

From: Matt Dunkley, Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education

To: Shellina Prendergast, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Subject: Proposal to expand Rosherville Church of England Academy and relocate the school to a new site.

Decision Number: 22/00009

Classification: Unrestricted

Key Decision: Yes, >£1m

Past Pathway Decision: Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee – 1 of March 2022

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Northfleet & Gravesend West
Conrad Broadley and Dr Lauren Sullivan

Summary:

This report advises the Cabinet Member of the proposal to expand Rosherville Church of England Academy in two phases and relocate the school to a new site.

Recommendation:

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is asked to agree the proposal to expand Rosherville Church of England Academy, London Rd, Northfleet, Gravesend, Kent DA11 9JQ, increasing the Published Admission Number (PAN) from 20 places to 60 places in two phases, facilitated by a relocation onto a new housing development.

1. Introduction

1.1. Kent County Council (KCC) as the Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places are available. The County Council's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2022-26 is a five-year rolling plan which is updated annually. It sets out our future plans as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent. A copy of the plan can be viewed from this link:

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/education-skills-and-employment-policies/education-provision>.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC) is overseeing three new developments in Northfleet, Gravesham. These developments are known as Cable Wharf, Harbour Village and Grove Road. The total of new housing is not yet fixed, but it is anticipated that the developments will generate between 1FE and 1.5FE of new primary demand. Analysis of the provision in the Northfleet and West Gravesend planning group indicates that there is insufficient capacity to accommodate this demand.
- 2.2. The Rosherville Church of England Academy is a small 20 PAN primary school, sited on a challenging site on top of a quarry cliff. The site is unsuitable for several reasons. It is restricted by topography on the south and east boundaries, and by the B2175 (London Road) to the north. The site is made up of several smaller parts that have separate freeholders, including the Church Wardens of the Diocese of Rochester.
- 2.3. The school buildings are either very old or in need of replacement, with the main building being of Victorian era. The remaining buildings require constant maintenance to remain fit for purpose. Whilst there is no immediate danger to the school buildings on the existing site, the chalk cliffs are sheer, at about 12m high. The school cannot expand on its existing site.
- 2.4. The proposal addresses two issues. That of increasing the primary provision in the area and providing Rosherville Church of England Academy with a new site and modern buildings, within the Cable Wharf development, but less than 200 metres from the existing school site. This issue has been mentioned in previous Kent Commissioning Plans.
- 2.5. With a PAN of 20, Rosherville Church of England Academy has to carefully manage smaller class sizes to remain a viable school. Increasing the school's PAN to 1FE and then again to 2FE will make the school much more financially viable and support the future of the school.
- 2.6. Ofsted deems Rosherville Church of England Academy to be a school that 'requires improvement'. It is a popular school with parents. The school is part of the Aletheia Anglican Academies Trust.

3. Proposal Details

- 3.1. The proposal would see Aletheia Anglican Academies Trust expand Rosherville Church of England Academy by 40 Year R places, each year to become a 2FE primary school. This expansion will be in two phases.
- 3.2. The first phase will see the school expand from 20 PAN to 1FE. This expansion should take place for the September 2024 intake. This phase will be facilitated by a move from the London Road site to a new site and building in the Cable Wharf housing development. The new building will initially be constructed to provide the core and infrastructure of a 2FE school, with 1FE of teaching accommodation (seven classrooms), ready for use. Another seven teaching rooms will be built,

but not finished. This maintains a 1FE net capacity that reduces the risk of the school having to exceed that capacity.

- 3.3. The second phase will see the school expand from 1FE to 2FE, facilitated by the finishing of an additional seven teaching rooms. This expansion will take place when demand requires it. Most of the new primary demand is forecast to be generated from the aforementioned Cable Wharf, Harbour Village and Grove Road developments in Northfleet.

4. Alternative Proposals

- 4.1. There is one other alternative option to provide additional provision, that of expanding Lawn Primary School. This alternative was rejected, because Lawn Primary School, being a very small site and will encounter challenging Highways constraints.
- 4.2. A completely new 2FE school would cost in the region of £10m, but comes with a possibility of creating overprovision in the area, which could have a detrimental effect on Rosherville Academy and other local schools. Therefore, by relocating Rosherville Academy into the new building, it would result in the provision of 240 additional primary places rather than 420, thus mitigating the risk of overprovision whilst providing the academy with new, fit for purpose premises.
- 4.3. If no further action is taken in the longer term, Kent County Council will find it extremely difficult to provide sufficient primary school places in the Northfleet and West Gravesend planning group.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. **Capital Funding:** KCC will manage and deliver the project.
- 5.2. Feasibility studies have been undertaken and identified that the cost of the scheme will likely be in the region of £10m to 10.5m. There are a lot of uncertainties in the construction trade at the moment. However, each component of the cost will be considered separately to see what can be reduced. A further paper will be presented to the Cabinet Committee once the financial aspects of the scheme are finalised.
- 5.3. The land is being awarded to KCC as part of the Cable Wharf housing developer's S106 contribution.
- 5.4. There are several funding streams that are being investigated. Gravesham is a Section 106 authority and nearby, there are a number of extant S106 monies that have not yet been allocated to a project. Work is underway to ascertain how many could be put towards this project, and this amount is likely to be between £4.7m and £5m, once index linking calculations have been completed.
- 5.5. The Rosherville site on London Road is not owned by KCC so no direct capital receipt can be received. However, talks are underway with the Rochester

Diocese and the Church Wardens to investigate the possibility of securing a capital receipt from the Church Warden's land which can be applied to the project cost.

