows is much higher. There is little prospect of significant housing development near to Shelford school.”

121. The Federation's response to this sub-concern was similar to that for B.i.c.

122. I have already set out that the Code does not prohibit catchment areas from different schools overlapping in principle and that the Federation provided rational reasons, in principle, for increasing the size of the School's catchment area. On that basis, I do not uphold this sub-concern. However, I go on to look at the potential practical effect of this change under the next sub-concern.

ii. In respect of Barton CofE (VA) Primary School:

b. Admission numbers will reduce and affect the school's financial viability.

123. Objectors 2 and 3 and Referrer 5 raised the matters under this sub-concern. Objector 2 submitted that:

"TMPS is seeking to extend its catchment area to address issues with reduced pupil numbers. We acknowledge that at the time of writing, BPS is less impacted by this issue. However, as a small, rural school (of around 120 pupils across five (four from September 2026) classes with a PAN of 17 compared to TMPS's PAN of 30), BPS is more vulnerable to external factors which could impact our pupil numbers. Sharing the proposed overlapping catchment with TPS could lead to more families from Grantchester choosing or being allocated places at TPS instead of BPS, impacting our budget and sustainability. While it is difficult to predict exact numbers going forward, as of the date of this application BPS has eight children from Grantchester on roll representing 6.6% of our pupils. Based on minimum basic per pupil funding levels of £5115, this represents £40,920 for our budget, around 4.8% of our projected income for 2026/27."

124. Objector 3 stated:

"The Council is also concerned about the long-term sustainability of both Great and Little Shelford CE Primary School and Barton CE Primary School. Barton currently has a relatively small primary-aged population of 68 pupils, meaning that even a modest reduction in numbers could significantly affect the school's viability if it is unable to attract children from outside its catchment in the future."

and:

"The January 2025 Census also showed that 12 children lived in the part of Grantchester, which is currently in the Barton CE Primary School, that [TMPS] propose to add to their catchment. Of those 12 children, 4 attended Barton CE Primary School and 6 Newnham Croft Primary School in Cambridge. None attended [TMPS]. This is 18% of the 68 children that live in the whole Barton CE Primary School catchment. Again, it is difficult to estimate the impact and the numbers involved are low, but potentially this could take some children from a catchment that has a low primary-aged population."

125. GIAS records that Barton CofE (VA) Primary School is a small primary school with a capacity for 120 children. If the concerns raised by the Objectors / Referrers are borne out, then there is the potential for the increased catchment area to have a disproportionate effect on admissions to this school, such that it may affect its long-term financial viability.

126. As I did for Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School (under section B.i.b.), I looked at GIAS to see what the two closest primary schools are to Barton CofE (VA) Primary School. GIAS records that Meridian Primary School is 1.47 miles away (straight line distance) and Coton Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School is 1.96 miles away. Parents in this area, prioritising location as a factor in which primary school they would prefer their child(ren) to be admitted to, would be less likely to choose TMPS (which according to GIAS is 2.23 miles away, the same distance as Haslingfield Endowed Primary School is from Barton CofE (VA) Primary School).

127. To assess the potential impact of there being increased numbers of children being admitted to the School from Zone A, I put aside that there may be admission from Zones B and C, though I return to look at the totality of the potential admissions in due course. Parents who live in Zone A applying for a place at the School in 2027/28 for their children would be prioritised for admission to TMPS because that area will be part of the increased catchment area. However, given the School has not been oversubscribed for a number of years, those children would be admitted regardless of the increase to the School's catchment area. I restate here, as did under section B.i.b. that based on the number of children in YR at the School (see Table 2), there would have to be at least 25 additional preferences expressed for places in order for the oversubscription criteria to have to be engaged to prioritise admission.

128. The LA told me that there are <10 children aged 2 as of 31 August 2025 living in Zone A and <10 in Zone A/B (where the postcode of a street in Zone A intersects with Zone B) who would need places at primary schools in 2027/28. This creates a range of between two and 18 places (as there would be at least one child and no more than nine in each zone). Putting aside any admissions from Zone B and C, if parents from Zone A were to express preferences for places at the School, they could all be admitted without recourse to the use of the oversubscription criteria.

