Office of the Schools Adjudicator

Determination

Case reference: **ADA4603**

Objector: **A member of the public**

Admission Authority: **Derby City Council on behalf of Littleover Community School**

Date of advice: **19 November 2026**

Determination

In accordance with section 88H(4) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I do not uphold the objection to the admission arrangements determined by Derby City Council for Littleover Community School, for 2027 / 2028.

I have also considered the arrangements under section 88I(5) and find that one element does not comply with requirements relating to admission arrangements in the way 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 element of the arrangements which does not comply with requirements must be revised on or before 28 February 2027 to dovetail with the deadline for determination of arrangements for 2028 / 2029.

The referral

1. Under section 88H(2) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (the 1998 Act), an objection has been referred to the adjudicator by a member of the public (the Objector), about the admission arrangements (the Arrangements) for 2027 / 2028 for Littleover Community School (Littleover, the School). The School is a community school for children aged 11 to 18 years located in Littleover, Derby.

2. The School is located in the local authority area of Derby City Council (the Local Authority or LA). The Local Authority is the Admission Authority for the School, and I refer interchangeably to the Local Authority and the Admission Authority.

3. The parties to the objection are the Local Authority, the School and the Objector.

4. The objection is to is to the defined catchment area (also described in the Arrangements as the "normal area") used within the oversubscription criteria set out in the Arrangements.

5. I am grateful to all parties for their helpful and collaborative approach to my requests for further information over a number of months. I am also grateful to the Objector for their patience whilst I conducted my consideration of this case.

Jurisdiction

6. The Arrangements were determined under section 88C of the 1998 Act on 11 February 2026 by Derby City Council.

7. The Objector submitted their objection to the determined arrangements on 14 March 2026. The Objector has asked to have their identity kept from the other parties and has met the requirement of Regulation 24 of the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 by providing details of their name and address to me.

8. I am satisfied the objection has been properly referred to me in accordance with section 88H of the 1998 Act and it is within my jurisdiction.

9. I have also used my power under section 88I of the 1998 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 they are covered in the section of the determination under the title of that name.

Procedure

10. In considering this matter I have had regard to all relevant legislation and the School Admissions Code (the Code).

11. The information I have considered in reaching my decision includes:

- the objection dated 14 March 2026 and supporting evidence in the form of three images of maps;

- a copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Admission Authority at which the Arrangements were determined;
- the determined Arrangements for 2027 / 2028;
- responses from the LA and the School to the objection and to my requests for further information;
- responses from the Objector in reply to my requests for further information and in response to the LA's submissions;
- the LA's online composite prospectus for admissions to secondary schools;
- confirmation of when consultation on the Arrangements last took place;
- maps, including Google Maps, and those showing the location of the School; and
- information available on the websites of GOV.UK (including 'Get Information About Schools' (GIAS)), the LA, the School and Ofsted.

12. I have been provided with a substantial amount of information / data by the Objector, the Local Authority and the School. I have referred only to that which has a bearing on my determination.

Background

13. According to GIAS, the School is a co-educational, secondary, community school for children aged 11 to 18 years. It does not have a religious character.

14. The School was last inspected by Ofsted in October 2022. The overall outcome of the inspection was "Good".

15. The published admission number (PAN) of the School for 2027 / 2028 is 295. The School's capacity according to GIAS is 1801 with the number of pupils on roll on 17 September 2026 being 1828.

16. The Arrangements set out that children with education, health and care (EHC) plans will be admitted first. Then, in times when oversubscribed, children will be prioritised according to the oversubscription criteria. These can be summarised, in the order that they are applied, as follows:

1. Looked after children or children who were previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, child arrangements, or special guardianship order.

2. Children who appear to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.

3. Children who are both living in the catchment area served by the School and have brothers or sisters of compulsory school age still attending the School at the time of their admission.

4. Other children living in the catchment area.

5. Children who do not live in the catchment area served by the School but who have brothers or sisters of compulsory school age still attending the School at the time of their admission.

6. Other children whose parents have requested a place.

7. Children whose parents did not request a place by the closing date.

17. The Arrangements state that catchment area maps are available to view from the School Organisation and Provision Team, located at The Council House, Derby, or by going to the website of Derby City Council, the website hyperlink being provided as part of the Arrangements.

