

By: Mr L Ridings – Cabinet Member, School Organisation and Early Years  
Strategic Director, Education and Libraries

To: Cabinet – 22 April 2002

Subject: PROPOSED ENLARGEMENT OF LADY JOANNA THORNHILL (ENDOWED) PRIMARY SCHOOL, ASHFORD - OUTCOME OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Classification: Unrestricted

File Ref: SW/hb

---

Summary: To report on the outcome of public consultations and to seek Cabinet's agreement to the issuing of a public notice for the enlargement of Lady Joanna Thornhill (Endowed) Primary School by 210 places, bringing the school to a formal 2 form entry, with a Standard Number of 60.

---

## Introduction

1. (1) Public consultation commenced in January on a proposal to enlarge Lady Joanna Thornhill (Endowed) Primary School with effect from September 2003.

(2) This report summarises the results of the consultation process.

## Background

2. (1) The report to the School Organisation Advisory Board on 18 December 2001 detailed the background to the proposal for an increase in the number of primary places in Planning Area 3.

(2) Details of rolls and capacities of individual schools in the vicinity were given in the report on 18 December and are noted again below in Table 1.

**Table 1 Primary School Places in Planning Area 3**

|                        | Standard Number | Gross MOE Capacity | Roll Autumn 2001 | 2001 2002 | 2002 2003 | 2003 2004 | 2004 2005 | 2005 2006 |
|------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Lady Joanna Thornhill  | 42 *            | 315                | 312              | 342       | 366       | 378       | 380       | 398       |
| Brook PS               | 8               | 55                 | 41               | 45        | 48        | 45        | 43        | 41        |
| Totals                 |                 | 370                | 363              | 387       | 414       | 423       | 423       | 439       |
| <b>Surplus/deficit</b> |                 |                    | 7                | -17       | -44       | -53       | -53       | -69       |

(3) As the figures in the table show, the demand for places is forecast to grow steadily.

## **The Proposal**

3. (1) The project will provide six permanent classrooms (180 places), library area, IT room, two small group rooms and additional toilets. A new kitchen/servery is to be provided linked to the hall, some additional car parking spaces and an enclosed reception play area at the front of the school. This will allow for the removal of two temporary double mobile accommodation as well as the kitchen/dining hut.

(2) This proposal will enable the school to operate as a 2FE (420) place Primary School with a standard number of 60.

## **Public Consultation Process**

4. (1) A copy of the consultation document is attached as Appendix 1. Copies of the document were circulated according to the County Procedures for Review to all Ashford Schools, District and County Members and the local MP.

(2) Approximately 1,000 copies of the Public Consultation document were circulated.

(3) The document included a form on which respondents could express their views.

(4) A public meeting was held at the school on 31 January 2001. The meeting was chaired by Mr W Hayton. Also in attendance were Mr L Ridings, Cabinet Member for School Organisation and Early Years, Dr Ian Craig, Assistant Director (Schools and Early Years) and Mr Simon Webb, District Schools' Officer, Ashford.

## **Responses to the Public Consultation**

### *Written responses*

5. (1) In total 225 written responses were received of which 206 were in favour, 14 against and 5 undecided.

(2) A summary of responses is attached in Appendix 2. Responses to the main points are included in the District Schools Officer's comments in section 10 and Transport and Road Safety Implications in section 12.

### *Public Meeting Responses*

(3) A summary of comments, views and responses is attached as Appendix 3.

## **Views of the Local Member**

6. The local Member, Mr C Findlay, supports the proposal to enlarge the school.

## **Views of the Governing Body**

7. The governing body is in favour of the proposal.

## **Views of Ashford Borough Council**

8. Ashford Borough Council is fully supportive of the proposal.

## **Views of Canterbury Diocesan Board of Education**

9. The Schools Committee of the Board of Education, having studied the issues, is therefore not wishing to stand in the way of this development, but would wish to ensure that the Church of England schools to the east of Wye, which are amongst the smallest in the County are not disadvantaged by this enlargement.

