

By:	Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning and Skills
To:	Education Cabinet Committee, 19 March 2013
Subject	Decision No. 12/02022 - Proposed enlargement of Otford 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 Otford 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 Otford 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 Otford Primary School.

1.3 This reports sets out the results of the Public Consultation which took place between Monday 3 December 2012 and Monday 28 January 2013. A public meeting was held on 6 December 2012.

2. The Proposal

2.1 It is proposed to enlarge Otford Primary School by 10 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 Sevenoaks section of the Kent Commissioning Plan indicates a need to commission additional primary capacity in the Otford planning area.

4. Outcomes of the Public Consultation

4.1 A large 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 Nick Chard provided the following comment:

I am content to expand Otford as per numbers indicated although this does not give my automatic support to Otford School's planning application.

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.

The school is situated on Otford High Street. This is not a very busy road, but it does get busier at drop off and pick up times.

Parents benefit from a public car park that is currently free to use, provided by the Parish Council. Many parents park there during drop off and pick up and it can get quite busy. The high street is traversed by a zebra crossing. A Kent Community warden will often be on hand at drop off and pick up times.

A new traffic survey has been sought in parallel to the planning process in order to clearly define any potential impact of additional traffic resulting from this proposal. Walking buses become more viable as the school expands. Once fuller information is available, the School Travel Plan will be updated to incorporate recommendations.

(ii) Concern over the potential for a dilution in the village school ethos at the school.

The Area Education Officer notes that there were several comments (mainly from residents) that expressed concern that the 'village' aspect of the school would be diluted due to the widening of the area from which the school draws in pupils.

There is no doubt that some of the residents of Otford village would wish for the school to only accept children who live in the village because they believe that this would reduce the traffic at drop off and pick up times. However it would be contrary to the Schools Admission Code to develop an exclusive ring fenced area for admissions to the school. To ensure schools serve the immediate local community, the proximity between the child's home and the school will normally be a determining factor, with those living closest receiving the highest priority. The local authority must consider all children for whom Otford is the nearest school.

(iii) Concerns over staff parking

There is limited capacity on the site and this need must be considered during the planning for the new build.

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

The responsibility for maintenance of standards of the school is vested in the Head teacher and Chair of Governors. Mrs Caisley, the headteacher stated during the public meeting that she was confident that performance and standards would not be allowed to deteriorate and that the enlargement would be a source of enrichment for the school, providing additional flexibility and versatility to the teaching complement.

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.

5.4 Governing Body

The Governing Body of Otford Primary School are supportive of the proposal.

5.5 Headteacher

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

5.6 Parents

A very significant majority of parents support the proposal.

5.7 Pupils

The pupils of the school have been offered the opportunity to comment on the proposal.

5.8 Other respondents

Local residents and the parish council have responded and listed their concerns about the potential for an increase in traffic in the high street.

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 £673,042. 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 Otford Primary School

9. Background Documents

Otford Primary School consultation document

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/OtfordPrimarySchool/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](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/q4880/Public%20reports%20pack%2012th-Sep-2012%2010.00%20Education%20Cabinet%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

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Proposal to expand Otford Primary School, Sevenoaks

Summary of Written Responses

Printed Consultation Documents distributed: 400

Consultation responses received: 106

A summary of the responses received showed that:

	In Favour	Undecided	Opposed
Governors	2		
Staff	6		
Parents	66	2	9
Pupils			
Other	2	4	15
Totals	76	6	24

Comments in favour of the proposal:

- Formalisation of increased PAN is crucial to continuing success of school
- Pupils will benefit from improved learning environment
- Gives greater flexibility in resourcing and staffing
- Parking needs to be addressed
- Additional provision for drop off and collection of school children needs to be improved
- Allow more families choice
- Enlargement will alleviate potential shortfall in primary school places
- Expansion will ensure that school receives optimum funding so children will benefit from improved accommodation and enhanced facilities
- The expansion of a successful primary school should not be held back because of traffic issues
- School plays an important part in community life
- Need to improve pavements as unsafe for the children to walk
- Relations between Parish Council & school need to be improved
- Improvements include equivalent sized library area, school hall and kitchen
- Classrooms have natural light
- Glad local children will be able to attend local school
- School is excellent and at last its achievements are being recognised by investment from KCC to improve learning environment
- Feel of huge benefit to the school and local community

Comments against the proposal:

- Concerned about development
- Parking needs to be improved
- Unacceptable levels of traffic congestion and parking
- Village infrastructure cannot cope
- Child population in Otford does not warrant enlargement of school
- Should remain a village school, for local children
- Need to consider green car park for school use (charge will apply) or running a bus service to collect & drop off children.
- Assume KCC will provide parking for members of school staff

- Feel it unfair for Otford to expand to take children from outside the village
- Vehicles often damaged by poor parking/speeding cars

Proposal to expand Otford Primary School

Summary of Public Consultation Meeting

Purpose of the Meeting

- To explain the proposal to expand Otford 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 Otford Primary School increase its reception year R intake to 60, taking the proposed capacity of the school from 350 places to 420 places.