129. My finding in respect of the 49 children aged 2 as of 31 August 2025 who would need places in YR in 2027/28 and who live in Zone B (set out in section B.i.b.) is relevant here. Assuming that the parents of these 49 children express a preference for places at the School such that the oversubscription criteria would have to be employed, as the housing in Zone B is closer than the housing in Zone A, those applications would be prioritised above those from Zone A. This would likely mean there would either be no places available for those applying from Zones A and C or that the number of places for those applying from Zone A would be reduced. This would have the effect of reducing the impact of the increased catchment area on admission to Barton CofE (VA) Primary School.

130. In respect of Barton CofE (VA) Primary School, I do not find that there to be any group that would be significantly disadvantaged or that there is an indication that there

would be any 'unfair disadvantage' from the increase in the catchment area in respect of this sub-concern.

131. I, therefore, do not uphold this sub-concern.

iii. Some areas of the revised catchment are more than two miles from the school by the shortest route, potentially causing the following issues:

a. creating significant transport cost implications for the LA; and

b. adversely impacting on existing transport arrangements for Barton CofE (VA) Primary School.

132. Objector 3 raised sub-concern B.iii.a. and Referrer 5 raised sub-concern B.iii.b. I deal with both sub-concerns a. and b. together in this section of the determination.

133. I note that the Code does not make reference to the requirement that a catchment area must not include areas that go beyond the 2-mile safe walking limit for children aged up to 8 years old or that admission authorities are required to take into account home to school transport issues in admission arrangements.

134. Concerns about school transport are not ordinarily in jurisdiction. My jurisdiction is set out by the Code, which deals with the requirements in respect of how children are admitted to schools; the Code is not concerned with the method by which children are transported to school once admitted. That is covered by the document 'Travel to school for children of compulsory school age: Statutory guidance for local authorities' (the school transport document).

135. However, I have determined to consider these matters for two reasons. First, the concern raised by Objector 3 is about a potential unfairness caused by the change to the size of the catchment area. Second, Referrer 5 raised the concern that the increase in the catchment area and consequent pressure on the LA's school transport budget would lead to significant disadvantage:

"We are particularly concerned about the impact these changes may have on the existing transport arrangements to Barton Primary for pupils living in Grantchester. At present, these pupils are entitled to free bus/taxi transport to and from Barton Primary as their catchment school. The Local Authority's School Transport Team has indicated that it is unlikely that they would discontinue these arrangements if the catchment changes were approved, "so long as the demand was there". The conditionality of this response is of concern, as a reduction in demand could potentially lead to the withdrawal of this service, making Barton Primary a less attractive choice for new and existing pupils, again impacting numbers and viability."

136. I deal with sub-concern B.iii.b. first. I believe what the LA's School Transport Team is recorded to have said has been misinterpreted. The provision of home to school transport is a statutory duty upon the LA. Providing the criteria as set out in the school transport document are met, then home to school transport will be provided. If they are not met, then it will not be required. Should children of families living in Grantchester choose to attend

TMPS such that transport from home to Barton CofE (VA) Primary School is not needed for those children, then that is a matter for those children and not other children for whom home to school transport is already provided. In other words, the decision to put in place home to school transport is specific to a child's circumstances. It is not, and cannot, be the case, therefore, that if it is not needed for children in YR in 2027/28 it would not be needed for any other child in the school. It is also the case that decisions on whether to provide home to school transport are made on a child living beyond specified safe walking distances, not on whether there a catchment area is employed to prioritise admission.

137. The LA told me that only two children who currently attend Barton CofE (VA) Primary School receive home to school transport provision (children are both in Year 3 at and are transported by taxi). This is a significantly low proportion of the total number of children at the school. Therefore, even if home to school transport could be considered an admission 'selling point' as asserted by the Referrer, I do not see how it could be viewed as such when it only applies to two children. Consequently, I do not find that it is possible that this duty, applied when it is needed, could lead to the reduction in the 'attractiveness' of Barton CofE (VA) Primary School when parents apply for places for their children or that there would be any detriment to children currently receiving home to school transport at the school if not required for children in YR in 2027/28.