Consideration of Case

The Objection

18. The objection is to the catchment area (described in the Arrangements as the "normal area") used within the oversubscription criteria. In particular that "Glebe Rise, Littleover, Derby, DE23 6GX" is currently excluded from the catchment area for the School despite being geographically closer to the School than several streets which are included within its catchment area. In respect of this, the objection made the following six assertions:

(i) More distant streets are included within the catchment area: properties on Empress Road (postcode DE23 6TD) and Breedon Hill Road (postcode DE23 6TG) are approximately 2.1 miles from the School and are included within the catchment area. Glebe Rise is approximately 1.1 miles closer to the School than Empress Road and Breedon Hill Road but is excluded, resulting in properties that are substantially further away receiving catchment priority over properties that are closer.

(ii) Absence of a clear rationale for the catchment area boundary: the objection states that the Admission Authority has provided no explanation or rationale as to why more distant properties are included while Glebe Rise is excluded. Further, that there is no objective reason as to why the boundary is delineated as it is and the catchment area is not reasonable or clearly defined as required by the Code.

(iii) Isolated exclusion within the catchment boundary: Glebe Rise is surrounded by streets that are included in the catchment area. Roads that are geographically contiguous with, and directly connected to, Glebe Rise including Valley Road, Brayfield Road, and Normanton Lane fall within the catchment area. Glebe Rise is the only adjoining residential street to be excluded, resulting in an isolated exclusion without clear or documented justification. The objection states that this results in a small residential street being treated differently from the surrounding area without a clear geographical or community boundary explaining the distinction.

(iv) Surrounding streets further from the School are included: streets surrounding Glebe Rise, including streets located further south and east from Littleover Community School, are included within the catchment area. This leaves Glebe Rise forming a discrete and unexplained exclusion within an otherwise continuous catchment area.

(v) Absence of a coherent community rationale: the objection recognises that electoral ward boundaries and school catchment areas are separate systems. However, Glebe Rise lies within the Littleover ward and the wider Littleover community. Its exclusion from the School's catchment area therefore further highlights the absence of a coherent or transparent community-based rationale for the boundary as currently drawn.

(vi) The School's catchment boundary does not appear to follow a clear geographic feature: the current boundary does not follow any clear feature such as a main road, river, railway lines, natural boundary or defined community division. Glebe Rise is accessed directly from Valley Road and Normanton Lane, parts of which are themselves within the catchment area. The objection states this further highlights the difficulty in identifying a clear geographical or community rationale for the exclusion of Glebe Rise.

19. I have determined that the following paragraphs of the Code are relevant to the objection (emphasis in the original):

Paragraph 14: "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."

Paragraph 1.8 (so far as is relevant): “Oversubscription criteria **must** be reasonable, clear, objective, procedurally fair, and comply with all relevant legislation, including equalities legislation. Admission authorities **must** ensure that their arrangements will not disadvantage unfairly, either directly or indirectly, a child from a particular social or racial group, or a child with a disability or special educational needs, and that other policies around school uniform or school trips do not discourage parents from applying for a place for their child.”

Paragraph 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.”

“Catchment Area” is described in the Glossary to the Code as: “A geographical area, from which children may be afforded priority for admission to a particular school. A catchment area is part of a school’s admission arrangements and must therefore be consulted upon, determined, and published in the same way as other admission arrangements.”

20. The issues raised by the objection are intrinsically linked and largely overlap. I will deal with issue (ii) first as this forms the fundamental lynchpin to the objection and whether the boundary is reasonable and clearly defined.

21. It is convenient to deal with issues (i), (iii) and (iv) together as each concern the question of why more distant streets are included in the catchment boundary, and the alleged isolated exclusion of Glebe Rise.

22. Lastly, I will deal with issues (v) (absence of a coherent community rationale) and (vi) (the School’s catchment boundary does not appear to follow a clear geographic feature).

23. I will set out my analysis of the issues raised in turn, and my reasons for the conclusions I have made on each aspect. I must also state at the outset that my jurisdiction is limited to the compliance of the Arrangements with the Code.

24. Finally, I note that although the Admission Authority is only required to consult on its admission arrangements every seven years (where there is no change to the arrangements), the LA as Admission Authority considers it appropriate that there is an annual consultation process that provides parents, carers, and stakeholders with an opportunity to review and comment on the proposed admission arrangements each year. The objection does not raise any issues in relation to this consultation process.

