

By:	Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning and Skills
To:	Education Cabinet Committee, 19 March 2013
Subject	Decision No. 12/02019 - Proposed expansion of Whitehill Primary School, Gravesend
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 Whitehill Primary School

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 The Gravesham district section of the Kent Commissioning Plan 2012 - 2017 indicates a need to commission additional primary capacity in the Gravesham East 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 Whitehill Primary School.

1.3 This reports sets out the results of the Public Consultation which took place between Monday 26 November 2012 and Monday 21 January 2013. A public meeting was held on 29 November 2012.

## **2. The Proposal**

2.1 It is proposed to enlarge Whitehill 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 Gravesham section of the Kent Commissioning Plan indicates a need to commission additional primary capacity in the Gravesham East planning area.

## **4. Outcomes of the Public Consultation**

4.1 A majority of respondents were undecided about 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 Members are Mr John Cubitt & Mr Bryan Sweetland. Mr Cubitt and Mr Sweetland said:

*It is clear that there is a need for a greater number of primary school places to meet the needs of the growing population of Gravesham. So from a pragmatic standpoint we do support the expansion at Whitehill provided that the school receives support in addressing the areas of concern which are detailed below.*

- *The latest published Ofsted 2011 shows plenty of room for improvement.*
- *The school has a larger than average proportion of pupils who do not have English as their first language. (Ofsted)*
- *The proportion of pupils entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) is larger than the national average. (Ofsted)*
- *The number of pupils that have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is larger than average. (Ofsted)*
- *Access to the school is a cause for concern.*
- *Some of the existing accommodation requires refurbishment.*

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

#### *(i) Concern over the potential for a dilution in the ethos of the school.*

There were concerns raised at the public meeting about the possibility of the ethos of the school being eroded with the increase in size, primarily because it would attract more children for whom, English is not a first language.

The headteacher, Mrs Jane Porter maintained that the school was completely inclusive and any such increase would not impact on the learning of any pupil.

#### *(ii) Concerns about the existing school buildings*

Several correspondents, including the headteacher, commented on the state of repair of existing school buildings. The AEO confirmed that the intention of the local authority was to ensure that following expansion, the school was fit for purpose. While Basic need funding could not be used to maintain or repair the school, there were other funding streams that might accommodate this, depending upon meeting the criteria.

The feasibility study indicates that the site size is capable of accommodating 3FE.

### **5.3 Area Education Officer**

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

### **5.4 Governing Body**

The Governing Body of Whitehill 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 small 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. The estimated cost for 2013-14 on this expansion is £40,565. This has been included within the 2013-14 capital programme although 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 Whitehill Primary School

## 9. Background Documents

Whitehill Primary School consultation documents

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/WhitehillPrimarySchool/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](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](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 – Gravesham District

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

### Lead Officer Contact details

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## Proposal to expand Whitehill Primary School, Gravesham

### Summary of Written Responses

Printed Consultation Documents distributed: 400  
 Consultation responses received: 32

A summary of the responses received showed that:

	In Favour	Undecided	Opposed
Governors			
Staff	1		
Parents	7		5
Pupils	3	15	1
Other			
<b>Totals</b>	11	15	6

#### Comments in favour of the proposal:

- Because then you get to teach more children and we can make more friends.
- I think it will be a good idea to expand this excellent school to give other children the chance to learn as well.

#### Comments against the proposal:

- It would not go well because there would be too much kids in the playground.
- The playground would be inadequate for the increase in children so how will you make extra playing space.
- Living so close to the school I see the chaos the traffic brings already to residents and have witnessed a couple of accidents involving the children.
- I feel that these spaces would be taken up with an increase in non English speaking children which would put yet more pressure on teachers and the other children would fall behind.

## Proposal to expand Whitehill Primary School

### Summary of Public Consultation Meeting

#### Purpose of the Meeting

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

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

In 2010 Whitehill Primary School agreed to a temporary enlargement to accommodate the increasing demand for primary school places.

Historically before Mrs Porter was appointed there was Whitehill Infant School and Whitehill Junior Schools. Both schools were amalgamated in 2005 because the number of children in the area dropped significantly and did not require a 3FE school. Mrs Porter became headteacher and has driven the standards up, to be one of the most outstanding schools in the County.

The school already has 21 classrooms as it used to be a 3FE, alterations will be necessary to ensure that the children have consistency and they will be recognised in the feasibility report. All building work will be agreed, with the school maintaining control over the works to minimise disruption, with the health & safety of pupils, parents and staff being paramount.