138. I, therefore, do not uphold sub-concern B.iii.b.

139. I turn now to consider sub-concern B.iii.a. I set out in my findings under concern A. of this determination that the Federation sought to consult on the proposal to increase the size of the catchment area at both of its schools. I found there to be evidence that the Federation had taken on board the results of the first period of consultation such that it ran a second period of consultation to allow the opportunity for comments on the proposed amended increased catchment area for the School. The amendments made to the size of the catchment area between the first and second consultation period were reported by the Federation to ensure that the increased catchment area did not include any areas which were beyond the statutory 2-mile safe walking distance (for children under the age of 8, as set out in the school transport document). The Federation told me that in making that change, it took on board the advice from the LA during the first consultation period. The responses from the Federation during my consideration of the objections / referral conveyed a frustration with the LA in that parameters shifted throughout and after the consultation and that its advice during the first consultation period did not result in a catchment area which dealt with the issue that it had raised and that the LA has subsequently raised an objection about it (as Objector 3).

140. The Federation's response to these sub-concerns was:

"We have stated that we are willing to reduce the proposed/determined new catchment area for Trumpington Meadows to meet the requirements of the LA as long as these are clear. We would be happy to engage with any mechanism to facilitate this. It was never our intention to go beyond the two-mile radius. As soon as we were aware of this requirement from the LA we amended our proposal and re-

issued the consultation. However, even at that stage were still not told how the two-mile radius is calculated. The tool used by the LA is not openly available as far as we are aware. We would like to re-state that we are happy to adjust our catchment area to be within the two-mile requirement but clearly addressing the unfairly small previous catchment area.”

141. I asked the LA to explain how the issue with the revised proposed increased catchment area which was presented for consultation on the second occasion occurred, and to provide a map which shows the boundary of the area around the School of the 2-mile safe walking limit (preferably as an ArcGIS shapefile). It told me that:

“The revised catchment has not addressed this issue because there remains a number of addresses located within the Federation’s revised catchment area are still beyond 2-miles walking distance from the school.

The School Transport Team uses Capita ONE to calculate distances to schools. Unfortunately, the outputs from this system cannot be converted into an ArcGIS-compatible format. We have tried to recreate the maps using an alternative mapping tool, but this has resulted in discrepancies between the two systems. As a result, we are hesitant to provide a map that may not be accurate.”