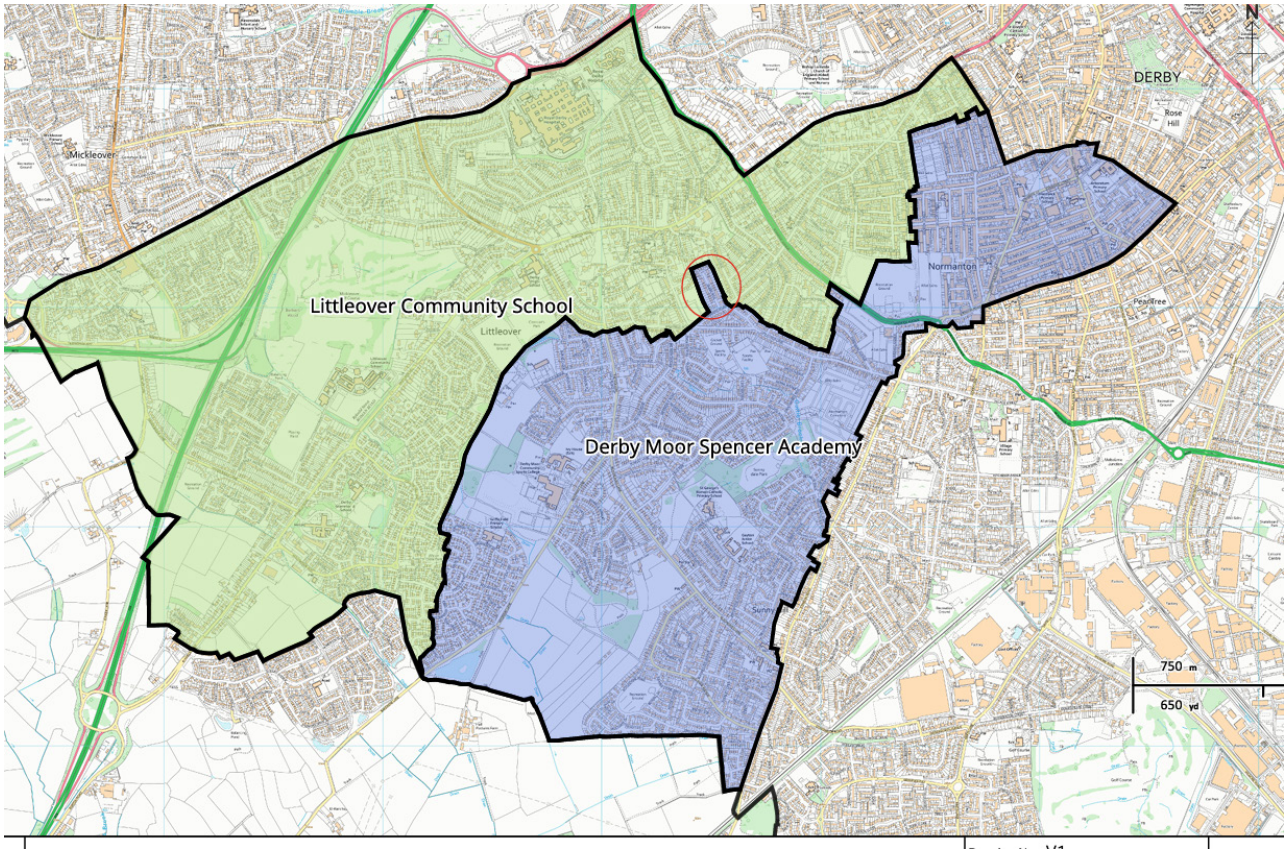
Issue (ii): Absence of a clear rationale for the catchment area boundary, and whether it is reasonable and clearly defined

History of the catchment boundary

25. The objection states that the Admission Authority has provided no explanation or rationale as to why more distant properties are included in the catchment area while Glebe Rise is excluded. Further, that there is no objective reason as to why the boundary is delineated as it is and that it is not reasonable or clearly defined as required by the Code.

26. The Admission Authority notes that the current catchment boundary is longstanding and forms part of a historic catchment framework originally determined by Derbyshire County Council, prior to the establishment of Derby City Council as a unitary authority. Maps provided by the LA show that Glebe Rise is situated on the edge of the catchment boundary, falling within another school's catchment, that of Derby Moor Spencer Academy (Derby Moor) rather than Littleover's. Each catchment is contiguous, sharing the same border on one side.

Map 1: catchment boundaries of Littleover and Derby Moor



27. Map 1 shows the catchment boundaries of Littleover (in green) and Derby Moor (in purple). The location of Glebe Rise is circled in red and shown as a rectangular shape coloured in purple at the edge of Derby Moor's catchment.

28. The LA estimates that the catchment boundaries have been in place for at least 30 years and is not aware of any consistent concerns regarding Glebe Rise not being within the Littleover catchment area.

