

By:	Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning and Skills
To:	Education Cabinet Committee – 19 March 2013
Subject	Decision No. 12/02013 - Proposed expansion of Dartford Bridge Primary School
Classification:	Unrestricted

Summary:	This report informs members of the results of the Public Consultation
Recommendations:	The Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills on the decision to issue a public notice to expand Dartford Bridge Primary School.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Dartford district section of the Kent Commissioning Plan 2012 - 2017 indicates a need to commission additional primary capacity in the Dartford North planning area.

1.2 On 12 September 2012 the Education Cabinet Committee recommended to the Cabinet Member of Education, Learning & Skills that a consultation takes place on the proposal to expand Dartford Bridge Primary School.

1.3 This reports sets out the results of the Public Consultation which took place between Monday 12 November 2012 and Monday 24 December 2012. A public meeting was held on 14 November 2012.

2. The Proposal

2.1 It is proposed to enlarge Dartford Bridge Primary School by 30 reception year places taking their PAN to 60 (2FE) for the September 2013 intake. Successive reception year intakes will offer 60 places each year and the school will eventually have a total capacity of 420 pupils.

3. Bold Steps and the Kent Commissioning Plan

3.1 This proposal will help to secure our ambition “to ensure every child will go to a good school where they make good progress and can have fair access to school places” as set out in ‘Bold Steps for Kent’.

3.2 The Dartford section of the Kent Commissioning Plan indicates a need to commission additional primary places in Dartford North.

4. Outcomes of the Public Consultation

4.1 A significant majority of respondents were in favour of the proposal. The concerns raised at the public meeting are explored in paragraph 5.2 below.

4.2 A summary of the comments received during the consultation period are given at appendix 1.

4.3 A summary of the questions, comments and responses made during the meeting are given at appendix 2.

5. Views

5.1 Local Member

The Local Member is Mr Avtar Sandhu. Mr Sandhu has not yet indicated whether he supports the proposal.

5.2 The following views were raised in the public consultation meeting:

(i) Concern over the potential for a dilution in standards at the school.

The responsibility for maintenance of standards at the school is vested in the Head teacher, Ms Samantha Crinnion and the Chair of Governors, Mr Alastair Jefford. Both made it clear during the public meeting that they believed that neither performance standards nor ethos were at risk.

(ii) Residents concern over the potential for an increase in traffic or local parking issues.

The school mainly draws in pupils from the estate so most of the children will walk to school. There is a safe pedestrian footbridge that enables children to walk from the Joyce Green Lane area to the school.

(iii) Access to the school is through the front entrance which is readily accessible via the Fasttrack bus service.

(iv) Car parking is limited due to the layout of the development which is planned to reduce the dependence on car transport by using low parking/higher density housing masterplanning. These issues would need to be considered in the wider planning, following a survey by Kent Highways.

(v) The school will revisit its travel plan and walking buses may be part of the solution.

(vi) Concerns about disruption to learning during build.

The first floor rooms are bare concrete and would need to be finished and provisioned, but there is no expectation of any major construction requirement.

(vii) Where possible, any disruptive building work will be limited to times when the school is closed. The head teacher will have access to the project manager and will be able to exercise complete control over any work being done, particularly if it is felt that health and safety may be compromised.

(viii) Concerns over staff parking.

There is limited capacity on the site and an increase in car parking spaces is an issue. Part of the feasibility study will consider what options there are to increase the car parking capacity. The site is compact, but there is under-utilisation of space at the back and size of the site.

(ix) Concerns about proving the demand for additional places that would require Dartford Bridge to expand and whether that entails drawing children from areas outside the Bridge development.

The local authority has a statutory duty to ensure that sufficient school places are provided. The case for the expansion is predicated on the forecasting methodology in use. Forecasts clearly indicate a significant and sustained increase of school age children in the North Dartford planning area. The original design and build of the school was to provide a 2FE school, when demand required it. That demand has now materialised.

(x) Dartford Bridge is a local authority school and uses the KCC admission arrangements. It is the local authority policy to ensure there is sufficient surplus capacity in the area to give parents practical preference options.

(xi) *Concerns about whether an increase from 30 to 45 is more practical.*

The school was conceived and built as a 2FE school and there are seven teaching rooms on the first floor. Increasing the intake to 45, is a more challenging school model, particularly considering the existing budgetary issues over the site. In admission law, because the school has unused teaching space, then any admission appeals are likely to be upheld.

5.3 Area Education Officer

The AEO fully supports this proposal. Demand in North Dartford planning area is outstripping capacity and forecasts indicate that this increasing demand is likely to continue.

5.4 Governing Body

The Governing Body of Dartford Bridge Primary School are supportive of the proposal.

5.5 Headteacher

The head teacher of the school has been fully consulted and is supportive.

5.6 Parents

A majority of the parents who responded, support the proposal.

5.7 Pupils

The pupils of the school have been offered the opportunity to contribute.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the consultation. No comments were received and no changes needed to be made to the Equality Impact Assessment following the consultation period.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 Capital funding is required to complete this expansion. The funding available comes from an annual Government allocation, topped up, where eligible, with Developer contributions. There are no capital costs during 2013/14 as building will commence in 2014/15. Estimated costs for 2014/15 are £200,000. We still await confirmation from the DfE of our 'basic need' capital allocations for 2013/15

8. Recommendations

8.1 The Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills on the decision to issue a public notice to expand Dartford Bridge Primary School.