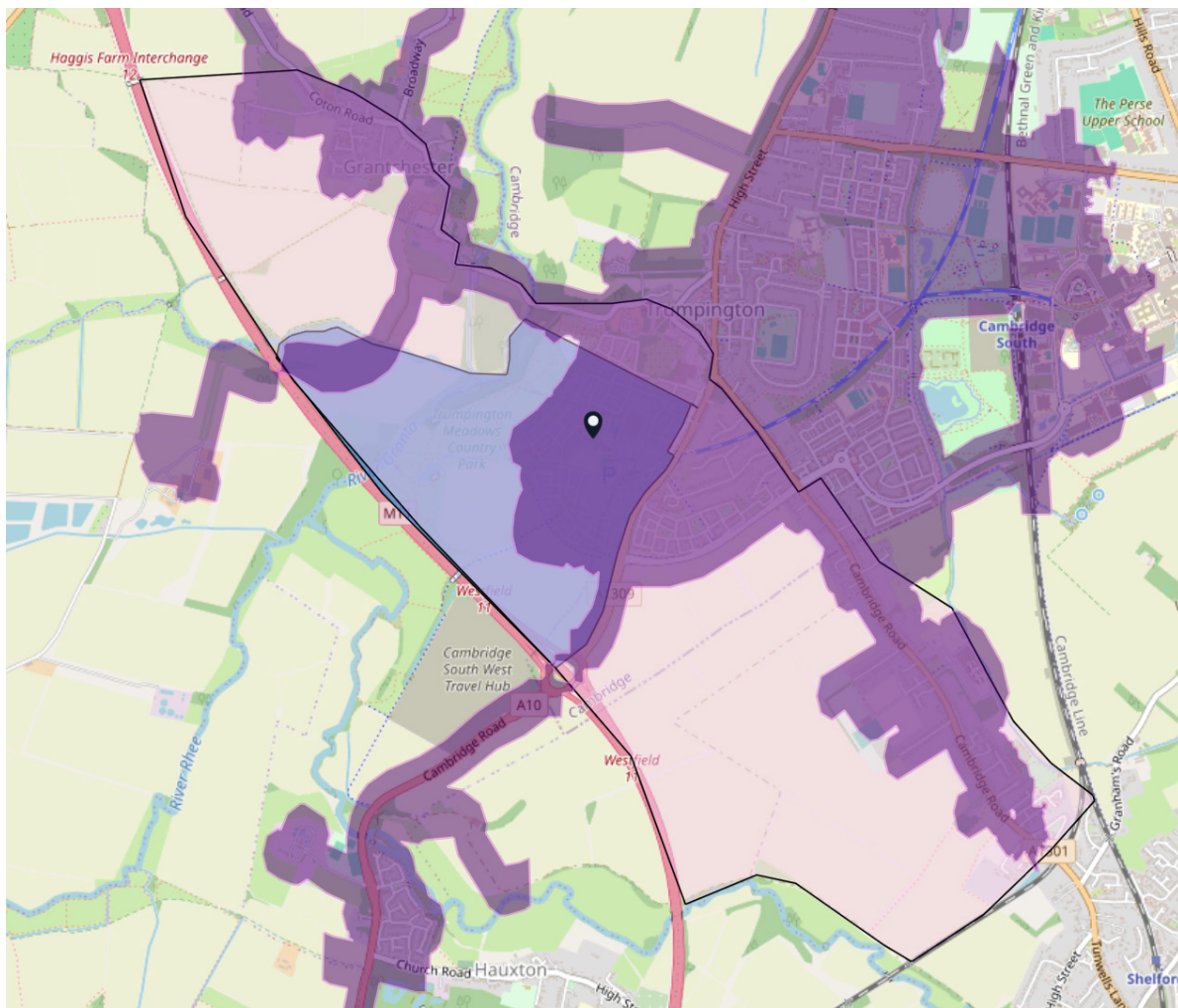
142. Without the LA providing a map to demonstrate this issue, I used ArcGIS to draw an isodistance polygon (called a travel area) showing the areas within a 2-mile safe walking limit of the School. This is shown on figure 5.

143. I then identified the areas of housing within the increased catchment area that were beyond the 2-mile safe walking limit of the School. I only found there to be one area in the south-east (in Zone C). This is shown on figure 6 and includes parts of housing on Davey Crescent, Cambridge Road, More’s Meadow, Bridge Close, and Abberley Wood. Those buildings shown along Trinity Lane in the south-western edge of the map do not appear to be housing.

144. I provided copies of figures 5 and 6 to the LA as Objector 3 and the other Objectors / Referrer and invited any comments about what they showed. I specifically asked Objector 3 whether it agreed that the area shown on figure 6 was the extent of its concern about the areas beyond the 2-mile safe walking limit of the catchment area. Its response was:

“I confirm that the 2-mile walking polygon matches our mapping and the houses [identified] are the ones that form the basis of our concern.”

Figure 5: Isodistance polygon (called a travel area) showing the areas within a 2-mile safe walking limit of the School.