29. Derby City Council became a unitary local authority on 1 April 1997. As a result, detailed records relating to the original establishment of catchment boundaries pre-date the LA's current formation. In order to establish whether any archived information was available, the LA contacted the School Admissions Service at Derbyshire County Council requesting any historic records relevant to this matter. A response was received stating that the Derbyshire County Council School Admissions Service did not hold any information on the historic decisions made in respect of catchment areas.

30. Notwithstanding the historic origin of the boundary, the LA has told me that there has been no material change in circumstances which, in its view, would have triggered a review or suggested that the boundary no longer remains appropriate. The LA is not aware of any significant demographic shift, housing growth, change in community composition, or wider social or planning development affecting Glebe Rise or the surrounding area which would indicate that the existing catchment arrangements have become unreasonable or give rise to disadvantage for a newly emerging or distinct community of residents. Further, there is an opportunity, the LA tells me, with yearly consultation for these issues to be raised. These consultations include accessible links to catchment maps, which are drawn using Ordnance Survey maps and which show the catchment boundary for each school within the LA's area. Following the most recent consultation, which was on the 2027 / 2028 Arrangements and took place between 20 October 2025 and 30 November 2025, the LA did not receive any comments or objections relating to any of the proposals, nor about Littleover's catchment. To date, the LA is "not aware of any consistent concerns from the community regarding Glebe Rise not being within the Littleover Community School catchment area".

31. The LA has stated that:

> "the absence of any substantive change in local conditions supports the continued operation of the existing boundary. In the absence of material change, identified Code compliance issue, or other exceptional circumstance warranting review, the [LA] considers it appropriate to maintain the established catchment arrangements in the interests of consistency, stability, and predictability for schools and families."

32. Of note is the fact that the residents of Glebe Rise petitioned the LA in 2011 requesting inclusion within the Littleover catchment area. This was considered by the LA and reported to the LA's Cabinet on 12 April 2011. The LA has told me it assessed the request against paragraph 2.40 of the relevant Code in force at the time, the School Admissions Code 2010, which stated in full (emphasis in the original) that:

> "The 1997 Rotherham Judgment confirmed that there is nothing unlawful in the principle of admission authorities operating catchment areas as part of their oversubscription criteria and thereby giving priority to local children whose parents have expressed a preference for the school. However, admission authorities **must not** guarantee places to parents in a local catchment area, in case the pattern of preferences expressed does not allow this guarantee to be met. In drawing up catchment areas, admission authorities should ensure that they reflect the diversity of the community served by the school, and **must not** exclude particular housing estates or addresses in a way that might disadvantage particular social groups. A catchment area does not prevent parents expressing a preference for the school if they do not live in the area."

33. The LA concluded at the time (taking into account that Littleover was extremely popular and oversubscribed) that "altering the catchment area to only include Glebe Rise, without a full consultation would risk breaching of section 2.40 of the Code." Interestingly, despite the LA consulting each year on its admission arrangements, it decided not to open the specific question to consultation at a later date, nor is there any evidence available that there was any request for them to do so.

Catchment areas, relevant Code provisions and caselaw

34. Catchment areas are a way in which schools can prioritise children for admissions purposes when they are oversubscribed. Doing so is perfectly lawful provided the catchment area is clearly defined and reasonable, and provided its use does not make the arrangements unfair overall. All admission arrangements create advantage for some applicants and disadvantage to others; indeed, their purpose is to give higher priority to some applicants than to others. The Code, as set out under paragraph 1.7, provides that all schools must have oversubscription criteria. The purpose of oversubscription criteria is to make clear how admission will be prioritised when the number of applications is greater than the number of places available in a relevant age group (the "relevant age group" is defined in the Code as "the age group to which pupils are normally admitted to the school"). In situations of oversubscription, there will be applicants who are not admitted.

35. Considerable freedom is given to Admission Authorities to determine their own arrangements so long as they comply with the Code. To be contrary to paragraph 1.8 of the Code, any disadvantage arising from an oversubscription criterion would have to be unfair to one or more identified groups. This is in contrast to unfairness in paragraph 14 of the Code, which is unfairness of a more general nature.

36. There is no specific reference in primary or secondary legislation making provision for a school to be able to include a catchment area in its oversubscription criteria. That is provided for by the Code.

37. Paragraph 1.14 of the Code expressly requires the clear definition of a catchment area, and that such areas are reasonable. Paragraph 1.14 is also clear that catchment areas do not prevent parents who live outside the catchment of a particular school from expressing a preference for the school. Criterions 5 and 6 of the Arrangements are reflective of that.

