

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

To: Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee - 21 January 2016

Subject: Expansion of Seal CE Primary School from 1FE to 2FE

Key Decision No: 15/00093(b)

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Sevenoaks (Nick Chard)

Summary:

This report informs the Cabinet Committee of the outcome of the public consultation on the proposal to permanently expand Seal CE Primary School from 1FE to 2FE and requests members to recommend that the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform agrees to release sufficient funding to put the necessary infrastructure in place.

Recommendation:

The Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform on the decision to;

- a) Agree that a Public Notice be published, and following a representation period of four weeks with no statutory objections received, implement the proposal.
- b) Allocate £2,780,000 from the Education and Young People's Services Capital Budget, to fund any necessary additional works or variations to accommodation.
- c) Authorise the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council
- d) Authorise the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts

Should objections, not already considered by the cabinet member when taking this decision, be received during the notice period a separate decision will be required in order to continue the proposal in order to allow for proper consideration of the points raised.

This decision is subject to planning permission being granted.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Sevenoaks district section of the Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2015-19 identified a local pressure in Reception year places in the Sevenoaks and Sevenoaks Rural East Planning Areas. The Commissioning Plan identified a need to provide additional places in the planning area from September 2016. Seal CE Primary School agreed a temporary 1FE expansion for September 2013, 2014 & 2015, admitting 60 children into Reception Year per year.
- 1.2. Every school in the two planning areas, and adjacent planning area were considered as a possible proposal for expansion according to several criteria, including location, cost, proximity to demand, site size, willingness of the school, highways issues, Sport England and Ofsted rating. Seal CE Primary School was identified as the best option for expansion according to these criteria.
- 1.3. The Department for Education issued new Regulations in 2013 (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013), and as a consequence of the changes introduced in these regulations, local authorities can propose making changes to maintained schools including expansion (enlargement of premises) providing that they follow the statutory process.
- 1.4. Before a statutory Public Notice is published to initiate a representation period, a public consultation must be undertaken.
- 1.5. This report sets out the results of the consultation, which took place between 9 October and 16 November 2015. A consultation meeting for parents/carers, governors, members of staff and other stakeholders was held on 22 October 2015.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1. It has been agreed by the Governing Body to permanently enlarge Seal CE Primary School, increasing the PAN to 60 (2FE) for the September 2016 intake and eventually a total capacity of 420 places.
 - a. Capital – Kent County Council’s contribution will be £2,780,000. KCC acknowledge that the final amount may be higher or lower as the costs of the project is an estimate. If the cost of the project is greater than 10% the Cabinet Member will be required to take a further decision to allocate the additional funding.
 - b. Revenue – For a period of three academic years, the school will receive protection for an additional 30 Reception Year pupils. For each additional classroom, resulting from the expansion of the school, the sum of £6,000 will allocated towards the classroom setup costs.

- c. Human – Seal CE Primary School will appoint additional teachers, as the school size increases and the need arises.

3. Kent Policy Framework

- 3.1. These proposals 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 the Education Commissioning Plan.
- 3.2. The ‘Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision, 2015-19’ identified a pressure on primary school places in the Eastern part of Sevenoaks District. Sevenoaks District Council have indicated that they need to allocate more land for housing development, which will mean increased pressure on primary school places in the planning area.

4. Consultation Outcomes

- 4.1. The local authority established a formal consultation process over a five week period, between 9 October and 16 November 2015.
- 4.2. A total of 57 written responses were received by the local authority through the prescribed consultation process. 18 respondents supported the proposal. 20 objecting to the proposal. 19 respondents were undecided.
- 4.3. A summary of the comments received by the local authority is provided at Appendix 1.

5. Views

5.1. The Local Member

Mr Nick Chard was informed of the proposal. He said: “The proposed expansion of Seal Primary School has raised concerns about increased traffic associated with an expansion.”

5.2. Headteacher

“Seal CE Primary School has grown in popularity over the last two years and will continue to grow. We are currently unable to offer school places to all families who request one. As there is a shortage of school places in Sevenoaks, I fully support the proposed expansion of our school.

