

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

DECISION NO:

24/00019

For publication *[Do not include information which is exempt from publication under schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972]*

Key decision: YES

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Expansion and Relocation of Rosherville Church of England Academy

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, I agree to:

- I. authorise the allocation of £14,900,000 from the Basic Need capital budget for the expansion of Rosherville Church of England Academy, London Road, Northfleet, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 9JQ, increasing the Published Admission Number (PAN) from 20 places per year group to 60 places per year group, facilitated by a relocation onto a new site on Crete Hall Road, Northfleet, DA11 9AA, for September 2025.
- II. delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure to, in consultation with the Director of Education, enter into any necessary contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision; and
- III. agree for the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements, with authority to enter variations as envisaged under the contracts.

1. Reason(s) for Decision:Reason for the decision

On 11/03/2022, through Decision number 22/00009, the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills agreed the proposal, subject to final financial information. This proposal has now been costed and agreement is now being sought by the Assistant Director North Kent, Ian Watts, for funding approval.

The Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC) is overseeing three new developments in Northfleet, Gravesend. These developments are known as Cable Wharf, Harbour Village and Grove Road. The total of new housing is anticipated to generate between 1FE and 1.5FE of new primary demand. Analysis of the provision in the Northfleet planning group indicates that there is insufficient capacity to accommodate this demand.

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.

Background

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.

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.

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.

As previously reported to CYPE Cabinet Committee, to further support the new developments in the area, the new school will also include a 26 place nursery and additional SEN space for a Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) or similar.

Following an inspection that took place in September 2022. Ofsted deems Rosherville Church of England Academy to be a 'GOOD' school. The school is rated 'OUTSTANDING' by SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) in their most recent inspection.

It is a popular school with parents. The school is part of the Aletheia Academies Trust.

There is one other alternative option to provide additional provision in the locality, that of expanding Lawn Primary School. This alternative was rejected, because Lawn Primary School, is also situated on a very small site and will encounter challenging Highways constraints along with the logistical challenge of needing to reconfigure existing buildings before introducing additional accommodation on to the already constrained site.

In reviewing the options for introducing additional provision into the area, it was acknowledged that a completely new 2FE school would come with a possibility of creating overprovision in the area, which could have a detrimental effect on Rosherville CE Academy and other local schools. Therefore, by relocating Rosherville CE Academy into the new building, it would result in the provision of 280 additional primary places rather than 420, thus mitigating the risk of overprovision whilst providing the academy with new, fit for purpose premises.

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 planning group.

Securing Kent's Future

This proposal will help to maintain KCC's strategic role in supporting schools in Kent to deliver accessible, high quality education provision for all families and supports avoidance of more significant costs from possible closure of the school.

KCC, as the Local Authority (LA), has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places are available. This duty applies to Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision, as well as mainstream settings. The County Council's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2024-28 is a five-year rolling plan which is updated annually. It sets out KCC's future plans as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent. A copy of the latest plan can be viewed from this link:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/education-provision/education-provision->

[plan](#)

Financial Implications

Capital

Feasibility studies have been undertaken and identified that the cost of the scheme will be £14.9m. The project attracts a high cost for several reasons, including Compliance with DfE Net Zero principles and EDC requests to conform to Ebbsfleet Garden City design principles.

Project Cost Breakdown

Description	Value
2FE Basic Need – design & build, including Nursery and SRP space	£11,094,000
Compliance with DfE OS 2022 (including Net Zero)	£1,496,000
S106 obligations	£967,000
KCC direct costs	£419,000
S106 Risk items*	£440,000
Contingency (including costed risk register/EWN)**	£484,000
Total Project Budget (proposed ROD value)	£14,900,000

It is the view of KCC officers that these costs represent the worst-case scenario, with all possible risks needing to be addressed. As the build progresses it is hoped that all risks can be mitigated at a lower cost, thus resulting in some saving against the proposed value of £14.9m

The sum relating to compliance with DfE OS 2022 (including Net Zero) includes a range of additional features over previous new school specifications to meet DfE new build requirements, such as Triple glazing / PV / Green roof / M&E upgrades / a range of other minor improvements.

The Section 106 obligations relate to EDC requirements, including a 3G Pitch to enable wider community use of the site, enhanced public use facilities within the building and an entrance plaza.

Given this scheme is more expensive than a standard 2FE Primary School build, KCC Officers and colleagues from Aletheia Academies Trust have worked hard to maximise external funding to mitigate the impact on the Council's own Capital Budget. The table below, shows the anticipated funding for this scheme:

Funding Source

Amount	Source
£6,000,000 (estimate at time of reporting)	DfE Contribution (Schools Rebuild Programme)
£420,000 (estimate at time of reporting)	EDC Sports Grant (for inclusion of a 3G pitch)
£3,556,800	S106 Developer Contributions
£4,923,200	CYPE Capital Budget (balance)

Due to the condition of the buildings on the existing Rosherville CE Academy site, the Trust, with the support of KCC submitted a bid to the DfE under the School's Rebuild Programme (SRP). This was successful and latest indications from Senior DfE Officers are that the allocation will be just in excess of £6,000,000.

The Developer Contributions sum represents what has been secured through signed agreements to date. Not all has been banked due to payment being linked to housing delivery triggers, but the developments they relate to are underway and receipts have started to come into the Council.

The EDC are currently consulting on other developments in the Northfleet/Ebbsfleet area. Where

appropriate, any developer contributions derived from those new developments can be attributed to this scheme in addition.

To inform forward planning and robust budget monitoring of the BN Capital Programme a sum, in excess of £15m, has been earmarked within the programme for this scheme. These new costs, therefore, represent a small saving against that provision.

The Rosherville site on London Road is not owned by KCC so no capital receipt can be received.

An allowance of up to £2,500 may be payable to the school, to outfit each new teaching room with appropriate ICT equipment, such as touch screens or projection equipment. This will be met from the overall Capital allocation for this project.

Revenue

Should the scheme progress, £6,000 per newly provided learning space, would be provided towards the cost of furniture and equipment, such as tables, desks, chairs, cabinets and learning resources.

The school would also receive funding for the additional pupils that it admits in line with the funding allocated to schools through KCC's Schools Funding Formula.

Both of these revenue allocations will be met from the Growth Funding provision held within the dedicated school's grant.

Human

The school will appoint additional staff as required; utilising revenue funding allocated through the Schools Funding Formula for these additional pupils.

Equalities implications

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

Legal Implications

The contracting for the project will be managed by the Director of Infrastructure. All works will be fully compliant with the building and planning regulations.

DPIA (if relevant)

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

Cabinet Committee Recommendations and Other Consultation:

This decision was considered at the meeting of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 6 March 2024.

Any Alternatives Considered and Rejected:

There is one other alternative option to provide additional provision in the locality, that of expanding Lawn Primary School. This alternative was rejected, because Lawn Primary School, is also situated on a very small site and will encounter challenging Highways constraints along with the logistical challenge of needing to reconfigure existing buildings before introducing additional accommodation on to the already constrained site.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken, and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

None



27 March 2024

.....
signed

.....
date