## **District Schools Officer's Comments**

10. (1) There is a clearly demonstrated need for more primary places in Planning Area 3, and enlarging Lady Joanna Thornhill (Endowed) Primary School goes some way to achieving the required number.

(2) There is strong support for the enlargement in the responses to the written consultation.

(3) Concern was expressed regarding traffic flow and parking in Bridge Street, the main road through Wye. There is considerable congestion in the immediate vicinity, especially at the peak times, starting and finishing times.

## **Resource Implications**

### *Capital*

11. (1) A feasibility study for a six classroom extension has been drawn and costed at approximately £1.084m.

### *Revenue*

(2) The costs of additional necessary equipment for the classrooms will be the subject of a claim on the Re-organisation Fund. This fund has been formularised. The allocation will be £5,000 per class for each of the six classes. This total of £30,000 will be allocated in the first year that the enlargement takes place.

(3) The costs of additional teaching and support staff required as a result of the expansion would be funded through the formula budget of the school, which will increase to reflect the additional pupils and enlarged accommodation.

### *Human*

(4) The enlargement will require the recruitment of an appropriate number of teaching and support staff. Recruitment will be the responsibility of the governing body and will reflect curriculum need.

## Transport and Road Safety Implications

12. (1) The majority of pupils currently at the school live within a relatively short distance and either walk to school or arrive by car. The number of cars arriving at the main entrance, parking outside the school and in the Village Hall car park, during both the morning and afternoon, has given rise to concern during the consultation. See District Schools Officer's Comments in section 10.

(2) There will be a second KCC Public Consultation from Highways in Wye later in the spring, which will seek to obtain consensus from the residents and Parish Council on a scheme to relieve the daily traffic congestion. A nominal sum of £90,000 has been allocated for this task. The outcome of this second public consultation will have a significant impact on the pupils home to school transport.

(3) Where required, there is access to public transport within 10 metres.

(4) There are no specifically designed cycle paths in the vicinity of the school. However, in common with most schools with primary aged pupils, very few pupils choose to cycle to school. The school does take part in the cycling proficiency scheme.

## School Improvement Implications

13. (1) The enlargement of the school to a full 2FE school will eliminate the need for mixed age classes.

(2) The enlarged school would provide greater curriculum flexibility and opportunity for setting pupils.

## Links to School Organisation Plan

### *Forecast Rolls*

14. (1) The table below shows the position regarding present and forecast total primary school rolls and capacities in Ashford as shown in the School Organisation Plan. It is clear that there is a need for more places when housing development is taken into account.

|                            | No. on<br>Roll<br>Spring<br>2001 | 2001<br>to<br>2002 | 2002<br>to<br>2003 | 2003<br>to<br>2004 | 2004<br>to<br>2005 | 2005<br>to<br>2006 |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Ashford Primary<br>Schools | 9332                             | 9392               | 9391               | 9414               | 9384               | 9359               |

### *School Performance*

(2) When considering which school to expand in an area of population growth, the LEA will generally consider expanding schools with good levels of achievement and which are popular with parents.

(3) The most recent OfSTED inspection was undertaken between 14 – 16 June 2000. The key commentary advises that there is '*effective teaching in all year groups enables pupils to learn well, and the standards they attain are well above average*'. There were no areas identified in which significant improvement was needed.

#### *Parental Preference*

(4) The school is regularly oversubscribed in Year R and is often approached by parents new to the area seeking places in other year groups.

#### *Class Size*

(5) The proposal will allow the school to continue to meet the requirements to maintain Key Stage 1 class sizes at no more than 30 pupils

### **Proposed Timetable**

15. If the proposal is agreed, the following timetable is proposed:

|                                                                        |                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Issue Public Notice (if approved)                                      | 2 May 2002        |
| End of Public Notice (if approved)                                     | 1 July 2002       |
| Decision by Kent Statutory School Organisation Committee (if required) | 10 September 2002 |
| Provisional Opening                                                    | September 2003    |

### **Views of the School Organisation Advisory Board**

16. At its meeting on 25 March 2002 the School Organisation Advisory Board supported the proposals to issue a public notice to enlarge Lady Joanna Thornhill (Endowed) Primary School, Ashford by 210 places (6 classes) with effect from September 2003.

