

By:	Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning and Skills
To:	Education Cabinet Committee – 18 January 2013
Subject	Decision number: 12/02010 - Proposal to expand St Mark's Church of England Primary School
Classification:	Unrestricted

Summary:	This report seeks to inform 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 expand St Mark's Church of England Primary School should proceed by issuing a public notice to expand the school

1. Introduction

1.1 The Tunbridge Wells District section of the Kent Commissioning Plan 2012-17 indicates a need to commission additional primary school places in the Tunbridge Wells area. This is one of several proposals in that district

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 St Mark's' Church of England Primary School.

1.3 This report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place between 5 November 2012 and 17 December 2012. A public meeting was held on 6 November 2012

2. The Proposal

2.1 It is proposed to enlarge St Mark's Church of England 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.

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 Tunbridge Wells section of the Kent Commissioning Plan indicates a need to commission additional primary capacity in the Broadwater planning area.

4. Outcomes of the Public Consultation

4.1 The majority of respondents to the consultation (32 out of 38) were in favour of the proposal. A summary of the comments received during the consultation period are given at appendix 1.

4.2 The comments and questions raised at the public meeting are explored in paragraph 5.2 below

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 James Scholes 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 ethos or standards at the school.

The Head teacher, Mr Robin Dungate and the Chair of Governors both made it clear during the public meeting that they believed that neither performance standards nor ethos were at risk. Mr Dungate delivered a firm commitment to parents at the meeting that he believed that the enlargement was a positive move and would benefit the school and local community.

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

It is acknowledged that the access from the surrounding roads may need to be considered as part of any redevelopment of the site and Property Group are factoring 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 resultant from this proposal is needed. Once full information is available, the School Travel Plan will be updated.

Concerns about disruption to learning during build.

Where possible, disruptive building work will be limited to times when the school is closed. 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. One solution offered was to look into off-site parking.

Concerns about the need for additional places that would require St Mark's to expand.

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 Broadwater planning area.

5.3. Area Education Officer

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

5.4 Governing Body

The Governing Body of St Mark's Church of England Primary School are supportive of the proposal subject to certain conditions and caveats over building and funding. The AEO believes that these conditions are reasonable and can 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 certain conditions and caveats.

5.6 Diocese

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

5.7 Pupils

The pupils of the school have been offered the opportunity to contribute to the consultation.

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 endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education Learning and Skills on the decision to expand St Mark's Church of England Primary School should proceed 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_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](plans/Commissioning%20Plan%20for%20Education%20Provision%20Kent%202012-17%20FINAL%20(Sept-2012).pdf)

Education Cabinet Committee report – 12 September 2012 – Primary Commissioning – Tunbridge Wells District

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

9. Lead Officer Contact details

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**Proposal to expand St Mark's Church of England Primary,
Tunbridge Wells**

Summary of Written Responses

Printed Consultation Documents distributed: 400

Consultation responses received: 38

A summary of the responses received showed that:

	In Favour	Undecided	Opposed
Governors	4		
Staff	3		
Parents	12	2	2
Pupils	12	1	1
Other	1		
Totals	32	3	3

Comments in favour of the proposal:

- Redevelopment of Ramslye Estate will justify reasons for expansion.
- Expansion will be of benefit to local community.
- Secure future of St Mark's CEP School.
- Provide more flexibility for increased educational opportunities in terms of extra curricular activities.
- Enrichment to the staff, with scope for peer mentoring and coaching.
- Refurbishment of classrooms.
- Under the leadership of present headteacher, school has excelled so welcome expansion so more children can enjoy Christian ethos.
- Believe expansion will have positive impact on school.
- Bigger school hall and more sports equipment.
- Make more friends.

Comments against the proposal:

- School not oversubscribed so cannot understand why expanding.
- Concerned the standards of teaching may fall.
- Roads are narrow and congested so parking a problem.
- Don't want school to get bigger as will split up friends and may take some of green field.
- Feel the justification for expansion not secure – will cost money and cause unnecessary disruption if figures are inaccurate.
- Noise and more children

Proposal to expand St Mark's C of E Primary School, Tunbridge Wells

Summary of Public Consultation Meeting

Purpose of the Meeting

- To explain the proposal to expand St Mark's C of E Primary School
- To give members of the public an opportunity to ask questions and comment
- To listen to views and opinions

The increased demand for primary places across Tunbridge Wells continues for September 2013. Kent County Council are therefore proposing that St Marks C of E Primary School increase its Year R intake to 60, taking the total proposed capacity of the school from 210 places to 420.

The school would admit 60 Year R pupils from September 2013 and subsequent years.

St Mark's is a popular school and is ideally placed to accommodate the forecasted increase.

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

Statement from the Headteacher, Robin Dungate

The headteacher was in support of the proposal as it:

- Secured the future of St Mark's on this site.
- Provides more flexibility for educational opportunities, extra curricular activities
- Offers more opportunities for staff development, coaching and mentoring
- As a Christian headteacher looks forward to welcoming more children under the church umbrella.

Caveats included:

- Concern for health & safety of children during building works (although aware that it is also KCC's priority).
- Seeks assurances that during the planning stage necessary arrangement and improvements to the infrastructure of the school, i.e. the catering facilities, the heating, the school hall, parking facilities, staff room is made good and that interior and exterior is matching and fit to purpose.
- First phase likely to be Early Years classroom – interested in ensuring that appropriate provision is made as it was raised when Ofsted visited the school.