- 5.6. Negotiations are also underway between the Academy Trust, KCC and the Department for Education (DfE) to try to secure a contribution towards the project cost.
- 5.7. The residue would be sourced from the CYPE Capital Budget. A better indication of this amount will be available if the proposal is progressed and the planning process complete.
- 5.8. The new building is being designed to incorporate additional space to facilitate either a nursery, a specialist resource provision or both, if future consultations and forecasts indicate that such provisions are required for the community. This will be formalised during the planning process.
- 5.9. In addition, an allowance of up to £2,500 may be payable to outfit each new teaching room with appropriate ICT equipment, such as touch screens or projection equipment.
- 5.10. **Revenue Funding:** Should the scheme progress, £6,000 per newly provided learning space would be provided towards the cost of furniture and equipment. This would be provided to the school to purchase required equipment. The school would receive funding for the additional pupils that it admits in line with the funding allocated to schools through KCC's Schools Funding Formula.
- 5.11. **Human:** The school will appoint additional staff as required; utilising revenue funding allocated through the Schools Funding Formula for these additional pupils.

6. **Other Corporate Implications**

- 6.1. The provision of sufficient school places is a statutory duty and contributes to the Strategic Business Plan Priorities to ensure that "Children and Young People in Kent get the best start in life".

7. **Kent Policy Framework**

- 7.1. The 'Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision, 2021-25 and 2022-26.

8. **Consultation**

- 8.1. In accordance with the statutory guidance, the Academy Trust conducted the consultation. The results were:
- 8.2. 10 Responses received

7 in favour
0 opposed
3 commented but did not express an opinion

8.3. The Aletheia Anglican Academies Trust have considered the results of the consultation and have resolved to progress the proposal. The Trust will advert the responses and decision to the Education Funding Agency when they apply for their funding agreements to be amended, in accordance with the regulations laid down in the guide, "[Making significant changes to an open academy](#)".

9. **Legal Implications**

9.1. The provision of sufficient school places is a statutory duty and contributes to the Strategic Business Plan Priorities to ensure that "Children and Young People in Kent get the best start in life"

9.2. KCC legal colleagues will ensure that no caveats, conditions or legal constraints exist that could create challenges to the proposal.

10. **Data Protection implications**

10.1. The Aletheia Anglican Academies Trust is the data handler. KCC will not handle any personal data relating to this decision.

11. **Views**

11.1. The Local Members affected by the change, Mr Conrad Broadley and Dr Lauren Sullivan have been informed of the proposal.

11.2. Mr Broadley said:

"I hope to see the school keep its name and respect and build on the areas rich garden and engineering heritage which could become part of the children's education. Definitely don't call the school Cable Wharf as historically there was never a wharf, just piers."

11.3. Dr Sullivan said:

"In principle I support the proposal to expand to school in my divisions. I welcome the increased SEN places and the early years element to the proposal. It is imperative to build connecting communities so the developers must ensure that there is a safe walking route that allows access to the new school from the main London Road. I would also need assurance that the architects provide sufficient car parking on the school site. This is not an endorsement for the planning application or building scheme as devil is in the details, always. This statement was written at the early concept principles and not at the stage of planning. As I am a representative from Gravesham Borough Council on the Ebbsfleet Planning Committee I must declare this."

11.4. Both the school and the Trust are fully supportive of the proposal.

12. The Area Education Officer has said that the analysis of the demand that will be created by the three new housing development in Northfleet shows that about forty new year R places are needed. All alternatives have been considered, and the conclusion is that the best solution is to relocate and expand Rosherville Church of England Academy.

13. Conclusions

13.1. The proposal will increase primary provision in the Northfleet area, and secure the future of Rosherville Church of England Academy. It is anticipated that the draw on the CYPE Capital budget would be considerably less than the draw from an entirely new 2FE school.

14. Recommendations

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is asked to agree the proposal to expand Rosherville Church of England Academy, London Rd, Northfleet, Gravesend, Kent DA11 9JQ, increasing the Published Admission Number (PAN) from 20 places to 60 places in two phases, facilitated by a relocation onto a site in a new housing development.

15. Background Documents

15.1. Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision.
www.kent.gov.uk/educationprovision

15.2. An equal opportunities impact assessment has been completed that indicates that there are no issues.

16. Contact details

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