## **Recommendations**

16. Cabinet is requested TO AGREE to the issuing of a public notice to enlarge Lady Joanna Thornhill (Endowed) Primary School, Ashford by 210 places (6 classes) with effect from September 2003.

Simon Webb  
District Schools Officer – Ashford  
Tel: (01233) 898560

The local Member is Mr C Findlay.

---

### *Background Documents:*

None

### *Other Sources of Information:*

LEA School Organisation Plan

### *Previous Committee Reports:*

Report to School Organisation Advisory Board  
Report to School Organisation Advisory Board

18 December 2001  
25 March 2002

**Appendix 2****Proposed Enlargement of Lady Joanna Thornhill (Endowed) Primary School, Ashford, Kent****Summary of Written Responses**

Consultation documents distributed: 1,000

Responses received:

|                                | Support    | Against   | Undecided | Total      |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Parents at Lady Joanna         | 143        | 11        |           | <b>154</b> |
| Member of staff at Lady Joanna | 24         |           |           | <b>24</b>  |
| Governors at Lady Joanna       | 10         |           |           | <b>10</b>  |
| Governors from other schools   | 1          | 1         | 2         | <b>4</b>   |
| Interested Party               | 28         | 2         | 3         | <b>33</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>206</b> | <b>14</b> | <b>5</b>  | <b>225</b> |

**Main comments in favour of the proposal:**

|                                                      |    |
|------------------------------------------------------|----|
| • Enhancement of buildings a priority                | 45 |
| • Will improve teaching, organisation and facilities | 13 |
| • Forward Looking proposal                           | 10 |
| • School has excellent ethos and teaching            | 17 |
| • Car access and parking needs addressing            | 32 |
| • Move from split-year groups a priority             | 9  |
| • Support for Brook School enlargement               | 2  |
| • Bring younger families to Wye                      | 1  |
| • One way system is needed                           | 2  |
| • Funding for the play area                          | 4  |
| • Children's safety                                  | 3  |
| • Widen the bridge                                   | 2  |

**Main comments against the proposal:**

|                                                     |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----|
| • Traffic congestion in Bridge Street               | 10 |
| • Village school status threatened                  | 3  |
| • Brook School should be considered for enlargement | 2  |
| • Detriment of the village                          | 2  |
| • Safety and security of the children               | 1  |
| • Larger doesn't mean better                        | 2  |

**NOTES OF PUBLIC MEETING : 31 JANUARY 2002  
LADY JOANNA THORNHILL (ENDOWED) PRIMARY SCHOOL  
- PROPOSED ENLARGEMENT TO 2FE**

*KCC Representatives:*

|              |                                                      |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Mr L Ridings | Cabinet Member – School Organisation and Early Years |
| Mr W Hayton  | Chair – School Organisation and Advisory Board       |
| Ian Craig    | Assistant Director – Schools and Early Years         |
| Simon Webb   | District Schools Officer – Ashford                   |

*Apologies:*

|              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| Mr C Findlay | KCC Member |
|--------------|------------|

Attendance : 47

*Introduction by Mr W Hayton*

*Presentation by Simon Webb* – at the end of the presentation Simon Webb pointed out that there were currently two Public Consultations in Wye – one regarding the School Enlargement and the other regarding Traffic Flow – he emphasised that these are two separate issues.

*At the end of the Presentation, Questions were requested by Mr W Hayton:*

*Barbara Bushell, Chair of Wye Parish Council:*

expressed concerns about the traffic flow study and felt this was of paramount importance. She expressed concern that a decision was sought on the school enlargement when parking etc is such a problem.

*Simon Webb:*

replied that school enlargement will be linked to a decision on traffic flow. The decisions on traffic flow were at the behest of the Parish Council.

*Barbara Bushell:*

replied that the Parish Council would.

*Mr Hayton:*

stated that traffic flow is always an issue in school consultations.

*Ian Cooling – Resident:*

felt that the paper did not take into account the increase in population in Ashford and that only two schools are mentioned in the paper. He felt that other schools were also relevant and would like to see information eg spaces and traffic. He felt this was essential in making judgement.