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

Question	Response
Biggest concern is the impact of parking and cars on the surrounding area. Fear for the safety of the children and how the school will cope.	A lot of questions have centred on highways and safety. School originally planned as 3FE so parking should be fine but as part of the feasibility study we will ask the highways department to conduct a traffic survey to see if traffic calming measures need to be put in place.
An additional problem will be that children from a wider area will be travelling to the school, causing more traffic chaos – has the authority looked at the wider impact?	Whitehill is in the centre of the Gravesham Planning Area surrounded by a number of schools. A concentric circle highlights where the children are likely to come from and I think the parents who want this school will travel from a limited area, because there a certain amount choice already.
School doing very well and will grow in popularity. If that is a fact people are going to travel from further away as it is now regarded	The points you raise will be looked at under the highways report. Officers will come at peak times to ascertain what happens re traffic flows

<p>as a high performing school. Will the possibility of putting in a pelican crossing be looked at under the feasibility report?</p>	<p>etc so it can be included in the recommendations to Cabinet Members and Highways.</p>
<p>What other schools are you looking at? Why is Wrotham Road not included?</p>	<p>Wrotham Road was expanded a few years ago but is in the Gravesham West planning area so is not included in this presentation. We are extremely limited as to number of school we can enlarge because their footprint does not allow for expansion.</p> <p>Kings Farm – could expand.  Chantry will be expanded in 2015  Rosherville school will be relocated and enlarged on Springhead quarter, once built.</p>
<p>Concerned about the increased immigration and how these children, mainly eastern Europeans will impact on the school as resources are diverted to accommodate their needs.</p>	<p>A number of schools within the Gravesham area have an excellent record of taking in eastern European children and working with them. Whitehill, Wrotham Road, Cecil Road and Chantry have worked together to nurture the expertise to help support other schools.</p> <p>The number of eastern European families within the Whitehill area is now dropping as they are relocating or migrating back to their country of origin.</p>
	<p>Tracking data at the school shows that once the eastern European children have been in school for a year they tend to make equitable progress with the other children.</p>
<p>There is concern about the standard of education children are receiving as more foreign students attend the school. I do not feel the children are getting the support because resources are being directed elsewhere.</p>	<p>I can only reiterate that our children do make the same levels of progress.</p> <p>The majority of eastern European children have quite high levels of intelligence so as they go through school; they actually enhance the levels of performance at the school.</p>
<p>Differentiation is very good in this school. Years ago there was an influx of Sikhs and I think sometimes it is difficult to accept change in a school. I think what these children bring is a plus not just for the school but for Gravesham as a community.</p>	
<p>What facilities, if any, are going to be affected whilst the building works go ahead. For example, this school had a swimming pool, long since gone, but am concerned about loss of playing fields or school hall being turned into temporary classrooms.</p>	<p>The original size of school was for 3FE, we know some alterations will have to take place to ensure that we have right accommodation but I do not believe the school hall or other facilities will need to be used as classrooms.</p>

	The new reception class in September 2013 will work through in existing accommodation, as will successive years. In the last two years we may need to add accommodation but cannot see that the green spaces will be touched.
My son who is at senior school has just gone through a rebuild at his school and found it very disruptive, so had whole year of turmoil. My younger son also experienced the same thing and on occasion I had to report the contractors on health & safety breeches e.g. building dust. My concern is for the existing pupils at the school and how it could impinge on health & safety and ability to learn.	Feasibility study will take place within next 2-3 weeks and will look to what is needed to accommodate 630 pupils, i.e. look at toilets, sports facilities, car parking, and entrance – all statutory requirements before the school can move to a 3FE. There will be minimum build at Whitehill and do not feel it will disrupt or impact on the school greatly. If we need to put additional accommodation on site hopefully this will take place during the summer holidays. If you think health & safety regulations are being breached then please let the local authority know.

**Headteacher, Jane Porter**

I think generally the proposals are a very positive step for the school as it gives teachers a bigger team to work with and provides better standard of education for the children. Am concerned there will be adequate resources to maintain the building, particularly the roof, as in the past we have been able to move the children to other areas if there were problems – would the roof be considered as part of the feasibility study.

If the roof is found to be faulty and needs repairing the cost will be taken out of the maintenance grant and not basic need funding. Kent has limited funding for maintenance works – property will assess how essential work is and County will have to determine outcome. I have to warn you there are a lot of schools on that list.

I think you have just contradicted yourself as you talk about a bare shell which needs to be fitted out to become a classroom; would have thought that a room would have included making it water tight and not passing off to someone else's budget.	<p>There are different ways we can managed this if accommodation already on site and not fit for purpose we could ask the headteacher why it was not dealt with it. If she said school not using for education purposes – no money to put right we would consider under basic need. My understanding of the question I thought you were talking of extended area of the roof – if whole roof that is poor may be landlord responsibility which comes out of maintenance. If not used as classrooms and we need to update for the growth would have to use of the basic need funding for that.</p> <p>If more than 25% of the roof needs maintenance then it becomes landlord responsibility.</p>
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Leyland Ridings thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for the questions that had been asked. He encouraged everyone to send in their comments by the closing date, 21 January 2013.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm.