

From: Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director, Education and Young People Services

To: Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform

Decision No: 13/00008 (b)

Subject: Proposed expansion of Ospringe CE Voluntary Primary School, Faversham

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: Education Cabinet Committee 21 June 2013 & Cabinet Member decision 13/00008 (a)

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member decision

Electoral Division: Swale East – Mr Andrew Bowles

Summary: On 21st June the Education Cabinet Committee recommended to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform that he took the decision to issue a Public Notice to expand Ospringe CE Primary School, Faversham. Following the decision taken by Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education Health Reform on 24 June 2013 to implement the proposal, the Highways Authority's raised objections to the plans for additional accommodation, which resulted in the proposed expansion being unable to go forward. Therefore the legal requirement is to public a revocation notice, revoking the notice published on 7 July.

Recommendations: That the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform agree to withdraw the decision to expand Ospringe Primary School owing to the refusal of relevant planning permission and endorse the notice issued by officers revoking the proposal

1. Introduction

1.1 The original proposal was published on 7 July 2013. The proposal was to enlarge the school to provide 45 places per year group, taking the total capacity of the school to 315 places. It was proposed to admit 45 children into the Reception Class in September 2014 and subsequent years. The admission number at the time of publishing the proposals was 40 as the school had been admitting over its published admission number of 30 since September 2011 at the request of the Local Authority, due to the demand for school places in the Faversham town locality. The proposal was to make permanent the temporary expansion that had taken place in existing accommodation and to provide an additional four classrooms and ancillary facilities in order for the expansion to continue across all year groups. The Swale section of the Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2012-17 indicates a need for additional places in the Faversham area.

1.2 Due to the number of applications received for a Reception Year place in a Faversham primary school for entrance in September 2014, although the revocation notice will determine the PAN for September 2014 as 30, the school has agreed to admit over this number to ensure that there are sufficient places. The school will require two additional classrooms to manage the four year temporary expansion period and planning for this has been submitted with confidence of receiving agreement. The school will gradually reduce in size from September 2015 to return to a one form entry primary school by 2021.

2. Reason why the original proposal cannot be implemented

2.1 A planning application for a 4 classroom extension to the school was withdrawn following objections raised by the Highways Authority. The concerns raised by Highways were as follows:

2.2 The Highways Authority has concerns with the permanent expansion of Ospringe CE Primary School, due to its impact on the A2 and Water Lane. Traffic that is already generated by the school causes congestion on the A2 through Ospringe due to the restricted nature of Water Lane, particularly at its junction with the A2. Water Lane is not wide enough to satisfactorily accommodate the 2-way passage of vehicles close to the junction, and this regularly blocks, causing tailbacks along the A2 as vehicles are unable to enter Water Lane. This is most noticeable during the morning period, when school traffic coincides with the network AM Peak, increasing delays on the A2 through Ospringe and beyond and this has a negative impact on the air quality in this designated Air Quality Management Area. Additional traffic attracted by the school will exacerbate the congestion in this location, and lead to a further reduction in air quality through this sensitive area.

2.3 Furthermore, due to the restricted width of Water Lane, vehicles regularly drive along the footway in order to pass one another. This footway is the main pedestrian link to the school from the A2, and schoolchildren and their parents are put at risk when vehicles do this. Expansion of the school is likely to increase the volume of pedestrians using this route and the additional vehicular traffic also associated with expansion would increase the likelihood of overrunning occurring. As a consequence, more people would be put at risk. It should also be noted that the school has previously been assessed for the implementation of a walking bus, but was deemed inappropriate due to the safety concerns with this route.

2.4 Unfortunately, Water Lane is constrained by the historic buildings either side of it, so there is little that can be done to make improvements to the road layout or footways to mitigate against the effects of development. Therefore, given its location and constraints, the Highways Authority would oppose the expansion of the school, and would suggest that there may be more suitable schools to consider expanding in order to meet the local need.

3 Financial Implications

3.1. Capital: As the school will admit up to 45 pupils in September 2014 before reverting back to its PAN of 30 for entry in September 2015, two additional classrooms will be provided so that the school has sufficient accommodation. Had the school

expansion been able to proceed, the school would have been provided with four additional classrooms at an estimated cost of £650k

- 3.2 Revenue: The school will receive increased funding through the Delegated Budget on a 'per pupil' basis and protection will be provided to ensure the school receives funding for 45 pupils for entry in September 2014 should numbers fall short of this. The school receives £6k for each additional class opened during the period of temporary expansion. As the school roll reduces when the PAN reverts to 30, the school's Revenue funding will decrease.
- 2.3 Human: The school may have to reduce staffing for the 2015/16 academic year when the PAN returns to 30.

3. Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

- 3.1 Even though the rejection of planning permission is disappointing alternative provision can be identified in other local schools and help to secure our ambition, "to ensure every child can 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 Swale section of the Commissioning Plan indicates a need to commission additional primary capacity across the whole of Swale, including the Faversham locality. Discussions will be held with Faversham primary schools to consider how to provide additional provision in the future.

4. Proposal

- 4.1 It is therefore proposed to revoke the notice published on 7 July and the published admission number for the school will return 30 from September 2014. However, the school has agreed to admit over this number for Reception Year entry in September 2014 in order to ensure that sufficient places are available for families applying for a place at a Faversham School. The revocation notice was published on 5th March 2014.
- 4.2 Two responses were received to the revocation notice:
- i. A parent with a child already at the school and a second due to start school in September 2015 did not disagree with the comments from The Highways Authority but felt that there was no commitment from the local authority to make the school access safer for exiting pupils and that not all options had been considered.
 - ii. A local school responded that reducing the PAN back to 30 would increase the intake in the rural village schools and help to keep them viable.

5. View of the AEO

It is very unfortunate that the early feasibility for the expansion of Ospringe did not identify the fact that the Highways Authority's concerns could not be mitigated. This has left the school in a difficult position which we need to address through the provision of accommodation.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 Forecasts for Swale District indicate increasing demand for primary school places. The enlargement of Ospringe CE Voluntary Primary School would have provided an expansion to accommodate current pressure and support the increasing pupil population. The unsuccessful planning permission application is disappointing, however options for providing alternative provision is under discussion with the schools. The school has agreed to admit up to 45 for entry in September 2014 and this will provide sufficient Reception Year places in Faversham primary schools.

7. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s): That the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform agree to withdraw the decision to expand Ospringe Primary School owing to the refusal of relevant planning permission and endorse the notice issued by officers revoking the proposal

8. Background Documents

- 8.1 COMMISSIONING PLAN FOR EDUCATION PROVISION 2012-17
<http://kent590w3:9070/documents/s34295/FINAL%20VERSION%20Kent%20Com%20Plan%20Ed%20Prov%202012-17%20attached%20to%20WEB%20SITE%2020%20SEPT.pdf>

- 8.2 Education Cabinet Committee report – 12 September 2012 Primary Commissioning - Swale District
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s38809/Item%20B9b%20Primary%20Commissioning%20Swale%20District.pdf>

The public consultation document is available via the following link:

- 8.3 Education Cabinet Committee report – 21 June September 2012 – Proposed expansion of Ospringe CE Voluntary Primary School, Faversham
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s40838/Item%20B1d%20Proposed%20expansion%20of%20Ospringe%20CE%20Voluntary%20Controlled%20Primary%20School%20Ospringe%20Faversha.pdf>

- 8.4 Revocation Notice:
<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/OspringeSchool/consultationHome>

9. Contact details

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