*Simon Webb:*



replied that public consultation meetings have to produce information for a two-mile radius around the relevant school. In this case only Brook Primary School is within that radius. He also gave information about the expansion of Downs View Infant School which was linked to the expansion of Kennington CE Junior School. There are few spare places at primary schools in Ashford. Furley Park Primary School established in September 2002 is due to be enlarged to 2FE. Godinton Primary School has been enlarged. Landmass is critical in expansion of a school ie there must be space on site to allow for the enlargement. Lady Joanna Thornhill is a good school and needs more provision by enlargement to 2FE. This would be more appropriate than building a new school. Kent County Council encourages expansion of primary schools. There are few other schools in Ashford suitable for expansion.

*Michelle Hamer, Chair of Governors – Brook Primary School:*

stated that Brook is also a small primary school of only two classes. The governors are concerned as their wish is to develop from two classes to four classes and increase roll to 75-100 pupils. She also stated that children from Brook village attend Wye school. She felt that a larger peer group would be important to the school. There are also concerns about facilities in Brook school, particularly the hall. She also stated that there is a farmer with land adjacent to the school who would give the land to the school in suitable circumstances. KCC had had requests to develop the school hall and sports facilities. She urged KCC to consider developing the school and stated that an estimate of £580K had been vastly overestimated. She felt that if the school were expanded then pupils would attend the school from other areas of Ashford.

*Simon Webb:*

stated that one of the reasons for expansion of a school is growth in the area. Eighteen months ago the governing body consulted with KCC about its standard numbers and had reduced it. The reasons for the proposed expansion at Wye school included Imperial College expanding. Also, development continued in the area. If houses had been build closer to Brook school and the development had been of more than 10 houses then KCC would negotiate with the developer for a developer contribution. He stated that governors had to look at ways of funding the gym and hall, ie outside money could be used rather than school budget. SEED Challenge fund could enhance the building if the school has new money and the project is linked to the School Improvement Plan then KCC could support with Government matched funding.

*Ian Craig:*

stated that Lady Joanna Thornhill school is at a very difficult size at the moment. – between 1FE and 2FE. The Headteacher is eager to improve this situation. There is increased pressure on the school and this makes expansion vital. Brook Primary School is also a difficult size – small with under 100 pupils which makes it difficult to manage the school budget. 120 pupils would make the school a more manageable size. Forecasts of roll make expansion unlikely in the foreseeable future as school has not reached capacity. If roll increases then expansion to four classes could be

considered. The school is of a difficult size for different reasons than apply at Wye.

*Susan White, Governor at Chilham school, Resident of Kennington:*  
stated that a new school is greatly needed at Goat Lees due to increase in population.

*Simon Webb:*  
stated that there is a site for a school at Goat Lees but that it is better to enlarge a good school.

*Susan White:*  
expressed concerns about environmental issues.

*Simon Webb:*  
stated that environmental issues were involved but that there is not enough money for a new primary school at the moment. However there are plans. There are few schools with spare places, particularly the popular schools, It is better to enlarge good existing schools rather than move to other sites and build new.

*Susan White:*  
asked about sites at Repton Manor – the old barracks site.

*Simon Webb:*  
stated that this is in the strategic plan.

In the medium/long term the Barracks site would be used – probably for a 2FE school. Planning would be around 2006 minimum. There would be three other sites anticipated for other new schools. Halcro consultants will report to Ashford Borough Council on growth in the area. The report is expected in around nine months. This will then be considered by KCC and Ashford Borough Council jointly.

*Barbara Bushell:*  
the consultation document is in the best interests of all pupils in Ashford and indeed Wye.

*Simon Webb:*  
stated that the travel plan should be linked to the expansion but is a separate issue.