Being a two-form entry primary school, we would be able to offer flexibility in offering school places to the families of Eastern Sevenoaks and the surrounding villages. With Trinity School and the Weald of Kent satellite grammar provision moving onto the Wilderness site, Seal will become a popular location for families, who will need a good primary school with outstanding features.

As the school expands, I stand firm in my intention to maintain the village community feel of the school and continue to maintain high standards of education across all key stages.

Both my staff and I are extremely excited by the prospect of the proposed expansion and are ready to face any challenges it may bring.”

5.3. Chair of Governors.

“I am writing on behalf of the Governing Body of Seal CE Primary School to express our strong support for the proposed expansion of the school to two-form entry. We believe that the school is well-placed to take on extra children and provide an excellent, caring education for all its pupils, whatever their background, ability or religion. The school has strong leadership, dedicated staff and committed governors. We are looking forward to working with KCC and the local community to provide a smooth transition to a larger school over the next few years.”

5.4. Area Education Officer:

The analysis of the needs in the area indicate that due to immediate pressure and future demand in the Sevenoaks planning area, an additional 1FE of Primary capacity is required.

5.5. I acknowledge that there are concerns about the impact of an enlargement to Seal. Key issues raised are:

- a. the possible increase in car parking in Zambra Way, Highlands Park and Ash Platt Road during drop off and pick up
- b. the use of the rear access gate to the west of the school
- c. proximity of Seal CE Primary School to the demand
- d. the feeling that the character or standards of the school would be diminished

5.6. With regard to the above:

- a. *Car Parking during drop off and pick up:* Car parking during pick up and drop off is frequently a challenge to many schools. Seal CE Primary School will be re-visiting its travel plan to encourage parents to consider alternative transport.

Other plans under consideration include arranging drop off time at the nursery next to the recreation ground, working with the Parish Council and staggering start times.

The Kent County Council Highways Gazetteer reports that Highlands Park, Ash Platt Road and Zambra Way are all recorded as publicly maintainable highway. This means that representation about parking and enforcement should be made to the appropriate Highways authority.

- b. *Western Gate*: The access to the rear entrance to the school off Ash Platt Road has been investigated, but there has been no representation from any landowner that would lead KCC to believe that this access will be withdrawn in the future.
- c. *Proximity*: KCC forecasts that there is actual demand locally in the planning area . When planning, KCC as the commissioner of school places must be mindful of several factors which decide which is the most appropriate school to enlarge. These factors include proximity, cost, site size, willingness of the head teacher and governing body, site access, managing disruption, Ofsted reports, popularity and standards. In comparison with all the other schools in the Sevenoaks and Sevenoaks Rural East Planning Areas, Seal CE Primary School was identified as the optimum choice in all these considerations.
- d. *School Character & Standards*: The head teacher and governors are confident that they can not only maintain the high standards that the school, but with the added flexibility that comes with an expansion, strive to achieve even better results in the future. Similarly, the governing body feels that the character of the school would not be compromised by the proposal to expand.

5.7. The Director of Planning and Access and I have considered every primary school in the planning area with a view to whether that school could be enlarged. I am of the firm opinion that notwithstanding the objections received during the consultation, the most appropriate, sustainable and cost effective solution to the demand in the Sevenoaks and Sevenoaks Rural East Planning Areas is to enlarge Seal CE Primary School by 1 form of entry.

6. Proposal

- 6.1. The proposed expansion of Seal CE Primary School will increase the value of KCC's property portfolio by adding value to the school buildings.
- 6.2. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the consultation. To date no comments have been received and no changes are required to the Equality Impact Assessment.

7. Delegation to Officers

- 7.1. 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, if the proposal goes ahead, that the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support will sign contracts on behalf of the County Council.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1. Forecasts for the Sevenoaks district indicate an increasing demand for Primary school places, due to small and medium scale housing development and inward migration.
- 8.2. This enlargement will add an additional 30 Reception Year places to the capacity per year, in line with priorities in the Kent Policy Framework, 'Vision and Priorities for Education and Young People's Services' and the 'Commissioning Plan for Education' (2015 – 2019).

