

By:	Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning and Skills
To:	Education Cabinet Committee – 19 March 2013
Subject	Decision No. 12/02017 - Proposed expansion of St John's Church of England Primary School, Sevenoaks
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 St John's Church of England Primary School.

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 The Sevenoaks district section of the Kent Commissioning Plan 2012 - 2017 indicates a need to commission additional primary capacity in the Sevenoaks 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 St John's Church of England Primary School.

1.3 This reports sets out the results of the Public Consultation which took place between Monday 19 November 2012 and Monday 14 January 2013. A public meeting was held on 22 November 2012.

## **2. The Proposal**

2.1 It is proposed to enlarge St John's Church of England Primary School by 15 Reception Year places taking their PAN to 30 (1 FE) for the September 2013 intake. Successive Reception year intakes will offer 30 places each year and the school will eventually have a total capacity of 210 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 Sevenoaks section of the Kent Commissioning Plan indicates a need to commission additional primary capacity in the Sevenoaks planning area. This proposal is one of three in that district.

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

4.1 A small 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 John London who 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 an increase in traffic or local parking issues.*

It is acknowledged that parking and access to the school may need to be considered as part of any redevelopment of the site and Property Group have factored this in to their feasibility studies.

A new traffic survey will be sought in parallel to the planning process, in order to clearly define the impact (if any) of additional traffic which may result from this proposal. Once full information is available, the School Travel Plan will be updated.

The Bayham Road crossroads is recognised as particularly challenging for both parking and for children walking to school. The feasibility study will need to liaise with Highways and SDC to consider what could be done to make this area safer for children and local residents.

*(ii) Concerns about sympathetic building.*

There is a concern that any new build would not be congruent with the existing building, or that of the immediate local area. The planning process is inclusive and it would be expected that residents would be able to have their concerns and suggestions considered as part of that process.

A project manager would be appointed and the head teacher will maintain complete control over any work being done.

### **5.3 Area Education Officer**

The AEO fully supports this proposal and, having considered other commissioning options, is of the belief that this enlargement is not only necessary, but is the most cost-effective and sustainable solution to increased demand in the immediate area.

All primary schools in the Sevenoaks planning area were considered and proposals have been put forward for three schools, of which St John's is one. No other schools in the planning area can be enlarged without a full rebuild. Such rebuilds would be unaffordable using Basic Need funding, as well as a poor return on public funds. It would also likely take at least two years longer, by which time, the local authority would be at serious risk of failing in its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places.

### **5.4 Governing Body**

The Governing Body of St John's Church of England 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**

Half the parents who responded, support the proposal.

## 5.7 Pupils

The pupils of the school were offered the opportunity to respond.

## 5.8 Diocese

The Diocese of Rochester has been consulted and are happy to support the enlargement of church schools.

## 5.9 Other Respondents

Local residents and the town council have responded and listed their concerns about the increase in traffic in the area and the difficulties in parking and movement in the Bayham Road area during drop off and pick up times.

## 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 £385,000. 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 St John's Church of England Primary School

## 9. Background Documents

St John's Church of England Primary School consultation document

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/StJohnsCoE/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 – Sevenoaks 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 St John's Church of England Primary School, Sevenoaks

### Summary of Written Responses

Printed Consultation Documents distributed: 400  
 Consultation responses received: 10

A summary of the responses received showed that:

	In Favour	Undecided	Opposed
Governors	1		
Staff			
Parents	2		2
Pupils			
Other	2	1	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>

#### Comments in favour of the proposal:

- This is essential to accommodate the large numbers of siblings that will come through the school as a result of the increased numbers taken to date.
- There will be a high level of demand from local families as the school is very popular due to the great improvements that have been made there.

#### Comments against the proposal:

- There are road safety problems in Bayham Road which must be addressed before this expansion goes ahead as the safety of the children is paramount.
- This is a sham. The school is already practically at the level proposed.
- A visually attractive design would have a less detrimental impact on neighbouring properties, as would external finishes that blend well with the garden surroundings.
- It is possible that the limited space and finance available for new buildings will result in an unattractive, over-development of the garden site and inadequate spacing between the new buildings and neighbouring residential property.

## **Proposal to expand St John's CofE Primary School, Sevenoaks**

### **Summary of Public Consultation Meeting**

#### **Purpose of the Meeting**

- To explain the proposal to expand St John's CofE 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 St John's CoE Primary School increases its Reception Year R intake to 30, taking the proposed total capacity of the school from 105 places to 210 places.

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

In 2010 St John's CoE Primary School agreed to a two year temporary enlargement to accommodate the increasing demand for primary school places.

With the increase in numbers of children and staff, there will be a need to improve and upgrade the infrastructure accommodation, which might include toilets, main hall, parking, access and hard and soft play areas. It is hoped that this can be achieved on the back of previous granted planning permission.

#### **Statement from Chair of Planning Committee representing the Governing Body, Derek Moore**

The proposals speak of enlarging from 105 to 210 but in actual fact there are 184 currently on roll at this school, so the increase is not so dramatic.

Since being in post the headteacher has totally transformed the school and standards continue to rise with a recent Ofsted outcome of Good. The school is now the first choice for many parents in the area.

The benefits of agreeing to the expansion proposals include, no mixed age class groups, additional resources to benefit the children and better allocation of staff.

Due to the nature of the school site, the main disadvantages include car parking, access, speed of traffic and the fact that an additional two classrooms are required.