*Kevin Grout, Headteacher, Lady Joanna Thornhill School:*  
gave a full background explanation as to why the expansion is needed. In particular he mentioned that the school is a difficult size – between 1FE and 2FE. He stated that the intake of pupils at the school fluctuates – with approximately two-thirds of pupils coming from Wye and the rest from outside the immediate area. Planning is difficult in current circumstances. An intake of 60 pupils is desirable. With an intake of 42 the school is challenged, A capacity of 2FE would ensure better curriculum planning and monitoring and raise standards. The potential benefits are excellent. The proposed

expansion would enable the school to get rid of the current mobile classrooms and the 1960s building. A new block would be provided which would improve conditions for pupils with first-class accommodation. ICT facilities would be available and Foundation Stage pupils would have their own play area. The library would also be improved and the canteen. Supervision of pupils would be easier for staff. He conceded that parking is an issue. The Village Committee and the Parish Council must be involved in transport issues

*Mr Hayton:*

stated that Mr Grout's presentation had answered many questions.

*Andrew Burden, Resident of Wye – lives on main road:*

stated that it often takes 10-15 minutes to get out of his drive. He also stated that he was in favour of the expansion at the school. Two of his daughters had been taught in mixed age groups and one in a single age group. He also stated that two meetings in Wye in two weeks seemed excessive. He also queried why there had been no public consultation meeting four years ago when the numbers of pupils in school had increased. He also mentioned traffic flow.

*Simon Webb:*

stated that when the last expansion happened in 1996 he had not been in post. However, he agreed that there had been no public consultation.

*Kevin Grout:*

explained that the school had been instructed to increase its standard number to 42. Traffic in and around the village is a 'grim reality'.

*Ian Cooling:*

asked if situations are the same now as in 1996. Mutual consent and dialogue with the governing body, Headteacher and District Schools Officer. OfSTED had given a good report. Demand is there for a 2FE school. Communication needs to be better now than in 1996.

*Ian Craig:*

stated that he, too, had not been in post in 1996. However, in 1999 KCC asked the school to meet a temporary increase. He conceded that improved communications would have helped. He said that mobiles are not satisfactory and that the public consultation is intended to formalise the replacement of the mobile classrooms. If it had been the case that the school could not maintain an intake of 60 pupils then the temporary accommodation would have to remain and the school would eventually revert to a 1FE school.

*Ian Cooling:*

asked if it was a temporary arrangement and consensus would be necessary.

*Ian Craig:*

stated that to increase the size of the school formally to 2FE would enable it to be more effective. The school is currently in a difficult situation, regarding size.

*Mr Hayton:*

stated that advice would be taken regarding the traffic problems.

*Andrew Burden:*

stated that the increase to a standard number of 42 had been a temporary solution put through without public consultation.

*Ian Craig:*

said this was not so. It had been a temporary increase at the time to cope with pressures. It is essential to remove the mobiles if the school is to become a 2FE school by providing permanent buildings. Current buildings are unsatisfactory. The school will have 14 classes rather than the current 12, ie two extra classrooms will be provided instead of four mobiles. Additional facilities could also be provided at little extra cost.

*Richard Bow Resident/Parent:*

supported the proposal. He stated that as there are 60 pupils in Reception failure to agree the proposal would be a step backwards. He also mentioned transport – Bridge Street car park capacity. KCC needed to address this with 'joined up government' please. He felt that the two proposals – traffic flow and school expansion – should be considered jointly.

*Mr Hayton:*

stated that he is on the Board of Highways and would pass on this comment.

*Ian Craig:*

gave further reassurance. County Hall's Green Travel Plans are joint between Education and Libraries, Social Services and Highways and Planning. The issue is being considered at Member level. It is a priority and is Cabinet driven.

*Mr Hayton:*

stated that green issues are given a high priority. It is relevant in both rural and urban areas. Plans are in place.

*Michelle Hamer:*

again raised the issue of Brook school. She stated critical mass is low, the school has no facilities. The population of Wye is increased by Imperial College but no new post currently. She felt there is a difference between potential and actual intake of school and that it may fluctuate. As there is spare capacity elsewhere why could these schools not take pupils? Indeed Brook school had had two good OfSTED reports and needed facilities.

*Ian Craig:*

offered to visit Brook school, with Cabinet Member, Leyland Ridings to see the facilities at first hand. He stated that for a small school to be viable it needs 100+ pupils. He would discuss this further at the proposed site visit.