38. A catchment area does not guarantee any child living within it a place at the school concerned. Conversely, living outside a catchment area does not preclude applying to a particular school. Indeed, “the 1997 Rotherham Judgment” referred to above *(R v Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council ex parte Clark, Dakin and Others (1997) EWCA Civ 2768, (1998) ELR 152)* established that parental preference was confirmed to have primacy, so that applicants from outside of a school's catchment area, who express a preference for that school, should be prioritised over applicants within the catchment area who express no preference.

Reasonableness and fairness of the catchment boundary and whether it is clearly defined

39. The question at the heart of this objection is whether it is unreasonable that the street Glebe Rise is not included in the catchment area for Littleover. The Code uses the term “reasonable” but does not define it. An everyday definition is 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.

40. Where the Code requires that a particular criterion be “reasonable”, that means that the Adjudicator must consider whether or not the criterion is reasonable. However, that does not mean that it must be a criterion that the Adjudicator would have chosen. There may be a range of reasonable criteria that could be selected, or reasonable grounds for adopting a particular criterion. It is only if the criterion selected (or grounds for adopting it) fall outside the range of what is reasonable that the Adjudicator should conclude that the requirements of the Code are not met.

41. A catchment area is likely to be reasonable if it:

a. has a logical basis;

b. is justifiable (for example an admission authority is able to provide rational reasons for why it is drawn as it is);

c. is clear (for example not cutting halfway through a house so it is not clear whether the house is in or out of the catchment area);

d. is sensible in the local context (for example taking account of matters such as the provision made by other schools); and

e. is meaningful. A catchment area must mean something in terms of the chances of gaining a place at the school.

42. Should I find that the catchment area is unreasonable, it would be non-compliant with the Code. If, however, I find the catchment area to be reasonable, I will go on to assess whether its effect is fair. Fairness is a concept, not unlike being "reasonable", that is used in the Code but is not defined. 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 admission arrangements on any relevant group. A factor which is relevant in the consideration of substantive unfairness is the reasons (or justification) for adopting a particular oversubscription criterion. These must be considered in context. It may be the case that the justification for the adoption of a particular set of oversubscription criteria could override any unfairness. I should also add that where the available evidence does not establish disadvantage, there cannot be any unfairness.

43. The Objector argues that it is not logical or justifiable to exclude Glebe Rise from the catchment of Littleover and that not to include it is unreasonable. The LA has made clear that although the initial rationale for the decision is not known, the same catchment boundaries have been in place for at least 30 years and it is not aware of any consistent concerns regarding Glebe Rise not being within the Littleover catchment area. This is not in and of itself determinative of the catchment boundary being reasonable or fair. Nor is it necessarily a corollary to deduce that the catchment area is reasonable simply because no one has complained about it. Equally, the existence of a historic catchment boundary does not become unreasonable solely by virtue of its longevity.

44. The LA considers that the long existing catchment boundaries in Derby remain fair, reasonable and compliant with paragraph 1.14 of the Code. The LA has stated that it would usually only consider catchment area changes if there were exceptional circumstances "due to the disruption that it can cause for families and schools", and that "unnecessary changes can have a detrimental impact." Further, it has highlighted that there is an opportunity to raise issues through the annual consultation process.

45. The LA does not view Glebe Rise as being in a different position to any other nearby street, in that they all have a designated catchment area secondary school. Examination of information provided by the LA on 2 November 2026 at my request shows that approximately 50 streets in Littleover's catchment are only partially within its catchment, meaning some addresses are included while others in the same street are not included. In terms of Derby Moor's catchment, more than 70 streets are only partially in its catchment. Although the entirety of Glebe Rise is included in Derby Moor's catchment, the LA has told me that Glebe Rise is accessed from Normanton Lane "which has the same catchment area school" as Glebe Rise. This is not entirely accurate as Normanton Lane is partially within the catchment

of Littleover and partially within the catchment of Derby Moor. No evidence or reasons have been given for this or for why so many streets are partially in each catchment.

46. Solely looking at the map, it does on the face of it appear illogical that Glebe Rise is not included in Littleover's catchment. Nevertheless, a range of factors are in play when designing a catchment area. The LA has been clear that there is no single determining principle as to how a catchment area is devised.

47. The Objector highlighted that there appears to be a number of properties within the Littleover catchment area that are geographically closer to alternative secondary schools and are further than Glebe Rise to Littleover. The Objector stated: "this would appear to indicate that proximity to another secondary school is not consistently used as the determining basis for catchment inclusion."

48. Finally, the Objector has noted that Glebe Rise comprises 34 houses and that only 25 per cent of those houses currently have young families, equating to approximately 8.5 houses. The Objector has concluded that, on average, Glebe Rise will generate fewer than 0.77 school applications per admission year if that demographic remains stable.

