

By:	Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning and Skills
To:	Education Cabinet Committee, 18 January 2013
Subject	Decision number: 12/02008 - Proposal to expand Lady Boswell's Church of England Primary School (Aided)
Classification:	Unrestricted

Summary:	This report informs members of the results of the Public Consultation
Recommendations:	The Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and either endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education Learning and Skills on the decision to expand Lady Boswell's Church of England Primary School by issuing a public notice to expand the school

1. Introduction

1.1 The Sevenoaks District section of the Kent Commissioning Plan 2012-17 indicates a need to commission additional primary school places for in the Sevenoaks Town area. This proposal is one of several in the Sevenoaks area.

1.2 On 12 September 2012, Education Cabinet Committee recommended to the Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills that a consultation takes place on the proposal to expand the Lady Boswell's Church of England Primary School.

1.3 This report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place between 8 October 2012 and 26 November 2012. A public meeting was held on 11 October 2012.

2. The Proposal

2.1 It is proposed to enlarge Lady Boswell's Church of England Primary School (Aided) by 30 Reception Year places taking their PAN to 60 (2 FE) 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 Sevenoaks planning area. This proposal is one of three in that district.

4. Outcomes of the Public Consultation

4.1 The majority of respondents were opposed to 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 copy of the questions, comments and responses made during the public meeting are given in 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 issues were raised at the public consultation meeting:

Concern over the potential for a dilution in standards, spiritual ethos, or 'village/small' school character of Lady Boswell's school.

The responsibility for maintenance of standards and the spirituality of the school is vested in the Head teacher, Mrs Sharon Saunders and the Governing body. Mrs Saunders gave a very compassionate, spirited and robust opening during the public meeting, saying that she believed that neither performance standards nor religious ethos were at risk and that she had full confidence in her staff. The Chair of Governors, Mrs Clare Whittaker reiterated that support and asserted that enlargement would be a source of enrichment for the school.

This issue has caused considerable contention amongst many existing parents who feel that the school would be harmed by an expansion. This is balanced by the view put forward by the Governors and particularly Mrs Saunders who believe very strongly that to share the caring and spiritual ethos and outstanding education provided by Lady Boswell's, is the Christian thing to do.

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

It is acknowledged that the 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.

There is potential to look at the second pedestrian entrance that allows access from the nearby car park, with walking buses being a possible solution.

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 resultant from this proposal. Once full information is available, the School Travel Plan will be updated.

Concerns about the need for additional places in the Sevenoaks Planning Area that would require Lady Boswell's to expand.

The case for the expansion is predicated on the forecasting methodology in use. Forecasts clearly indicate a significant and sustained increase in the planning area. Two other expansions (a total of 75 additional reception places) are proposed in the planning area. Forecasts indicate that all three enlargements are required.

A new school is not a viable alternative because it would take a minimum of three years for a new school to open.

Concerns about disruption to learning during build.

Where possible, disruptive building work will be limited to times when the school is closed. A project manager would be appointed and the head teacher will maintain complete control over any work being done, particularly if it is felt that health and safety may be compromised.

Concerns over staff parking

There is limited capacity on the site and an increase in car parking spaces is an issue. This will need to be looked at and if deemed necessary, incorporated into the planning for the new build.

5.3 The Area Education Offer

Notwithstanding the above, 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. 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 much up to 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 Lady Boswell's Church of England Primary School are supportive of the proposal subject to certain conditions and caveats over building and funding. The building must be fully integrated with the existing school accommodation and there must be no loss of existing facilities. The AEO believes that these conditions are reasonable and within cost parameters and can therefore be incorporated into the planning for the school.

5.5 Headteacher

The head teacher of the school has been fully consulted and is supportive, subject to the conditions and caveats put forward by the governors.

5.6 Staff

All the school staff who responded, support the proposal.

5.7 Parents

The vast majority of existing parents do not support the proposal for the reason listed above.

5.8 Pupils

The pupils of the school have been consulted and their views are included in this report. A significant majority of pupils support the enlargement.

5.9 Diocese

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

5.10 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 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. Recommendations

7.1 The Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and either endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education Learning and Skills on the decision to expand Lady Boswell's Church of England Primary School by issuing a public notice to expand the school

8. Background Documents

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/g4880/Public%20reports%20pack%2012th-Sep-2012%2010.00%20Education%20Cabinet%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

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Proposal to expand Lady Boswell's Church of England Primary School, Sevenoaks

Summary of Written Responses

Printed Consultation Documents distributed:	400
Consultation responses received:	127

A summary of the responses received showed that:

	In Favour	Undecided	Opposed
Governors			
Staff	11		
Parents	10		74
Pupils	19		4
Other	1	3	5
Totals	41	3	83

Comments in favour of the proposal:

- Great opportunity for more children to experience excellent teaching in a wonderful caring environment and to receive a Christian education.
- I can only see the proposal as positive because there are not enough school places available in the Sevenoaks area.
- More spaces for siblings and friends.
- Bigger classrooms and more equipment.
- Better that one of the more successful schools takes up this challenge as it is more likely to be successful in the long-run.
- The increased number of children allows for more friendships and spreading of the Christian message which is surely imperative for a Christian school.
- More clubs for the children, brand new facilities, more parents for the PTA and help with trips, reading etc.
- This is a successful happy school delivering good results and there is an obligation to do what can be done to increase the number of children who can benefit. We think this factor alone is overwhelmingly in favour of expansion.