Statement from the Chair of Governors, Mrs Karen Stevenson

Agree with proposal as good for the school, both for the children presently and those who will attend in the future.

By investing in the school I feel it demonstrates to the local community that KCC has faith in the school in what it achieves. Investment has been decidedly lacking in this area of Tunbridge Wells and it is nice to see the school rewarded in this way.

Will ensure that the plans are fit for purpose for our children and our community.

Statement on behalf of Rochester Diocese Representative, John Constanti

Apologies were received from John Constanti of Rochester Diocese. Mr Dungate

confirmed the Diocese were in agreement to the expansion of St Mark's C of E Primary School.

<p>The forecasts depicted in the graph do not seem to match the provision you are offering – will you be able to fill the two classes and if not will that have an impact on the budget of the school?</p>	<p>We know what the pupil numbers are in Tunbridge Wells and we know that we need to put extra provision in. I would expect the school to receive between 48 and 56 applications, dependent on parental preference. Since Mr Dungate has been in post the school has become more popular and I am convinced that it will fill up.</p> <p>In terms of the budget, for the first year of every entry, we will provide funding for 30 pupils. After that year it will be based on per pupil head in the school.</p>
<p>You are effectively increasing the catchment area of the school so children will be travelling to St Mark's from a wider area. Have the local authority considered what impact that is likely to have on the infrastructure, roads etc.</p>	<p>The first two years will be turbulent because you will have a greater number of children travelling to the school and then two years on you will probably get the siblings coming through.</p>
<p>What about the issues concerning the infrastructure around the school. I assume as we are increasing the area from which the children are coming, there will be an increase in traffic and how will the local road network cope?</p>	<p>There are two stages to an enlargement of a school; this stage where we ask generally of parent and residents whether a good idea. If proposal proceeds KCC planning & highways will be approached to look at the road network, parking and access.</p>
<p>Understand there is no feasibility report yet but am concerned about the amount of green space being used to accommodate this proposal.</p>	<p>Can understand the concern that the local authority is consulting without the benefit of a feasibility study. Internal infrastructure will be increased by 7 class room, tastefully added to what exists at present. In consultation with the parents, the school will decide how to proceed.</p>
<p>Concern that the children will be put into mobile accommodation and that KCC may not deliver what it promises.</p>	<p>It is more than likely that for reception class in September will be put in a demountable on site. Please do not be concerned they are steel built double classrooms with air conditioning and in some cases are better than the current buildings at the school.</p>
<p>What could stop this proposal from going ahead? For example, another school in Tunbridge Wells taking 60 but at the last minute getting pressured to take 90 - would this impact on St Mark's.</p>	<p>Local authority would be delighted if there was another school to enlarge to 60. There are 7 expansion proposals being consulted on and we have no further options.</p> <p>If the general consensus was no and there are substantive reasons, we would not recommend.</p>

<p>Budget question – funding for 30 children initially and that is increased by the number of children actually in the school?</p>	<p>Currently the school budget is determined by number of children who are on roll. Kent is prepared to forward fund the proposal in September in addition to normal funding for academic year.</p>
<p>If building programme going on year by year – are children coming in next year effectively going to be on a building site for the next 7 years.</p>	<p>The whole school is likely to be a building site for the first year. The class rooms will be in place but they will not be fitted out to avoid being forced to take casual admissions.</p>
<p>Would the communal areas of the new development, extra hall etc be that be fitted out in first tranche. Also would the budget be ring fenced as we do not want to be left with empty classrooms we cannot use.</p>	<p>In law once public notice enacted KCC has to enlarge school to 2FE. The Bridge PS in Dartford is still incomplete in that respect – willing to visit if you wish.</p>
<p>Expresses ambivalence as can see the benefits like extended curriculum but like the fact that the school is small.</p>	<p>Every effort will be made to ensure the small school ethos will remain, with strong links to the church. Think the school will be small enough to keep Christian pastoral ethos.</p>
<p>Agree with those comments. Worried about land issue. How much land is going to be taken? Would there be a possibility of going to a second storey building to save on land space.</p>	<p>Whatever the planning options are – I know the residents will be very concerned about a double storey building.</p> <p>Let's see what the feasibility says.</p>
<p>Broad water Down – on planning area – really small school, surely if St Mark's increases from 30 – 60 it are going to be swallowed up.</p>	<p>Broad water Down will still fill up. Need 5% surplus places to accommodate future needs as inward migration and new developments continue? Also try to reduce driving distances to schools to alleviate traffic problems as congestion is very bad around Tunbridge Wells.</p>
<p>Bishops Down is in review as well. Says 30 but if they do H&S could go to 60.</p>	<p>Bishops Down – needed places there for last 2 – 3 years and would have enlarged to 2FE if possible. A second feasibility study showed the site was not big enough and the access routes were inadequate. Cannot regulate traffic flows by making a turning circle in the grounds of the private school.</p> <p>We are taking forward a planning application to enlarge to 60 – it will fail so legally we cannot enlarge the school.</p>

15 people attended