49. The LA responded to these matters as follows:

> "Catchment boundaries are not determined solely by proximity to a particular school or by individual road access arrangements in isolation as the objector is referring to in their most recent response. Rather, catchment areas reflect the collective outcome of wider strategic considerations including historic community alignment, pupil place planning, the need for coherent and recognisable boundary lines, feeder schools (where applicable), demographic balance, and the overall distribution of school places across the city.
>
> The existence of individual properties within the Littleover Community School catchment area which may be geographically closer to an alternative secondary school does not demonstrate inconsistency or invalidate the wider catchment structure. In any boundary-based system there will inevitably be properties located close to the edge of a catchment where another school may be nearer by distance. Catchment areas are therefore not designed or intended to operate as a pure "nearest school" model."
>
> Catchment boundaries are not determined on a property-by-property basis or by reference solely to distance from a school but reflect wider strategic considerations. In any long-established catchment structure, there will inevitably be locations near boundary edges which, when considered individually, may appear inconsistent in comparison with neighbouring streets. This does not, however, render the wider catchment arrangements inconsistent or unfair.

We also note that the suggestion that Glebe Rise would generate only a limited number of secondary transfer applications each year. However, catchment areas are not determined solely based on current or projected pupil yield from a single street or development at a particular point in time. Catchment boundaries are intended to provide stable and consistent long-term framework for school admissions and pupil place planning. Even relatively small amendments can create precedent for further disconnected changes elsewhere, potentially undermining the coherence and stability of the wider admissions system.

In addition, pupil generation rates are subject to change over time as demographics and occupancy patterns alter. The Council must therefore consider the cumulative and longer-term implications of any proposal boundary amendment, rather than assessing the impact solely based on current housing composition or projected application numbers from a single location."

50. In terms of the impact on Glebe Rise residents specifically, the LA had the following observations:

"Available demographic and socioeconomic information indicate that Glebe Rise is a stable residential area. The area is ranked outside of the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in England based on overall deprivation, indicating lower levels of deprivation when compared with other areas within the Derby City Council administrative boundary. Whilst certain parts of Derby fall within the 10% most deprived areas nationally, Glebe Rise is not identified within these higher deprivation categories and is considered comparatively less deprived (English Indices of Deprivation, 2025.)

Population profiling also indicates that Glebe Rise has a comparatively diverse resident population relative to other areas within Derby. Available data suggests representation from a range of ethnic communities, including Roma, Indian, Pakistani, other Asian and Black Caribbean communities alongside White British residents. This demographic profile also contributes to religious diversity within the area.

In relation to age profile and household composition, 27% of residents are aged between 40 and 59, and around 25% of households comprise of families with young children.

Taken together, this background information informed the local authority's understanding of the area profile, ensuring that relevant community, demographic and equality factors were properly considered in support of compliance with paragraph 2.40 of the DfE School Admissions Code 2010."

51. It appears to me that the LA has designed a strategy to ensure that pupils in Derby can be educated at a school close to their home bearing in mind a number of factors, which it

is entitled to do. The complex tapestry appears to work without complaint and there is no evidence that warrants disrupting the careful balance at play in delivering this strategy.

52. The LA has provided rational reasons for why the catchment area continues to be drawn as it is. It is also clear in terms of which streets or parts of streets are included. I find the catchment boundary is sensible having taken account of matters such as the provision made by other schools nearby, including the fact that Glebe Rise has its own catchment school which is nearer.

53. I therefore find that the continuance of the catchment area in its current form falls within the range of reasonable decisions available to the Local Authority. The LA should of course always keep under review the reasonableness of its catchment areas as evidence of demand for places and other factors change.

54. I further find the catchment area to be clearly defined. The catchment maps provided alongside the Arrangements are clear as to which streets or parts of streets are included within Littleover's catchment. A list of streets and postcodes is also provided so parents are clear as to whether their street, or the part of the street where they live, is included within catchment.

55. As set out above, given that I have found the catchment area in its current form to be reasonable, I will go on to assess whether the effect of that area is fair. Of significant relevance is the fact that families living on Glebe Rise have a designated catchment area school well within the 3-mile statutory walking distance for secondary school aged pupils. That school is Derby Moor whose catchment is shown in Map 1. Derby Moor is a co-educational secondary, non-selective academy converter school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years, also in the area of Littleover, Derby. Derby Moor was last inspected by Ofsted in June 2022, receiving an overall rating of "Good".