Sevenoaks and the surrounding villages have seen an increase in the numbers of primary age children over the last few years. This growth and migration is bringing new families to the area, requiring enhancements to the infrastructure in order to meet the future needs of the town and its residents.

Otford Primary School has a PAN of 43 which was increased to 45 for 2008. A further increase to 50 was published for 2009. Finally the PAN was temporarily enlarged to 60 to accommodate the increasing demand for primary school places.

Statement from the Headteacher, Natasha Caisley

The leadership team, staff and governors do support the expansion of the school. It will facilitate us to become the outstanding school we think we can be. With 60 children we can run school smoothly and efficiently and it allows flexibility. High percentage of budget covers staffing costs and with added flexibility we can develop exciting projects which children can enjoy. Support for staff could suffer if the budget reduced.

If numbers do drop it becomes more difficult to have flexibility in staffing recruitment and structures –

There are benefits to rising roll, with larger cohorts able to make varied staffing choices that are benefitting the children. To have flexibility written out of the system would be problematic.

Have worked hard to develop involvement in village, support village fair and good links with the churches.

KCC are supportive of the school and work in partnership with us, to provide fit for purpose educational provision. We politely request schools need for other classes to be replaced with modern and staff room.

Whatever the size of cohort, 15 or 60 each and every child is valued at this school and known personally to me and wider staff. School has an exciting future but need confirmation of 60 number, we will continue to strive to be the best we can.

Statement from the Chair of Governors,

The school, from governor's point of view is on a journey and have set headteacher objective to become an outstanding school. For two years we have operated just under a PAN of 60, with expansion it will allow us to continue that journey but that needs proper, accommodation, finance to invest in the future of the children. Any expansion has to come with proper facilities for the children; ultimately what we want is a successful school at the heart of the community.

Question	Response
<p>You mention about the Otford Planning area and indicate where the children are coming from but I cannot see why there is a need for expansion as few of the children who attend the school actually come from Otford. The majority travel in from the surrounding areas.</p>	<p>The Otford planning area indicates where the majority of children come from. The law changed from catchment areas to parental preference and we are guided by parental preference which is where parents wish to send their children. The local authority cannot control this so we legally we required to take children from outside the parish boundaries.</p> <p>From school data, children with Otford postcode 189 children and where Otford was the nearest school, it is a majority no.</p> <p>Aim of the County Council is to provide a 5% surplus capacity in any school to support parental choice. 85% of parents got first choice and 95% got second choice last year.</p>
	<p>The oversubscription criteria does not apply to Otford yet.</p> <p>Lets say 65 children applied for first preference then the oversubscription criteria kicks in LAC Sibling link (brother or sister of child in school) Distance (from front gates of school)</p> <p>Concentric circle out up to 60 would be offered places and then go the extra 5 and look at the oversubscription criteria.</p> <p>The Edge forecast shows an increase in numbers in the planning area where parents are likely to opt to send their children to Otford, or Shoreham and Dunton Green. The oversubscription criteria hasn't been used at Otford yet but in theory a person in Thanet could send their child here as long as first preferences below 60.</p>
<p>If PAN is increased to 60, any guarantee that class sizes fixed to 30 or might we have larger classes.</p>	<p>Let's say 60 children with oversubscription criteria offered a place, the other 5 can apply to IAP (Independent Appeal Panel) and try to persuade Otford as their school of choice. The local authority will point out that infant class legislation says class sizes are 30, it is then up to IAP to decide. Once decision made by IAP it cannot be revoked so we have schools where IAP put extra children in, taking class over 30. It causes disruption in schools in terms of management, costs etc.</p>