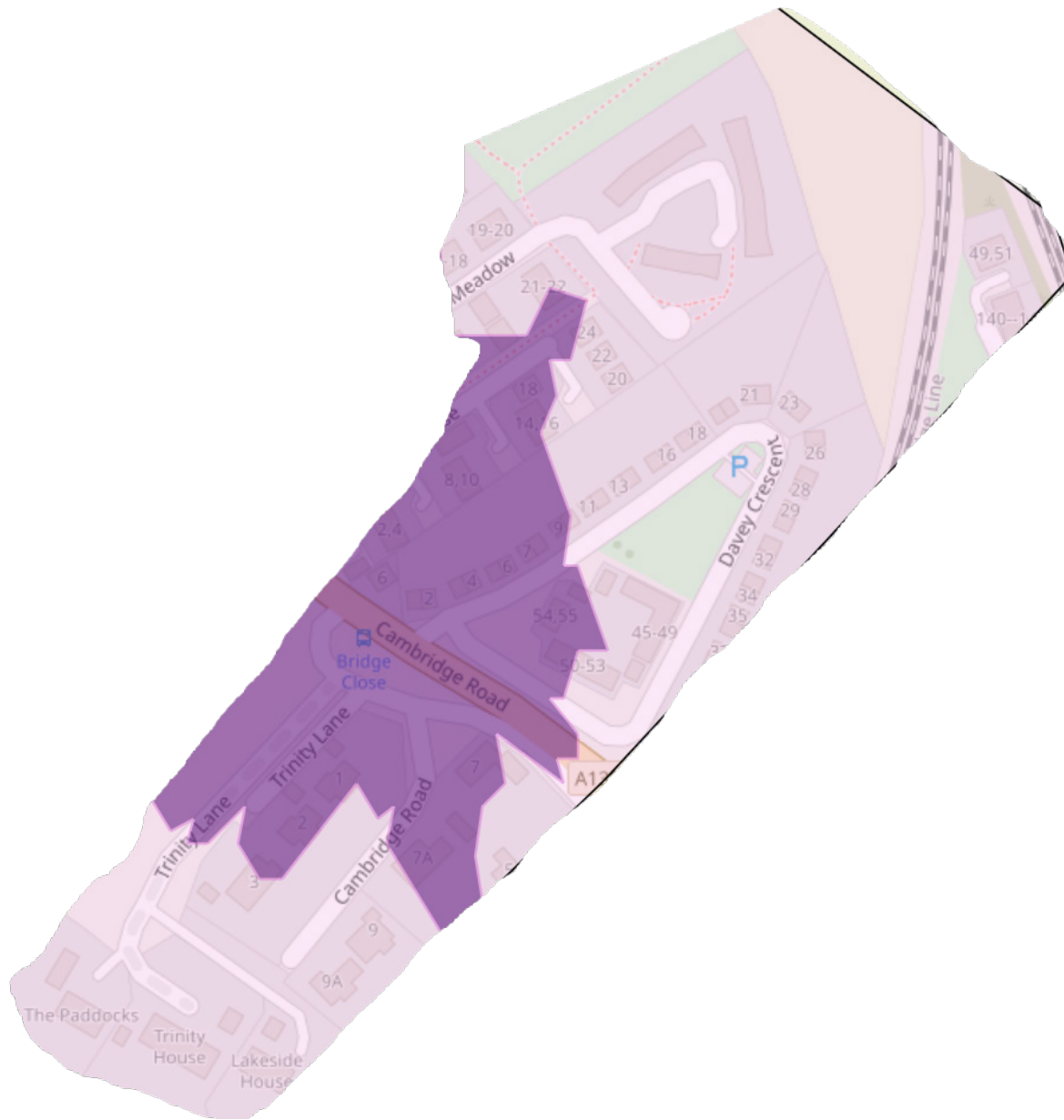
(Source: OpenStreetMap basemap in ArcGIS with the current catchment area (in light blue) and in the increased catchment area (in light pink) provided by the Federation along with the isodistance polygon generated by ArcGIS which shows the areas that are within the 2-mile safe walking limit (in purple))

145. No comments were received by other Objectors / the Referrer about figures 5 and 6, though I noted Objector 1 provided more information about public transport in an area of the increased catchment which I did not consider relevant.

146. I invited Objector 3 (as the LA) to provide any insights it might have into whether the parents in the area of figure 6 living in housing beyond the limit of the 2-mile safe walking distance are more likely to express a preference for a place at the School than the school(s) nearer to their houses. In its response, the LA told me that:

“The Council has no insight into whether children living in the identified area are more likely to attend TMPS rather than Great and Little Shelford CE Primary School. TMPS may be more attractive to parents working in the city or use the park and ride site nearby; however, there is congestion on the Shelford Road/Cambridge Road at peak times which may deter this.”

Figure 6: Areas of housing within the increased catchment area that were beyond the 2-mile safe walking limit of the School.