56. The mid-point of Glebe Rise falls between number five and number nine Glebe Rise. Table 1 and Table 2 below show the distance from those addresses, to Littleover and to Derby Moor. This demonstrates that Derby Moor is closer to Glebe Rise than Littleover in terms of both straight line and walking distances.

Table 1: Number five Glebe Rise

Name of school	Straight line distance (using Synergy Database)	Walking distance (google maps)	Walking time (google maps)
Littleover Community School	1.027 miles	1.3 miles	30 mins
Derby Moor Spencer Academy	0.705 miles	0.9 miles	20 mins

Table 2: Number nine Glebe Rise

Name of school	Straight line distance (using Synergy Database)	Walking distance (google maps)	Walking time (google maps)
Littleover Community School	1.025 miles	1.4 miles	30 mins
Derby Moor Spencer Academy	0.711 miles	0.9 miles	20 mins

57. Table 3 below sets out the number of applications received by the LA from addresses within Glebe Rise for secondary transfer to Littleover since the 2017 / 2018 admission round, including whether places were offered and, where applicable, the oversubscription criterion under which each offer was made.

Table 3: Glebe Rise applications to Littleover over the past 10 years

Main Round Intake Year	Applications Received from Glebe Rise residents	Places offered	Distance of Offers (home to School)	Criterions under which offers were made	Notes
2017/18	1	1		Out of Area with Sibling	Appeal Allowed
2018/19	1	0		Not known	Offered higher preference
2019/20	0				

Main Round Intake Year	Applications Received from Glebe Rise residents	Places offered	Distance of Offers (home to School)	Criterions under which offers were made	Notes
2020/21	0				
2021/22	0				
2022/23	1	0		Not known	Offered higher preference
2023/24	0				
2024/25	0				
2025/26	0				
2026/27	2	1	1.050 miles	1 x Out of Area applicant offered place preference	1 x offered higher preference

58. The information in Table 3 highlights that in the last ten admission years, there have been few to no applications from Glebe Rise residents to Littleover. On the limited occasions when such applications have been made, either places have been offered at the School or a higher preference offer has been made. The reasons for there being little to no demand for places at Littleover from Glebe Rise in the last ten years are not clear: it may simply be that residents generally prefer their nearest catchment school, Derby Moor, which is ten minutes walking time closer to Glebe Rise than Littleover.

59. Further, it would appear that Glebe Rise residents will generate less than one school application a year as evidence currently stands. It is also open to Glebe Rise residents to apply to Littleover (paragraph 1.14 of the Code and criterions 5 and 6 in the Arrangements recognise this) and further, that in the past ten years when an application from Glebe Rise has been received, the applicant has either been offered a place at Littleover or been awarded a higher preference school.

60. Therefore, the available evidence does not appear to establish any disadvantage, and I conclude there is no unfairness.

Issue 1 (more distant streets are included within the School's catchment area, Issue 3 (isolated exclusion within the catchment boundary) and Issue 4 (surrounding streets further from the School are included)

61. The objection highlights that properties on Empress Road and Breedon Hill Road are approximately 2.1 miles from Littleover Community School yet are included within the catchment area. Glebe Rise is approximately 1.1 miles closer to the school than Empress Road and Breedon Hill Road but is excluded. The result being that properties substantially further away receive catchment priority over properties that are closer without, the Objector asserts, good reason.

62. As already described, the Code requires that catchment areas are reasonable and clearly defined. There is no rule which states that catchment areas cannot include more distant streets if it is reasonable to do so. However, the Objector considers that there is no logic to, or justification for, the fact that Glebe Rise is excluded while streets geographically connected to Glebe Rise such as Valley Road, Brayfield Road and Normanton Lane are included in the School's catchment with no explanation for the distinction.

63. As described earlier in this determination, the LA's records do not extend far enough back to confirm the original rationale for the boundary line, as this is a long-established catchment area. Glebe Rise is a cul-de-sac, accessed from Normanton Lane, which also lies within the same school catchment area (Derby Moor). The argument is, therefore, that rather than Glebe Rise being isolated, it is situated at the edge of a catchment area boundary.

64. There is no evidence that Glebe Rise has been treated any differently to any other street in the LA's area in the decision to include it in Derby Moor's catchment rather than Littleover's. So long as it complies with the Code and acts reasonably, a local authority has a broad margin of discretion to take into account a range of factors pertinent to its local area as part of making complex decisions that rightly fall to its judgment.

65. For the reasons already given in my conclusions to issue (ii), I do not find that it is unfair or unreasonable to exclude Glebe Rise and include more distant streets within Littleover's catchment boundary.

