

By:	Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning and Skills
To:	Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills
Subject	Decision No. 12/02013 - Proposed expansion of Dartford Bridge Primary School
Classification:	Unrestricted

Summary:	This report provides the results of the public consultation for consideration of the Cabinet member and seeks agreement to expand the school.
Recommendations:	The Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills is recommended to expand Dartford Bridge Primary School via the necessary first stage issue of a Statutory Public Notice and to put in place measures to continue with the proposal after that period has ended

## **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.

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

4.1 The consultation document was distributed to parents/carers, school staff, nursery staff, governors and County Councillors, Member of Parliament, the Diocesan Authorities, local library, the Borough and Parish Councils, and others, in accordance with the agreed County policy. The document was also posted on the KCC website and the link to the website widely circulated via email.

4.2 Approximately 400 copies of the public consultation document were circulated, which included a form for written responses.

## **Responses to the Public Consultation**

### *Written Responses*

4.1 6 responses have been received, of which 5 are in favour and 1 is opposed. The Cabinet Member has reviewed these responses and should have due regard for them before taking a decision.

## **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 Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills is recommended to:

- (i) issue a public notice to expand Dartford Bridge Primary School.

And, subject to no objections being received to the public notice

- (ii) expand the school

## **9. Officer Scheme of Delegation**

- 9.1 The Cabinet Member should be aware that no specific officer delegations are included within the formal decision as the Officer Scheme of Delegation; under Appendix 2 part 4 of the Council's Constitution, provides a clear and appropriate link between this decision and the actions needed to implement it. For information it is envisaged that the Director of Property & Infrastructure Support will sign contracts on behalf of the County Council in this instance
- 9.2 Officers performing tasks under the scheme of delegation are expected to keep the relevant portfolio holder informed of progress

## **10. 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\\_plan\\_s/bold\\_steps\\_for\\_kent.aspx](http://www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/priorities,_policies_and_plans/priorities_and_plan_s/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 – 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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