(Source: As for figure 5)

147. In terms of the number of houses in the area of Zone C shown on figure 6 which are beyond the 2-mile safe walking limit, the LA told me that:

“There are 55 residential addresses which are greater than 2 miles walking distance but inside the proposed catchment. These are all in the area that is highlighted. The local authority (LA) only has data at postcode level so are unable to give the precise numbers of children living in this area. Based on the multipliers we apply to planning for new housing developments, we expect 55 homes to generate some 11-17 primary-aged children (approximately two per year group). The LA considers that there is still the potential for a significant increase [in] school transport costs based on this number of children as transport would need to be provided for all seven years of primary education.”

148. Dealing first with the year of entry in 2027/28 (YR). I note that the LA estimates there to be two children who would be of YR age whose parents might express a preference for

places at the School in 2027/28 and who may, if admitted, need free home to school transport to be provided.

149. Figure 6 shows that there are more houses on Davey Crescent than other roads beyond the 2-mile safe walking limit shown by the isodistance polygon in purple. GIAS records there to be four primary schools that are closer than TMPS (with straight line distance in miles in brackets after each): Great and Little Shelford CofE (Aided) Primary School (0.58); Stapleford Community Primary School (1); Trumpington Park Primary School (1.23); and Hauxton Primary School (1.35). Parents in the areas of Zone C beyond the 2-mile safe walking limit, who prioritise location as a factor in which primary school they would prefer their child(ren) to be admitted to, would be less likely to choose TMPS as there are four closer options.

150. For older children in this area (who would be in Years 1 to 6 in 2027/28), there is the factor in addition to the location of the School that they will already be on roll at a primary school. No evidence has been presented which would lead me to believe that this area being in the increased catchment area would be such a draw to the School that parents would initiate an in-year application.

151. Overall, whilst Objector 3 has identified only a small number of children, I can see that should that number of children apply and be admitted to TMPS this would be a cost to the LA in terms of home to school transport. The LA told me that the approximate cost of providing home to school transport would be £88 to £190 per day (£16,720 to £36,100 per annum). It also told me that it:

“[...] is not able to predict which families living within the proposed new catchment area, living more than 2 miles from the school, will choose to apply for places at [TMPS] from September 2027/2028.”

152. I find there are factors which would mitigate against there being the need for such provision, as set out above, and do not consider that presented by Objector 3 to represent the scale of disadvantage it asserts.

153. I, therefore, do not uphold sub-concern B.iii.a.

154. In summary, I do not find unreasonableness or unfairness in the Arrangements in the manner that the Objectors / Referrer assert under concern B.

155. Finally, I make two further points:

- I note that the Federation had intended, since the second consultation period, that the increased catchment area would not include addresses which were beyond the 2-mile safe walking limit. This has not been found to be the case in the area shown on figure 6. Whilst I have not found there to be any evidence that any specific group would be disadvantaged unfairly by the increased catchment area, the Federation has stated that it would wish to amend the catchment area such that all addresses included therein will be within the 2-mile safe walking limit. I record here that, should

the Federation still wish to, I can see no reason why it should not be permitted to do so under paragraph 3.6 of the Code (as set out at the end of the 'Other matters' section below), without the need to submit a variation request, providing that is the only amendment made to the increased catchment area.

- I have based my findings in respect of reasonableness and fairness on assumptions made in the understandable absence of any data relating to the practical operation of the increased catchment area. I remind the Federation that it is its responsibility to monitor the effects of the School's increased catchment area in 2027/28 to ensure that significant disadvantage is not caused by its implementation.

Other matters

156. Having considered the arrangements as a whole it appeared to me that the following matters do not conform with the requirements of the Code and so I brought them to the attention of the Federation. Most of the matters raised concerns about compliance with paragraph 14 of the Code which states:

"In drawing up their admission arrangements, admission authorities **must** ensure that the practices and the criteria used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear, and objective. Parents should be able to look at a set of arrangements and understand easily how places for that school will be allocated."