9. Recommendations

- 9.1. The Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform on the decision to;
 - a) Agree that a Public Notice be published, and following a representation period of four weeks with no statutory objections received, implement the proposal.
 - b) Allocate £2,780,000 from the Education and Young People's Services Capital Budget, to fund any necessary additional works or variations to accommodation.
 - c) Authorise the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council
 - d) Authorise the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts

Should objections, not already considered by the cabinet member when taking this decision, be received during the notice period a separate decision will be required in order to continue the proposal in order to allow for proper consideration of the points raised.

This decision is subject to planning permission being granted.

10. Background Documents

10.1. Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

10.2. Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2015 – 2020

10.3. Consultation Document and Equalities Impact Assessment

11. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Summary of Written Responses

12. Contact details

Report Author:

Ian Watts

Area Education Officer – North

03000 414302

Ian.Watts@kent.gov.uk

Relevant Director:

Keith Abbott

Director of Education Planning and Access

03000 417008

Keith.Abbott@kent.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Proposal to expand Seal Primary School Sevenoaks Summary of Written Responses

Printed Consultation Documents distributed: 300
Consultation responses received: 57

A summary of the responses received showed that:

	In Favour	Undecided	Opposed
Governors	3		
Staff	1		
Parents	7		1
Pupils			
Other	7	19	19
Totals	18	19	20

Comments in favour of the proposal:

- Successful & popular school
- Acknowledge problems with traffic and HT has been proactive in looking at alternative travel arrangements.
- School is very much part of Seal community.
- HT is working hard to bring Seal PS up to the standard of other primary schools in Sevenoaks.
- Educational standards of the school have risen year on year.
- Proposed expansion is essential in meeting the needs of this area and to improve parental choice.
- The shortage of school places within the local area makes school expansion necessary and the school's current site provides an excellent landscape for development.
- School is well placed to take on extra children and provide an excellent, caring education for all its pupils whatever their background, ability or region.
- School has strong leadership, dedicated staff and committed governors.
- Good to see a new modern building that further supports the children's education.
- It will enhance current resources, opportunities and provision at the school, i.e. outdoor space, ethos and attainment.
- Value good caring ethos.

Comments against the proposal:

- Objection based purely on total lack of infrastructure in and around the vicinity of school.
- Cars are parking dangerously and illegally on the corner of Highlands Park and Ash Platt Road.
- Emergency vehicles would not be able to gain access to houses or school.

- Children & parents walk across private gardens and land to avoid cars parked on the only pavement or just to cut corners.
- Road is becoming a no-go area.
- Most children are not local and therefore do not walk to school.
- Residents do not have private driveways so park in the road.
- Loss of all school activities, assemblies etc.
- Staggered lunchtimes would be necessary to accommodate all the children.
- Like the family ethos of the school which we feel would change if school got too big.
- Additional parking will be needed for teachers
- Against expansion unless parking can be provided off site with its own access road off the A25.
- Access to drive partially blocked by parents cars.
- Residents suffer disturbance at school peak times and access onto own property.
- No expansion until suitable plans have been submitted re traffic issues.
- Issues re highways, including parking, congestion and pedestrian safety.
- School should be required to provide safe parking within the confines of its own grounds and parking restrictions should be imposed and enforced in Highlands Park.
- Back gate access to the school should be locked as no right of access permitted.
- Residents are subjected to abuse and aggressive behaviour from some of the parents.
- Safety of children paramount as fear it won't be long before an accident happens.
- Letters home to parents have no effect.
- Highlands Park is used as a free car park.
- Schools Travel Plan is not being effective or monitored.
- Access road is a private road and should not be used. Ordnance Survey map clearly shows that Ash Platt Road ends where the kerbs finish. There is no public right of way over this access road. Use of what was clearly a maintenance access gate as secondary pedestrian access, involving a high volume of pedestrian traffic on a private road and vehicular parking in both Ash Platt Road and Highlands Park, does not have any legitimacy and is clearly contrary to 2007 Planning Permission.
- Need an alternative drop-off and collection point.
- Should restrict or block access to the school via the playing field gate leading to Ash Platt Road and expand the car park on Seal recreation ground so has vehicle capacity suitable for the current size of school.
- Do not feel that the school is organised enough to handle increased numbers.