*Mr Ridings:*

confirmed that he would be pleased to visit Brook school with Ian Craig.

*Ms Wise, Resident:*

asked why buses could not be used to reduce cost to users.

*Simon Webb:*

stated that there was a link up paper. Government and governing body re travel plans. Ashford Borough Council must give consent for the plan to work. The Headteacher is working on it.

*Kevin Grout:*

stated that this is a concern for the school – linking traffic plans. There is a possibility that a link with parents may help.

*Mike Lucas, Parish Councillor:*

asked whether a 'walking bus' would be suitable?

*Kevin Grout:*

confirmed that this had been tried earlier in the year. It is difficult to resolve the issue of the Travel Plan. Numbers and the school being in a rural area meant that sufficient numbers were not available to make a 'walking bus' viable. There are practical problems but pupils are encouraged to walk to work if this is possible.

*Barbara Bushell:*

stated that in addition to the 'walking bus' the Parish Council would like other ideas considered. Possibly land lease for drop off points outside the main village with pupils walking into school. Babbie Report had been promised by Highways. Expected by 7 March 2002. This is too late for return of response forms on public consultation on school expansion. She asked if it could be available earlier?

*Simon Webb:*

stated that there will be a public exhibition for preferences regarding traffic flow but no definite timescale had been set (probably late Spring).

*Barbara Bushell:*

this is needed now!

*Simon Webb:*

reiterated that the two public consultations are separate. Although linked they are separate and traffic is the responsibility of Highways. He will chase this up.

*Ian Craig:*

stated that Dr Alistair Jefford would be informed.

*Mr Morris, Chair of Governors, Lady Joanna Thornhill School:*

apologised for lateness – due to late arrival of his train. He reiterated that the two issues are separate but stated that the school is most important. He, and the governing body, wish the school to move willingly to 2FE. Traffic flow can be the only argument against this proposal. The governing body wants a village school but a bigger school with two extra classes to provide better balance. He stated that the Headteacher knows all the pupils individually and

there is a good atmosphere in school of safety and community. The school was praised by OfSTED. The governing body feels the replacement of mobile classrooms is the right thing. He feels that the traffic issue can sort itself out – children are more important. He feels the roads are a disgrace but urges everyone to go for the best for the children. He conceded that it may be safer not to use the Village Hall car park. The expansion of the school will provide enhanced facilities for future generations.

*Comments were requested:*

*Mike Edge, Chair of Lady Joanna Thornhill Trust:*

stated that the school had been set up for village children. The Trust owns the land and helps the Headteacher to refurbish. The Trust also provides assistance for local pupils to go to University or College by providing grants. The school is growing. He has had three sons at the school and is interested to see it move on. He expressed thanks to the Headteacher.

*Vinnie McLean, Parent:*

stated that her daughter had sat on books in a mobile and this is not ideal – this was four years ago.

*Barbara Bushell:*

stated that the Parish Council praised the hard work and dedication of the school and looked to the future – seeing the school as a place of excellence.

*..... (parent):*

expressed concern about split year groups. Bilting is outside the three-mile limit. School bus is available but not all use it.

*Ian Cooling:*

observed that there had been a lack of notification of meeting. The public consultation document had only been available from a locked cupboard in Wye library.

*Ian Craig:*

stated that the consultation is an eight-week process and is standard procedure. A further copy could be sent to Wye Library.

*Pamela Laws:*

stated that she had been involved in sending out the documents and that perhaps it should have been pointed out to Wye library that the document should be on public display.

*Simon Webb:*

confirmed that the end of the consultation period is 7 March. The Headteacher will distribute copies widely in the village. Objections are possible. KCC report to be ready by 25 March. New provision at school to be available in September 2003.

He also confirmed that the concerns over traffic flow would be relayed to Dr Alistair Jefford.

2<sup>nd</sup> draft – 16 April 2002

He urged everyone to respond to the consultation.

*Mr Hayton:*

thanked everyone for participating in the meeting.

---

Meeting ended at 8.45 pm.

Lady J, Wye – PC Meeting 31 January 2002 - notes