

Please reply to:



Admissions Consultation
Howard of Effingham School
Lower Road,
Effingham KT24 5JR

1st January 2020

Admissions Criteria September 2021 consultation

I am writing on behalf of The Bookhams' Residents Association as the Portfolio holder for Education & Young People and on behalf of the largest community of children at The Howard of Effingham. You will be aware that, apart from Effingham, The Bookham Villages form the closest community to the school, and that our Association and the vast majority of our residents are very supportive of The Howard.

1 Tie Break within catchment

As most of our residents' school journeys are by foot or bicycle, we continue to have concerns about the use of the NAS tie break (Note 4) on procedural fairness, clarity and ethical grounds. Since this unusual tie break was introduced by two Surrey schools, many new parents are confused by it and even the admissions experts at Surrey CC have made administrative errors in applying the NAS tie break.

Furthermore, the areas of the catchment that are favoured by the NAS tie break have had two new secondary schools open in addition to their existing two secondary schools that are marginally further away than The Howard, and there is a signed S106 agreement in place with Guildford Borough Council (the Planning Authority) such that a new 4 Form Entry secondary school will be opened in Ockham just outside the Howard's catchment area that has been sized to accommodate almost double the "estimated 346 secondary school places" that arise from development itself. According to Guildford's recently adopted Local Plan, the whole of this additional school's capacity is required to be open in time for the 2028 admission round, and GBC retains the option to bring forward some of this capacity sooner should it be needed. With Climate Change declared an emergency at all levels of governance, and the importance of reducing carbon emissions now widely accepted, there is no justification for the continued operation of the NAS tie break.

In contrast, the area of the catchment that is disadvantaged by the current NAS tie break (ie the Eastern end near Eastwick School) has only one alternative school nearby and the actual journeys to it are substantially longer than journeys to the Howard. The vast majority of children who will be displaced by NAS will have no alternative but to rely on vehicular transport. (The additional distances mean that walking is not feasible, and in any case, the routes are often dangerous. The off-road routes in the low-lying land around the river cannot be used at moment due to flooding and the alternatives are along very busy main roads on which there are no cycle routes until Leatherhead station is reached).

Applying the NAS tie break means that children whose school journeys are currently carbon neutral would become carbon positive if they had to travel to any other school.

Furthermore, The Howard's criterion applies the NAS tie break whether or not a place is available for the child, so it is likely that the school allocated to displaced children may not even be Therfield due to the massive house building targets being set for north Mole Valley. It means those in the East of Howard's catchment with a steadily lower priority at the NAS school ie the Bookham and Effingham villages will then be travelling past their local school through the west of the catchment to a school(s) much further away than HoE and Therfield.

This would be a travesty since the vast majority of children from the West & North of the catchment travel to The Howard by private car or bus with the route from the Horsleys across Effingham Common hardly ever cycled by pupils.

Given these changes in circumstance since the NAS Tie Break was introduced, we recommend that the Tie Break it is changed to give priority to those closest to the school.

2. Catchment area

The existing catchment has served the communities well and the incorporation of the Horsleys & the Boohams / Fetcham where the Howard is the nearest school was fair when introduced. This catchment together with the Sibling rules have also helped to reduce the post code renting scam that has previously displaced some children from the Bookham villages from the only school to which they can walk & cycle.

Since the last Admissions consultation, there have been changes around the edges of the catchment area that mean a revision to the catchment area itself is needed to ensure "procedural fairness". With the introduction of new primary and secondary school provision, the catchment area needs to be contracted so that children who *already* have an enhanced priority at their closest secondary school cannot be prioritised over children for whom the Howard is their closest school.

It is not procedurally fair to force children in some parts of the catchment into the "all other applicant" category of their Nearest Alternative School by giving a higher priority to other homes in the catchment for whom the Howard is *not* the closest school. The main areas of concern are homes that are closest to Cobham Free School and/or gain an enhance priority there via CFS's KT11 criteria. We also note that some homes in Ockham have been included in the Howard's catchment despite being closer to other secondary schools.

Summary

1. Note 4 & 5 Tie break to be straight line distance ie the same for both in & outside the catchment
2. Review outer edges of North & North West of the catchment.

David K G Cox OBE

Education & Young People
Bookhams Resident's Association