The expansion in terms in numbers means little than officially recognising the number of children attending the school and should not be a concern. However, the environmental impacts such as increase in traffic need to be addressed immediately.

#### **Statement from Headteacher, Sally Quirk**

The school and staff are committed to maintaining the small school church ethos and will continue to provide an excellent standard of education.

The PAN increased in 2010 from 15 to 30 temporarily and with increasing numbers of casual admissions the school roll currently stands at 184 with little or no impact on the children themselves.

With expansion comes the benefit of providing specialist teaching and extending the curriculum and no mixed age groups. The staff has greater opportunities with the additional resources provided.

The school will have 8 classes over the next 7 years and the local authority has agreed to fund an extra 2 classrooms and staff room.

The problem regarding the road network and increased traffic will need to be looked at immediately, with the possibility of extended road crossing and crossing required outside the school.

On the whole I feel this is a positive development for a small church school.

**Statement on behalf of the Rochester Diocese, Gary Cooke**

The Diocese welcomes the opportunity to expand church schools to the wider community and therefore supports the proposal.

Question	Response
<p>Agree children have to be educated somewhere but my concern is the increase in traffic on an already heavily congested road. I think the local authority need to look at the access onto school site, with an entry and exit to ensure less congestion.</p>	<p>The traffic impact is considered in the planning and highway process. The local authority will have to satisfy the highway and planning authorities that expansion is appropriate and the impacts of traffic acceptable and mitigated.</p>
<p>I wish it recorded that I share the same views of the previous speaker.</p>	<p>Highways are always an issue and will be built into the scheme. The local authority will try to mitigate this as best we can.</p>
<p>I have worked on safety on behalf of the Residents Association for a number of years and we have attempted, on several occasions to instigate traffic calming measures in Bayham Road but met resistance from Joint Transportation Board at County because of not reported incidents. With hindsight our argument would have been more weighted if we had joined forces with the school, lobbying parents. We have undertaken speed watch patrols and would like to see more signage and perhaps a pedestrian crossing installed to encourage more children to walk to school.</p>	<p>Parents are working with the school on a traffic project by staggering school opening and closing times. We are open from 8am-6pm to hold our sporting clubs and additional activities and this helps with congestion at drop off and pick up times. We are looking at travel plans which include a walking bus but cannot consider a pedestrian crossing until the speed of the traffic is reduced because of health &amp; safety concerns.</p>
<p>We are delighted with the work that the school is undertaking to try and alleviate the traffic problems but are appalled by the responses we receive from County when trying to address these issues.</p> <p>The volume and speed of traffic has increased significantly along these roads</p>	<p>The local authority accepts that there are significant issues surrounding this proposal with regards to traffic.</p> <p>May I suggest that parents and local residents lobby their local councillor, John London to gain support? The local councillor has access to highway funds</p>

<p>in recent years causing a major concern to the health &amp; safety of our children.</p>	<p>that may be able to help put in a zebra crossing, road marking, and 20mph speed limits.</p>
<p>The standard response from KCC of 'no recorded incidents' is appalling, does it take a child to be killed before anything is done?</p>	<p>I am disgusted by the standard response you seem to be receiving from the local authority representatives and will take this up further.</p>
<p>The volume of traffic and road safety has got to be a key part of any planning proposal. I can remember children being killed whilst walking to school when I was young and I remember how that felt – I do not want it to happen to any of the children of this school. Something needs to be done immediately.</p>	<p>We accept that there are major highways issues but I do not want to take the whole of this meeting up discussing them as it is an educational consultation concerning the expansion of the school.</p> <p>The Borough Council can make recommendations but it is the Police who address line markings.</p>
<p>I am disappointed with your responses because this situation has been going on for a long time. I believe the consultation should have happened two years ago but now feel our hand is being forced.</p>	<p>Thank you for your statement but I believe we have already discussed these issues at great length.</p>
<p>The school is already practically at the proposed level of expansion and I feel KCC has nothing constructive to say regarding the main issue which is traffic and safety of children coming to and from the school.</p>	
<p>I would like to thank the school and local residents for their work on the traffic measures but until there tangible plans to tackle this key issue I cannot support the proposal.</p>	
<p>How will the local authority be supporting the school through this process?</p>	<p>The local authority will forward fund the proposal so the school budget is not affected by the increase in pupil numbers.</p> <p>The headteacher will manage now the funds are distributed within the school.</p> <p>Once planning permission has been granted for the new build, it is hoped the local authority can get the new class rooms on site as soon as possible after the feasibility report agreed. The scheme will be supported by a project manager from KCC, headteacher and governors.</p>
<p>Will the installation of new classrooms take away any of the playing space?</p>	<p>The short answer is no.</p>

<p>Other local authorities seem to have a blanket approach of 20mph speed limits around all their schools but KCC chooses to take the option of 'there have been no casualties'.</p>	<p>I will contact John Burr in Highways to get someone to visit the school to look into traffic issues.</p> <p>Please respond to the consultation, highlighting your concerns regarding road safety.</p>
<p>Where are the classrooms going to be sited?</p>	<p>The two storey school hall will be sited on grass meadow where library use to be. We will not be using the playing field or KS1 playing area.</p>

Mr Cooke said the expansion of schools programme was about providing the best education for the children in Kent. St John's CoE primary school has challenges but to see the standards rise so rapidly and to receive an Ofsted outcome of good is testament to Sally and her staff and I thank her for her efforts.

I thank you all for attending tonight.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm and 18 people attended.