

By:	Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning and Skills
To:	Education Cabinet Committee – 19 March 2013
Subject	Decision No. 12/02012 - Proposed expansion of Fleetdown Primary School, Dartford
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 Fleetdown 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 West 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 Fleetdown 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 13 November 2012.

2. The Proposal

2.1 It is proposed to enlarge Fleetdown Primary School by 30 reception year places taking their PAN to 90 (3FE) for the September 2013 intake. Successive reception year intakes will offer 90 places each year and the school will eventually have a total capacity of 630 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 capacity in the Fleetdown planning area.

4. Outcomes of the Public Consultation

4.1 A 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 Mrs Penny Cole. Mrs Cole said:

This is an outstanding school and I am assuming that by the lack of parents not attending the consultation they are generally not against the proposal. My only concern is that more children would be driven to the school as the Fleet Estate itself is a small community so the extra capacity would be filled from elsewhere and probably further than may be considered walking distance, ie. Darenth or The Brent area and this would cause extra congestion around the school. I'm not sure how we can tackle this but the issue must be considered during the planning stage.

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, Mrs Angela Konarzewski and the Governing body. Both made it clear during the public meeting that they believed that neither performance standards nor ethos were at risk.

Mrs Konarzewski delivered a clear and focussed speech in which she assured parents that she would not let the ethos or standards of the school deteriorate and that the staff were fully committed to the proposal to enlarge the school.

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

Access to the school is via Lunedale Road. The surrounding roads are largely residential, and drop off and pick up parking can cause traffic issues. These issues would need to be considered in the wider planning, following a survey by Kent Highways.

The school mainly draws in pupils from the Fleet estate so most of the children will walk to school. Possible solutions include additional parking/stopping restrictions, installation of a turning area inside the school and walking buses.

(iii) Concerns about disruption to learning during build.

Where possible, 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.

(iv) 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 very large with underutilisation of much of the lower field area. Constraints exist over green belt scheduling, but that would not prevent relocation of sports fields.

(v) Concerns about the need for additional places that would require Fleetdown to expand.

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 Fleetdown planning area.

5.3 Area Education Officer

The AEO fully supports this proposal. This enlargement is one of three proposals for the Fleetdown/Greenhithe/Swanscombe area, due for September 2013. Demand in this part of Dartford district has currently outstripped capacity and forecasts indicate that this increasing demand is likely to continue

The AEO is of the belief that this enlargement is not only necessary, but the most cost-effective and sustainable solution to increased demand in the immediate area.

5.4 Governing Body

The Governing Body of Fleetdown 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 £150,000. 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 Fleetdown Primary School.

9. Background Documents

Fleetdown Primary School consultation document

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/Fleetdown/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

Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2012-2017

<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](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 Fleetdown Primary School, Dartford

Summary of Written Responses

Printed Consultation Documents distributed: 400

Consultation responses received: 13

A summary of the responses received showed that:

	In Favour	Undecided	Opposed
Governors			
Staff			
Parents	9		4
Pupils			
Other			
Totals	9		4

Comments in favour of the proposal:

- Keen to see continued progress being made at school.
- Will be of benefit to our children.
- Looking forward to new build.

Comments against the proposal:

- Lose family feel of school.
- Accommodation too small.
- Increased traffic will cause parking problems and make it dangerous for children.
- Fear if class sizes increase, standards will fall.

Proposal to expand Fleetdown Primary School, Dartford

Summary of Public Consultation Meeting

Purpose of the Meeting

- To explain the proposal to enlarge Fleetdown Primary School
- To give you an opportunity to ask questions
- To listen to your views and opinions

Kent County Council is proposing that Fleetdown Primary School increase its Year R intake to 90, taking the proposed total capacity of the school from 420 places to 630 places.

The demand for Reception Year places is currently in excess of capacity. Medium and long term forecasts indicate that the higher number of primary age children will continue to increase further.

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

Statement from Headteacher, Angela Konarzewski

School have been approached by the local authority about expanding this outstanding school, with amazing staff and supportive parents. HT felt it was an opportunity for wider community to access the standard of education presently offered at the school. HT assured parents that standards would be maintained and that Fleetdown would continue to be a beacon school of excellence. Benefits include additional funding to enhance infrastructure, staff and resources within the school and conditional upon this, the HT was happy to accept the proposals.

Headteacher asked for clarification that the expansion would take place year on year and not all at once.