Undecided Comments included:

- Is the site big enough to provide outdoor space to 420 pupils?
- Road cannot handle the volume of traffic already being experienced.
- Estimate expansion will generate another 180-200 additional car movements.

- As school will attract children from further afield, and there being a limited bus service parents will be reliant on cars to transport children to school.
- How can such an expansion be proposed without looking at the road infrastructure.
- Expansion addresses educational need but not the wider impact on residents and local community.
- Could Seal recreation ground be used for additional parking? The local authority need to consider options.
- As a parent if the school have a travel plan then I am unaware of it.
- A larger school doesn't necessarily mean a better school.
- How did KCC come to the conclusion that Seal was the primary to expand – what are the other options?
- At consultation KCC showed little understanding of the current and escalating traffic problems around the school despite being raised on a regular basis at school meetings.
- Only pedestrian access to the school involves a long walk along a busy section of A25 where footpath extremely narrow. With increased traffic through Seal since approval of Trinity & Grammar School annexes fear it won't be long before there is a serious accident.
- Disruption to school whilst building works undertaken.
- School has promoted woodland setting and outdoor learning experience which will be lost to accommodate new building.
- Residential development was there before the school so road were not built to accommodate volume of traffic.
- Concern for health & safety for parents & pupils.
- Understand the need for expansion and support the school but have serious concerns over current proposals as would compromise pupil safety.

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Roger Gough,

Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform

DECISION NO:

15/00093(b)

For publication

Subject: Proposal to enlarge Seal Church of England (VC) Primary School in Sevenoaks, from 1FE to 2FE

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform I agree to:

- a) Agree that a Public Notice be published to enlarge Seal Church of England (VC) Primary School in Sevenoaks, from 1FE to 2FE for September 2016 and following a representation period of four weeks with no statutory objections received, implement the proposal.
- b) Allocate £2,980,000 from the Education and Young People's Services Capital Budget, to fund any necessary additional works or variations to accommodation.
- c) Authorise the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council
- d) Authorise the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts

Should objections, not already considered by the cabinet member when taking this decision, be received during the notice period a separate decision will be required in order to continue the proposal in order to allow for proper consideration of the points raised.

This decision is subject to planning permission being granted.

Reason(s) for decision:

In reaching this decision I have taken into account:

1. The views received from the consultation with parents/carers, staff and governors.
2. The views of the Governing Body
3. The views of the Local Member
4. the views of the Area Education Officer
5. the views of the Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee.

Financial Implications:

It has been agreed by the Governing Body to permanently enlarge Seal CE Primary School, increasing the PAN to 60 (2FE) for the September 2016 intake and eventually a total capacity of 420 places.

- a. Capital – Kent County Council's contribution will be £2,980,000. This is an estimate and KCC acknowledge that the final amount may be higher or lower. There is also a specific allocation of £2,500 for classroom set up costs.

- b. Revenue – For a period of three academic years, the school will receive protection for an additional 30 Reception Year pupils. For each additional classroom, resulting from the expansion of the school, the sum of £6,000 will allocated towards the classroom setup costs.
- c. Human – Seal CE Primary School will appoint additional teachers, as the school size increases and the need arises.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

15 December 2015 report to Education and Young People’s Cabinet Committee

The Committee endorsed the Kent Commissioning Plan, which identified a need for additional secondary places in the Sevenoaks District.

21 January 2015 report to Education and Young Person’s Cabinet Committee

Recommendations to be added following meeting

Any alternatives considered:

The ‘Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision, 2015-19’ identified a pressure on primary school places in the Eastern part of Sevenoaks District. Sevenoaks District Council have indicated that they need to allocate more land for housing development, which will mean increased pressure on primary school places in the planning area.

The proposal to enlarge Seal Church of England (VC) Primary School in Sevenoaks, from 1FE to 2FE to meet the predicted future demand in the Sevenoaks district was deemed a suitable option.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

N/A

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Signed

Date