<p>Enhancements to the infrastructure are required to accommodate the needs but there are issues; serious highways and access, we need strong commitment that these areas will be considered fully.</p>	<p>I have met previously with residents and am aware of the issues regarding the traffic. I have sat in the car park at beginning of day so appreciate it is difficult to move out of the car park if you are not part of the school – what feasibility study do will take into account the major route, look at number of traffic movements expansion is likely to create and will try and mitigate the issues. A report will be compiled and recommendations made.</p>
<p>This is a village school and you are trying to turn into an urban school and if you are going to do that why don't you build a new school with car parking facilities. Move the school or else don't enlarge it. Why don't you build a new school instead of enlarging this one?</p>	<p>A lot Greenfield around Otford is in Green Belt, 2.5 hectares to build a new school and we cannot do that because there is no need to move a village primary school out to green field where we would not get planning permission. We will look at the traffic issue, the parking issue and I am aware of the concern around the highways.</p> <p>We would have to apply to central Government for Basic Need Funding to enable us to build a primary school and we have to demonstrate that there is a need for a new school in the area, which we cannot do here.</p>
<p>Parents will choose schools with best SAT results; I would ask rather than promoting expansion of Otford Primary School should education authority be seeking to raise standards in the schools that don't match those at Otford.</p> <p>Parents will look at three schools and not look Otford as the best.</p>	<p>That is exactly what we are doing KS2 has improved considerably across the County. Schools below floor standards (78 previously, this yea 23). At County we have enacted a scheme called Kent Challenge to help those less performing schools.</p> <p>That would come back to parental choice and not necessarily the schools in the planning area. Parents will choose a school which is best for their child; the local authority cannot influence that decision.</p>
<p>Ten years ago how many pupils were at the school?</p> <p>10 years ago Otford got village of the year but that won't happen again because as the school has increases it has an impact on the village. Our quality of life has suffered as a result of the school expansion. You have basic need funding does the community receive some money from that?</p>	<p>The PAN originally was 43, so 240.</p> <p>Basic Need is specifically funding for enlargement and also for a new school but KCC would not be involved in new schools under new legislation that would be under the DfE or Education Funding Agency. There are something else called Free School which is outside that criteria.</p> <p>In terms of the highways we have to see what the planning & highways authority come back with in their report.</p>

<p>Concerned about the point of the car park and not safe for the pupils of the school.</p> <p>Re expansion does that includes children with special educational needs?</p>	<p>Part of the feasibility report will include the staff car park.</p> <p>In terms of SEN there will be requirement to ensure that there are break out spaces (small area where you might use with 1 or 2 children) and areas for staff to work with SEN children.</p>
<p>Feasibility study for parking and traffic – you implied only include village car park and high street but should also include Sevenoaks Road as can be quite dangerous with parking down one side.</p>	<p>My colleagues in Property are aware of undertaking a comprehensive traffic survey – we recognise the problems and the experts will look at the feeder roads by visiting at various times of the day to ensure that it is accurate.</p>
<p>Mark Sears from ACOM did a study on car park following meeting in October and we presented him with data on car park usage. Also suggested other sites for overspill car park – as a Parish Council we cannot afford to build a new car park so may need to start charging for this facility. As 40% of pupils come from outside Otford village to use the car park I feel it is unfair to expect 60% of residents to pay for a car park. Could KCC not help fund a car park, a green car park. Mark Sears promised a report by mid December will we get a copy of that?</p>	<p>Any report will be available to the public.</p> <p>Simon asked headteacher to send an email regarding this.</p>
<p>Well aware of the issues to do with car park and will listen tonight and take away think we want best for children at this school. Principle concern is quality of life and likely impact of more vehicles and children/students attending the school, particularly around the traffic, car park and school. I know Kent Highways will do a report but at what point are we able to interrogate and refine the recommendation of Kent Highways. I get sense that unless the highway/car parking issues addressed to most people's satisfaction then the community are not going to be as supportive. When report done when can community see it and comment on it or negotiate on the outcome?</p>	<p>There will be a feasibility study which is subject to a planning application giving further opportunity of community to engage in highways. You as local member can represent your community and would be welcome at Ed Committee and expect you to interrogate the officers at that meeting.</p> <p>Any report that written by consultants make County Council make a decision will be open to public scrutiny. You may not like it; you can make representation to that affect and make recommendations to that report.</p>
<p>What happens if recommendations are negative and support what most people say about highways, can you overrule them?</p>	<p>When reports come through there will be a recommendation from officers, expect recommendation members endorse and recommend for expansion to 60 that does not mean that Member have to agree. There will be debate within the Committee and I cannot prejudge the outcome.</p>

