
LEEDS CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

I have read with interest the 'Community Engagement Survey for secondary school provision in the Wetherby and Boston Spa area'.

I do not think that it is a document that is fit for its purpose. While we appreciate that Leeds City Council (LCC) are driving the case for the Boston Spa site to be sold and a new school to be built in Wetherby, I had still expected that the consultation would reflect a professional level of accuracy, balance and detail which is lacking from that which has been published.

THE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESPONSE FORM

1. The Engagement Survey Response Form first asks respondents to identify themselves. I note that after publication the criteria by which respondents identify themselves has now been corrected to include both parents and pupils at Boston Spa, Wetherby and their primaries. Boston Spa, however, was built to serve a wider footprint than Wetherby. It has always served the more rural communities of Thorner, Scholes, Bramham, Bardsey, Harewood, Barwick in Elmet, Collingham, Shadwell and Thorp Arch. Why have parents and pupils from these primaries been discouraged from responding by being forced to choose to define themselves as 'Others'? This omission indicates a failure on the part of LCC to understand the very communities for which they are seeking to reorganise secondary provision.
2. Families across north Leeds have always chosen to send their children to both schools. They hold high aspirations for their children, and in this way both schools contribute hugely to social mobility in the city. Why have these families, who are significant stakeholders in the plans, also been reduced to the definition of 'Others'?
3. The consultation only includes three questions, and question 1 provides two choices 'if you agree'. There is no advice as to how to act if you do not agree. There is no lozenge to reply either 'I don't know' or 'I wish to keep two schools'. As a consequence this question will only provide deeply unreliable data and perhaps many abstentions. This question alone undermines the whole integrity of any conclusions that LCC might seek to present at the end of this process.

4. The integrity of the survey is further compromised by there being no safeguards as to the number of times a person can complete it.
5. It is significant that the survey does not seek the address of the respondent, leaving LCC with no way to triangulate the authenticity of the contribution.
6. The biggest single omission in the consultation is any reference to how LCC expect to achieve and maintain standards and outcomes in the new build. The consultation conducted by Boston Spa when seeking to join TGAT held, as its primary focus, the standards of outcomes for the children of the school. Leeds is already littered with expensive new buildings, where standards of achievement are not commensurate with the financial investment in the fabric, three of the worst examples being merged schools. We all had hoped that LCC might not have been choosing to repeat these previous errors in the outer north east.

THE SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

1. LCC states that Boston Spa has 'too few' students attending. They have not highlighted that we have a consistent four year rising roll, against every prediction made by Leeds City Council.
2. They make reference to 'outstanding schools' but offer no strategy to achieve this. This is, as stated above, in stark contrast to the approach taken by the Governors of Boston Spa in their consultation in May 2017.
3. They also state their expectation that they wish to see all schools 'good and outstanding'; these are very different judgements, and for the Governors of Boston Spa a further 'good' judgement would be an indication of coasting.
4. At the start of the consultation document LCC reference 'outstanding' but by the end this aspiration has been downgraded to 'good'; these phrases are not usually interchangeable.
5. LCC reference new schools in the east allowing the reader to assume these are secure and well developed in their planning. This is not the case, and those that are planned will only meet the needs of the population increase already attending east Leeds primary schools. It is a matter of public records that Leeds needs 500 school places in the east for 2020.
6. The consultation document also fails to recognise that, wherever they can, families will always choose to send their child to the best school they can reach, a principle that underpins the drift into North Yorkshire. This is the very issue that Boston Spa Governors seek to address through their partnership with TGAT.
7. LCC state that the schools are two miles apart. They might be 'as the crow flies', but for families there are 3.2 miles between the schools.
8. LCC make the argument that Wetherby should be the location for a new school because it is the main population centre, has good transport links and other facilities. What are the good transport links? What 'other' facilities does it have that are relevant to school children? Crucially they fail to recognise that if parents wanted to send other children to the town of Wetherby for their education they could do so now, but every year, and despite its 'good

transport links', an increasing majority of families choose Boston Spa over Wetherby.

9. Table 1 omits to state student preferences for September 2018. This data is important in identifying consistent trends. It is available to LCC but has been withheld.
10. Table 1 also ignores Post 16. It is astonishing that LCC would enter into a consultation on education provision in the locality without a single reference to Post 16 provision.
11. Table 2 is misleading as it represents the LCC definition as to what represents a child's closest school, which has been changed. It does not reflect the perceptions of the local communities nor the actual factors they take into account when considering secondary choices.
12. Table 2 shows the total number of nearest children to both schools as being 236 for the year 2018/19. Data presented previously showed that the number of children living in the nearest priority area at July 2017 for this intake was 313. This is a material difference and would lead the reader to a different conclusion on whether two schools were needed, as clearly neither school could accommodate all pupils if they decided to attend their local school if there was only one.
13. The budget figures presented are incorrect. The Boston Spa carry over into 2017/18 was only -£58,090. The suggestion that Boston Spa has a deficit similar to that of Wetherby is disingenuous. Boston Spa Academy has a larger budget than Wetherby therefore any deficit should be looked at as a percentage of the total budget, and should have been published as such.
14. When describing our budget position LCC has taken projected data from our budget model, ignoring the actual, and published this without any reference to Governors' consistent track record of prudent financial management.
15. When LCC want to make a different case they have ignored our budget model and used a different evidence base. On the 'spend per pupil' they have referenced old data from the DfE Benchmarking website for 2015/16, although the current data was plainly available to them. They have chosen not to demonstrate that our 'spend per pupil' is in line with both the national and Leeds average.
16. The broad generalisations about our building misleads the reader. The Boston Spa building is only six years younger than Wetherby High School but has been well maintained and has benefited from over £6,000,000 capital investment over recent years, including 14 Science labs, a 6th Form extension, indoor tennis centre, dance studio and additional sports hall.
17. In the 2017/18 Financial Year the Council spent £1,400,000 on re-roofing and replacing curtain walling and windows. This funding addressed all the identified key maintenance priorities, meaning the LCC's condition survey has no priority 1 actions and no priority 2, leaving only priority 3 actions due over the next 5 to 7 years.
18. To propose building a ten form entry secondary school on the existing Wetherby High School site is disingenuous. After the sale of their land to a supermarket the site is not large enough to accommodate a school with 1800