157. The matters I raised are (paragraphs of the Code other than 14 are indicated where relevant):

- The Federation admissions web page has a link to an 'Admission Form'. About this:
 - This is not referred to at all in the Arrangements, and it is not clear for parents that they have to complete the form with the application (or even at what stage this form needs to be completed).
 - It is not clear what the status of this form is and whether this is a Supplementary Information Form (SIF). If this is the SIF, then it is asking for information which is likely to be in contravention of paragraph 2.4 of the Code which states that Admission Authorities, "must only use supplementary forms that request additional information when it has a direct bearing on decisions about oversubscription criteria".
- In the 'Oversubscription Criteria' section it states: "Children who have a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN)". Such statements have not been used for a number of years. The Arrangements are not clear for parents in that regard.
- Oversubscription criterion 1 states: "Children in Care (CIC), and Children who were previously in care but ceased to do so by reason of adoption, a residence order (now known as a child arrangement order) or special guardianship order".

This definition does not state that the definition of 'previously in care' includes those children who appear (to the admission authority) to have been in state care outside of England prior to adoption. (Paragraph 1.7)

- Oversubscription criterion 5 states: “ Children living outside the catchment area who have been unable to gain a place at their catchment school because of oversubscription”. The definition of 'catchment school' is not clear for parents.
- At the end of the 'Oversubscription Criteria' section, the Arrangements state: “In cases of equal merit in each set of criteria, priority will go to children living nearest the school as measured by a straight line. Please refer to the First Steps booklet for further information. This is available on our website - www.trumpingtonfederation.co.uk”. About this:
 - This statement appears to have muddled the use of the distance criteria (paragraph 1.13) on page 18 of the LA's 'First Steps Booklet' with a tiebreaker (paragraph 1.8) (also on page 18 of the LA's 'First Steps Booklet'). Both serve different purposes.
 - Where the Arrangements make an earlier reference to the LA's 'First Steps Booklet', a link is provided to the page of the LA's website on which parents can find the booklet. This is not consistent or clear for parents to then be directed to the Federation's website with no specific link to find this booklet.
- The Arrangements state: “As a Federation, our admissions process is determined by Cambridgeshire County Council”. This is not the case; as a Federation, it is the Trumpington Federation Governing Body that determines the Admission Arrangements, regardless of whether it delegates such a task to its Schools or opts-in / buys-in to the service that the LA provides to run the admissions process (paragraph 11). This will make the Arrangements unclear for parents.
- The Arrangements do not provide or make reference to essential information for parents as required by the Code or links to the LA's information about such:
 - There are no definitions of key terms such as 'sibling' (paragraph 1.11).
 - A catchment area map is not provided nor is there a link to such (paragraphs 1.14 and 14). (I note the link sent to me in the consultation documents, but it is not in the Arrangements).
 - The circumstances under which an offer of a place can be withdrawn.
 - Waiting lists.
 - Admission in circumstances where the infant class size limit might be exceeded.

- Admission of children below compulsory school age and deferred entry to school.
- Admission of children outside their normal age group.
- In-year admissions.
- The right to appeal.

158. I find that the provisions set out above do not comply with the requirements of the Code. The Federation has told me that it will address these matters, which is welcomed.

159. I will not discuss these matters further, other than to make clear that the Code requires that the Arrangements be amended to address the points set out here. Such amendments are permitted in line with paragraph 3.6 of the Code which states, in part:

“Once admission arrangements have been determined for a particular school year, they cannot be revised by the admission authority unless such revision is necessary to give effect to a mandatory requirement of this Code, admissions law, a determination of the Schools Adjudicator or any misprint in the admission arrangements.”

160. The Code requires that the Arrangements be amended to address the points I have raised within the timescale set out in this determination.

Determination

161. In accordance with section 88H(4) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I partially uphold the objection to the admission arrangements determined by The Trumpington Foundation for the Trumpington Meadows Primary School for September 2027.

162. I have also considered the arrangements under section 88I(5) and find that they do not comply with requirements relating to admission arrangements in the ways set out in this determination.

163. By virtue of section 88K(2) the adjudicator’s decision is binding on the admission authority. The School Admissions Code requires the admission authority to revise its admission arrangements within two months of this determination, unless an alternative timescale is specified by the schools adjudicator. In this case, the admission authority is to revise its admission arrangements by the end of September 2026. This is so parents can take into account the revisions during the current admissions round.

Dated: 17 September 2026

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Dr Robert Cawley