9. Background Documents

Dartford Bridge Primary School consultation document

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/DartfordBridge/consultationHome>

Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

http://www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/priorities_policies_and_plans/priorities_and_plans/bold_steps_for_kent.aspx

[https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/education-and-learning/plans-and-consultations/strategic-plans/Commissioning%20Plan%20for%20Education%20Provision%20Kent%202012-17%20FINAL%20\(Sept-2012\).pdf](https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/education-and-learning/plans-and-consultations/strategic-plans/Commissioning%20Plan%20for%20Education%20Provision%20Kent%202012-17%20FINAL%20(Sept-2012).pdf)

Education Cabinet Committee report – 12 September 2012 – Primary Commissioning – Dartford District

<http://kent590w3:9070/documents/g4880/Public%20reports%20pack%2012th-Sep-2012%2010.00%20Education%20Cabinet%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

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Proposal to expand Dartford Bridge Community Primary School, Dartford

Summary of Written Responses

Printed Consultation Documents distributed: 400

Consultation responses received: 6

A summary of the responses received showed that:

	In Favour	Undecided	Opposed
Governors	1		
Staff			
Parents	4		1
Pupils			
Other			
Totals	5		1

Comments in favour of the proposal:

- Excellent school, with good community involvement.
- By providing more places, more children will have excellent start to their education.

Comments against the proposal:

- Lack of parking – new car park needs to be built that can be used by all staff and visitors to the Dartford Learning Campus.
- Lack of signage to direct visitors to the school.
- Safe, clear pathway for children & parents to use into campus.
- Need zebra crossing across Fastrack road.
- Need school hall big enough to accommodate all the children.

Proposal to expand Dartford Bridge Community Primary School

Summary of Public Consultation Meeting

Purpose of the Meeting

- To explain the proposal to expand Dartford Bridge Community Primary School
- To give members of the public an opportunity to ask questions and comment
- To listen to views and opinions

Kent County Council are proposing that Dartford Bridge Primary School increase its Year R intake to 60, taking the proposed total capacity of the school from 201 places to 420 places.

A short presentation outlining the proposal for expansion was given by Simon Webb.

Statement from Chair of Governors, Alastair Jefford

Governors have discussed the proposals and are fully supportive. The infrastructure is already in place to accommodate the extra children but have significant concerns relating to parking, arrival and departure times.

Governors would like to know whether there is a mechanism whereby places could be reserved solely for children from the development rather than the wider community of Dartford. Many of the residents are displeased they are unable to get their children into local school. Would it be possible to enlarge by 0.5FE in September with another 0.5FE in the January?

Unfortunately not. It is unlikely that the local authority could agree to a phased entry as the County favours September intake only.

Statement from Headteacher, Sam Crinnion

School has been in state of influx since opening in 2009 and is operating on a permanent building site. Phase 3 of the development is coming on stream and it is increasingly difficult to offer places to children from the development because when the school first opened places were available to the wider community.

Have huge concerns regarding health & safety and whether school is operating within legal guidelines. Would like clarification from KFM re fire certificate for school hall, as possibly using without a valid fire certificate.

When development was originally planned there was additional parking earmarked for staff and parents opposite the school but this has now been built on by Taylor Wimpey, so this remains an issue.

Question	Response
<p>Have concerns whether able to get children into school, despite having a child at the school and one at the nursery. Taylor Wimpey are selling the houses on the proviso that children from the development will be accommodated in local school.</p>	<p>Perhaps school could be proactive and approach Taylor Wimpey about how children admitted to the school.</p> <p>HT advised that unfortunately parents cannot name a school unless they have evidence of residency which isn't guaranteed until</p>

	exchange of contracts which is where the system breaks down.
My eldest son has left to go to secondary school but I have another son in the nursery and am worried I will not get him in because we do not live on the Bridge development. Unfortunately, there are no other schools in Dartford I would like him to attend.	The local authority cannot give guarantees that your child will be admitted to the Bridge. In the event that the proposal to increase intake to 60 is agreed, the odds are more likely.
My main concern if the school increases is parking and the disruption during drop off and pick up times as health & safety of the children is paramount.	<p>I am in agreement with the proposals in principle but the development was built on the assumption that people would walk or use the fast track but in reality this doesn't happen. School places were originally offered to the wider community of Dartford so people drive to school and due to lack of space, parking is a real problem. The whole issue means we are moving away from original ethos.</p> <p>The local authority advised that a separate consultation would be undertaken by the planning and highway authorities to address the issues surrounding parking and traffic flows.</p>
The speed at which some people drive through the development is worrying, especially as there is no signage to denote school site. Not sure whose responsibility it would be to provide signage, Taylor Wimpey, the school?	<p>As stated earlier, the headteacher said when the development was originally planned, it was felt traffic levels would be low as the ethos was for people to walk to the school. Unfortunately in reality this has not happened so parking is a significant issue.</p> <p>The local authority were in agreement that the issue of parking should be addressed through discussions with Taylor Wimpey and Dartford Borough Council, especially as the plans have altered substantially since the development originally proposed. The local authority asked if the school could provide background information regarding this point.</p> <p>Headteacher said she was really fearful of something dreadful happening because of the traffic/parking issues – need to have school signage in place and perhaps flashing warning lights to warn drivers a school is in the area.</p>
What is the mechanism to deal with what is being discussed here tonight to ensure that the infrastructure is in place?	<p>The local authority advised that the Education Committee will look at the impact of adjoining schools, community and Highways issues to try and mitigate them.</p> <p>The local authority suggested the signage</p>

	issue is perhaps something that can be taken up with the local member, outside of this meeting.
I notice from the timescales you give the expansion proposals will not be considered until March 2013, however, applications for admission to the school have to be in by January.	The local authority was hoping to move the Committee date forward, or perhaps add in an additional one. However, the people in admissions are aware of the situation so there will be a degree of flexibility.