Comments against the proposal:

- We feel that to build a whole new school when there is only insufficient capacity for one year is unnecessary expense.
- The "Sevenoaks Planning Area Forecast" graph presented on the KCC Public Consultation Document does not in our opinion clearly demonstrate the need for an additional class.
- Lady Boswell's is a very special place, with a warm, friendly, Christian and family atmosphere which would be watered down, if not lost, with this expansion.
- The most worrying part of the proposal is that the character of the school would undoubtedly change.
- Many parents chose the school partly because it was only one form entry.
- I believe there would be a health hazard from the dust and noise from a massive and possibly prolonged building project.
- There is no safe place to turn a car outside the school when dropping off children. This will only become an even greater problem if the size of the school increases.

- Doubling the size of the school would require a major rethink on the severe traffic, parking and access problems.
- The scheme would be a major distraction to the children.
- The children's education would suffer because staff would become preoccupied by the enormous upheaval involved in the building project and expansion of pupil numbers.
- I am concerned by the 'proportional' expansion of communal areas such as the hall and the 'proportional' less outside space available to each child.
- How can 420 children play safely on playgrounds which will be made smaller according to the proposed plans.
- I am totally against reduction in the existing beautiful green fields.
- Concern expressed about the ICT suite and maths area being made into a classroom.
- If there is a real need for additional spaces (which is not proved by the planning forecast), it would make sense to build a new school rather than destroying a number of popular schools.
- Because of the increase the many activities involving the whole school, including services at St Nicholas Church, performances at the Stag could no longer be done in the same format.
- This proposal has been rushed through without enough thought to the potential impact it will have in a number of areas.
- I feel that very careful consideration must be given to the residential surroundings of the school when balancing the needs of both school and residents.

Proposal to expand Lady Boswell's CoE (VA) Primary School, Sevenoaks

Summary of Public Consultation Meeting

Purpose of the Meeting

- To explain the proposal to expand Lady Boswell's CoE Primary School.
- To give members of the public an opportunity to ask questions and comment.
- To listen to views and opinions.

Simon Webb delivered a short presentation outlining the proposal for expansion.

Statement from Chair of Governors, Clare Whittaker

The Governing Body and Trustees are supporting this proposal because it allows us to offer more children the special education here at Lady Boswells.

The school have conditions attached to this proposal.

- Not required to change the admissions criteria, keeping commitment to local churches and vulnerable groups.
- School expanded on a permanent basis, not mobiles.
- Building work phased.
- School hall extended.
- Guaranteed funding
- Access from top gate considered to improve movement of traffic
- Christian ethos sustained.

Statement from Headteacher, Sharon Saunders

I understand many parents are concerned about the Christian ethos of the school being diluted through expansion but it is not about numbers, it's about leadership of staff, the parents and everything being embedded in our lives. Wish to widen the opportunity of children receiving an excellent education in an outstanding Christian school and role of the headteacher is to ensure each achieves their full potential. Becoming a 2FE brings many benefits, allowing teachers to share ideas and plan together and what we achieve should be shared with our neighbours, and therefore I support the proposal, subject to caveats.

Statement from Deputy Director of Education, Rochester Diocese

Christian outreach welcomes opportunity to expand VA Church Schools to the wider community. Local circumstances have to be considered and worked through with the Governing Body, Trustees and Local Authority to overcome and move forward.

Purpose of the Meeting

Kent County Council is proposing that Lady Boswell's Church of England Primary School increase its Year R intake to 60, taking the proposed total capacity of the school from 210 to 420 places.

Question	Response
Agree that the Christian ethos of this school should be shared within the local community, therefore are the Governing	School's admission criteria does have a commitment to the surrounding churches in Sevenoaks, however, the Governing Body will

Body looking to change the admissions criteria in the future.	review it, not for this year though.
As school expanding the number of staff will increase. Am concerned that standards might slip.	Children's education will not be disrupted – previous advertisements for teaching staff have generated interest from high calibre applicants. Appointment of new staff will be gradual, over 7 years.
Am pro expansion but feel agreement has already been reached. Will there a report reflecting all the responses to the consultation available?	This is a genuine consultation and the local authority is happy to listen to all arguments, for and against.
Concerned about the practical issues like disruption caused by building works and traffic congestion.	<p>Headteacher said the two reception classes would parallel with internal configuration works using ICT suite and moving new class into early years unit to be in place for September 2013. Long term the classrooms will be extended out toward the rugby club and rest of school fenced off.</p> <p>School has been working on travel plans, walking buses and how to improve the facilities at top gate. Working with Parish Council and local residents to explore ways of lessening impact.</p>
How is the expansion going to be managed? Will there be two Deputy Headteachers?	<p>Headteacher has worked previously in a 2FE so understands the dynamics associated with it. Expansion gives layers of leadership; every teacher in this school is a leader of learning. It gives lots of opportunities for staff to create and build layers of leadership and coaching.</p> <p>Part of the role of the Governing Body was to challenge the headteacher to ensure the senior leadership team is right and reviewed regularly. Chair of Governors said they have started to look at structures on how the school will be managed.</p>
Committed to Christian ethos of school and small class sizes but can you reassure parents that standards will not fall.	It is not about the number of children, it is about how we look after them, how we educate them and how involved in the school they are. Families come in different numbers, with different needs.
Schools' actual budget depends on how many children attend the school. If funding guaranteed for 30 children and only 25 starts, who will that affect the budget?	Lady Boswells is an outstanding school so if only 25 children on roll, the other places will be taken up by casual admissions. Following April numbers on roll from January determine

	the following years. Funding will be guaranteed for 7 years.
Concerned we are rushing into this as looking at Sevenoaks in isolation there appears to be a dip this year.	Forecasting methodology used by local authority for the last three years has proved inaccurate. New forecasts from Edge show an upward trend due to indigenous growth and inward migration. The demand for capacity within the Sevenoaks town centre area is heavy.

70 people attended