Growth would be incremental, with first 90 reception intake in September 2013 and would grow, year on year. Has to be implemented this way as would impact hugely on surrounding schools.

Question	Response
Attended amalgamation meeting sometime ago and during those discussions it was intimated that school would have new building, is this case?	No. New builds are no longer an option due to financial constraints imposed upon local authority now. Local authority will make sufficient improvements to meet statutory requirements for the number of children attending the school. There is limited flexibility as to what can and cannot be accommodated to improve facilities for community use. HT explained the school already has facilities available to the community for hire and use outside of school hours.
Will the playground be extended to accommodate extra children?	Yes. The playground and outside space will be compliant with what is expected for a 3FE school.

<p>Have discussed structural changes but what about teaching staff, crucially the deaf unit which is attached to the school – what provision has been made to accommodate this – will funding still be available?</p>	<p>Funding equates directly to the number of children within school. Funding will increase substantially to allow for the appointment of extra staff – how that is managed is determined by the headteacher and governors.</p> <p>Headteacher said school had recently appointed four outstanding teachers and will ensure standards are maintained throughout this process. The headteacher assured parents that the vulnerable children at Fleetdown would continue to receive 1:1 tuition.</p> <p>Funding will be based on the assumption of 30 children in reception class for the full year, August to September – so effectively the local authority will forward fund to ensure the school does not go into deficit.</p>
<p>School took an additional 30 pupils last year 2012, if this proposal does not go ahead, what will happen?</p>	<p>The local authority hoped the proposals would go ahead. If not there will be one year group (or spike) which goes through the school – it is difficult to manage but the funding will follow the children through.</p>
<p>So funding is in place now and cannot be removed?</p>	<p>Yes, there is a set formula and each school makes a return based on head count. School will receive the additional funding directly and determines how spent.</p>
<p>Can understand why local authority wishes to expand outstanding schools but obviously if you are expanding other schools within the area it is going to have a huge impact on traffic.</p>	<p>Local authority explained that there would be a separate consultation with the County, Borough Councils, local residents etc to discuss the highway and planning issues surrounding these proposals. The road network will be looked at sufficiently to try and avoid congestion around the local schools.</p>
<p>The nursery currently on site is an excellent but not part of the school – will this provision continue to be available?</p>	<p>HT advised several improvements have been made to the nursery provision at the school, it is outstanding and a great asset so will continue to be accommodated on site.</p>
<p>There is a lot of expansion of good or outstanding schools do local authority plan to close any schools?</p>	<p>No. The local authority needs all the additional provision. The local authority are heavily involved in an initiative to help support low performing schools so a higher level of education can be provided for the children.</p>
<p>Will there be an opportunity, before the consultation closes, for the children and young people to be consulted? Feel it is very important to get their views.</p>	<p>The local authority confirmed that the children and young people will be consulted so their ideas can be taken on board. Unfortunately the local authority is not in a position to accommodate everything on the 'wish list'.</p>

<p>Will the school be getting permanent brick built buildings or temporary structures?</p>	<p>The new buildings are likely to be demountable, which are modular builds complete with air conditioning, toilets. They are probably better than some of the existing accommodation at the school, with a life span of 60 years.</p>
<p>Can the school cope with the additional 30 children from September 2013 as the space in KS1 hall is already quite limited.</p>	<p>The headteacher said the school hall was quite a good space for children at the moment but capacity may be squeezed to take the additional 30 children. The increase in pupil numbers will be gradual so the space within the school can be adapted to suit the needs of the children, for example the KS1 library could become a classroom. The school just needs to use the space to the best advantage for the children whilst the improvements are made.</p>
<p>As part of the proposed expansion will there be a disabled lift for children with special needs in the new building as school needs to be DDA compliant.</p>	<p>The headteacher said the pupil requiring wheelchair access can be accommodated on the ground floor so initially there will be no need for a new lift for at least two years. The lift can be accommodated and has been looked at by the senior leadership team.</p>
<p>Reminded the headteacher that under the Equalities Act the school had a statutory duty to provide accessible accommodation for children with special needs. Assuming the school decides to expand, they will have to draw up plans for the adjustment.</p>	<p>The local authority said, as Fleetdown Primary School was a county school it would have to be compliant with whatever legislation is in force.</p> <p>Funding will not come from basic need but from the SEN budget and in that sense school will have to meet the needs of those children.</p>