Issue 5: Absence of a coherent community rationale

66. The fifth issue the objection raises is the absence of a coherent community rationale for the School's catchment area. The objection recognises that electoral ward boundaries and school catchment areas are separate systems, but states that Glebe Rise lies within the Littleover ward and the wider Littleover community and the Objector considers that its exclusion from the School's catchment area further highlights the absence of a coherent or transparent, community-based rationale for the catchment boundary as currently drawn.

67. The Objector is wishing to make the point that there is a lack of a sensible rationale in the local (or community) context and that this is unreasonable. The "absence of a coherent community rationale" is a generalised matter to which the Code does not refer. I cannot therefore conclude that this aspect of the objection breaches the Code. For the reasons given

above, I do not find the continuance of the current catchment area to be unreasonable or unfair.

Issue 6: The School's catchment boundary does not appear to follow a clear geographic feature

68. The sixth issue highlights that the current boundary does not follow any clear feature such as a main road, river, railway lines, natural boundary or defined community division. The objection states this further highlights the difficulty in identifying a clear geographical or community rationale for the exclusion of Glebe Rise.

69. Catchment areas can be wholly contained within administrative boundaries, and even coincide with administrative boundaries, or equally may not, provided that their use does not amount to giving priority solely on the basis of residence within a local authority area. The crucial factor is that the area is "clearly defined" and its use can be considered "reasonable" (as required by paragraph 1.14 of the Code). There is no requirement (or even recognition) in the Code of a requirement for a catchment boundary to follow a clear geographic feature. I have discussed above whether or not the catchment boundary is reasonable and fair and have concluded it is.

Other matters

70. Having considered the Arrangements as a whole it appeared to me that there were other matters which did not conform with requirements of the Code. I brought these matters to the attention of the Admission Authority in my Jurisdiction and Information Paper of 22 April 2026. The LA responded to each of the matters raised and I refer below only to the sole matter which I consider (having carefully reviewed the LA's responses) does not conform with the Code (Code references are indicated):

71. Oversubscription priority 2 on page 16 of the Arrangements appeared to not comply with the requirements set out at paragraph 1.7 of the Code which states that (emphasis in the original):

> "…….the highest priority **must** be given, unless otherwise provided in this Code, to looked after children and all previously looked after children, including those children who appear (to the admission authority) to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. Previously looked after children are children who were looked after but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to a child arrangements order or special guardianship order). All references to previously looked after children in this Code mean such children who were adopted (or subject to child arrangements orders or special guardianship orders) immediately following having been looked after and those

children who appear (to the admission authority) to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. Oversubscription criteria **must** then be applied to all other applicants in the order set out in the arrangements."

72. Therefore, children adopted from state care outside of England should receive equal highest priority (i.e. priority 1 in the oversubscription criteria) to looked after children and previously looked after children within England.

73. The LA responded to this matter as follows:

> "The local authority notes the comment in relation to Oversubscription Priority 2 on page 16 of the Arrangements and its alignment with paragraph 1.7 of the School Admissions Code 2021.
>
> The intention of the Arrangements is to ensure that all categories of children required by paragraph 1.7 of the Code, including looked after children, previously looked after children, and children who appear to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in care as a result of adoption, are afforded equal highest priority within the oversubscription criteria.
>
> The local authority accepts that the current drafting may not make this sufficiently explicit within the structure of the published criteria, and that this could give rise to uncertainty in interpretation.
>
> To ensure full clarity and improve transparency for parents, the local authority will amend the wording of the oversubscription criteria to explicitly include all categories of children listed in paragraph 1.7 of the Code within the highest priority group, thereby ensuring the Arrangements clearly reflect the intended application of equal highest priority.
>
> This change is made for clarity of drafting only and does not reflect any change in policy, intent or practice."

74. As set out above, the Local Authority has told me that it will address this matter, which is welcomed. As the Local Authority has accepted that changes are required, I will not discuss them 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."

75. The Admission Authority must address these matters, as permitted by paragraph 3.6 of the Code, by 28 February 2027, if it has not already done so.

Determination

76. In accordance with section 88H(4) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I do not uphold the objection to the admission arrangements determined by Derby City Council for Littleover Community School, for 2027 / 2028.

77. I have also considered the arrangements under section 88I(5) and find that one element does not comply with requirements relating to admission arrangements in the way set out in this determination.

78. 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 element of the arrangements which does not comply with requirements must be revised on or before 28 February 2027 to dovetail with the deadline for determination of arrangements for 2028 / 2029.

Dated: 19 November 2026

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Emma Harrison