<p>Could we reject the expansion?</p>	<p>As a community you cannot. The choice is that it is public consultation, make representations and due process followed and recommendations made to Cabinet.</p>
<p>I am outside the Otford planning area; parking and traffic a big issue but look at what happens if proposal does not go ahead. If we do not proceed how does that impact on the children already at the school? The numbers would remain at 50 in unsuitable conditions?</p>	<p>If members decide that the enlargement of Otford not appropriate I would look at expanding another school or it would be build a new school. Take options back to Committee.</p> <p>I would look at creating new primary school and costs borne by County Council. Yes the numbers would remain at 50 and the accommodate would stay the same.</p>
<p>If you can demonstrate exceptional need and exceptional circumstances the legislation with regards to Green Belt can be overridden.</p>	<p>I understand what you are saying – overcoming objections may be more difficult. The funding is compulsory purchase land for a new school; the money is not there to do it.</p> <p>The timeframe for anew school is 4 years and the need for more places is immediate. Alternative is not a new school, that is not going to happen, it will be enlarge another school and the people of Otford will have to travel to another school.</p>
<p>The focal point is highways. Ryewood Developments are building 500 houses but no primary schools, so the children are going to come here.</p> <p>You talk about parents making choice come across that a lot of 40% from outside Otford come because no choice because schools in Sevenoaks full. It is not parental choice, I know you are enlarging the schools in Sevenoaks, but this is a village school build a school outside the village and sell this site off.</p>	<p>Not asking Simon to comment any further on car parking issues.</p> <p>Housing development in Dunton and S106 in which funding has to be used in limited area of Dunton Green and looking at KCP, Dunton Green will be considered for expansion. The panning area, says new development underway look at when pressure to enlarge Dunton Green. Can add 0.5 FE as there will be need through developer contributions to enlarge that school £238,000 not sufficient to enlarge that school. I accept to degree point you are making about overflow from Sevenoaks town, % increase about 20%, accept its unpalatable, two schools Sevenoaks 2FE to 3Fe, 50% in middle of urban build and Lady Boswell’s 1Fe to 2Fe 100% increase.</p> <p>Could sell the school site, broadly because of access get £2-3m, build new school %6-7m, to buy land and build school and so the funding gap is too great.</p>

<p>Resident Kent Commissioning statement – line total for 106-17 as 306.</p> <p>The figures in the Commissioning are suspect then.</p>	<p>That KCP was predicated on old forecasting methodology – the new method takes inward migration. At the point of 2016 we have to guestimate the migration or falling. The old forecasting methodology over last two years across Sevenoaks has enough places but has had to enlarge temporarily 2 schools. That has happened for two successive years and it caused us to look at new form of methodology takes into all factors which should produce more accurate figures.</p> <p>Next KCP will have much more accurate basis of what we do for schools. Figures may be suspect after 2016 onwards.</p>
<p>Play space is there a regulation that specifies an area of hard play space per child. Will that happen to the detriment to the green play space?</p>	<p>Yes, we will have to increase hard play the balance that we have that school large enough to have green space for 2Fe, anything over statute we can use if need to expand further.</p>
<p>The minutes from previous meeting indicates that the school currently operates a walking bus from the car park into the school – is that operational? Apparently the parents did not want a walking bus because they thought it would be dangerous.</p>	<p>I don't know why an inaccurate minute – when attending parking meeting it was a proposal raised to offer introducing a walking bus and this is what Lisa Alexander has commissioned. Looking into the feasibility, loss of car parking spaces would outweigh cost benefits etc. Had it risk assessed by the tutors, sanctioned by KCC unfortunately not got off ground by parental take up volunteers? Some interest from Hale Lane and interested parents to take on board – that route to be risk assessed by Kent. Parents reluctant to walk children to school because of the narrow pavements and speeding traffic which has been raised by the school to the parish council so still opt to drive. The road here might benefit from a 20mph limit.</p>
<p>Frankly sadden that this village and Parish council don't seem to have any pride in the village or the future of the children of the village and I am delighted that Kent are actually going to invest in the school. I am frankly appalled, disappointed by this reaction.</p>	
<p>If children from Otford had to travel to other schools they would be travelling in cars, adding to the problem but the residents seem to be more interested in the village than the children at the school.</p>	

<p>It can be fairly thankless task chairing these meetings but I would like to thank you for giving up your evening, thanks to Simon Webb, Natasha Caisely. I totally understand the views of people concerned with quality of life and they will have opportunity to make their views known when submitting their responses. Big decision and it is a decision for the village as a whole. I have enjoyed the debate here this evening and thank you for participating.</p>	
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Gary Cooke 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, 28 January 2013.