

# Response to the Draft Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2017-2021

## Education Commission For the Archdiocese of Southwark

**December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and express thoughts on the Draft Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2017-2021. We acknowledge that this is a comprehensive and dynamic document that provides a solid basis for planning the future school needs in Kent.

We welcome the invitation (on page 9) for the Diocese and other “providers” to submit proposals. To that end, Appendix One of this document contains some specific proposals generated at the meeting held on 9 November 2016 with your area planning officers and Roger Gough. We would be happy to arrange joint meetings between the Diocese, our Catholic MAT in Kent (KCSP), and your area officers and with the EFA to discuss delivery of school places in Kent.

The Diocese, across the 14 local authorities in which we work, has shown a robust and innovative approach to providing school places and we are keen to discuss solutions that can include possible free schools, ‘land swaps’, part funding projects, capital projects through developer contributions, pod construction techniques, ‘air rights’ developments and other creative solutions to provide quality school places for all children.

The emphasis in the Commissioning Plan on the importance of parental preference and parental choice is to be commended. While acknowledging that a large number of places have been delivered by Kent over the past few years, these places have not been in the Catholic sector. Moreover, while welcoming the acknowledgment of the importance of faith places, it is important to be specific in terms of *Catholic* provision, as for parents seeking Catholic provision, a Church of England or other faith designated school is not equivalent. As stated in the plan, it is important to provide parents with choice of schools with different ethos. The voice of the community, particularly in certain areas, has been very strong in terms of the need for additional places in Catholic schools.

Across Kent, an admirable 87.2% of parents received their first preference school place. Of the 26 Catholic Primary schools 14 were oversubscribed with first preferences in 2016. Only one of the schools has surplus places and the majority of the schools provide places for local children of other faiths or with no faith. The number of Catholic children seeking primary school places has increased over recent years and placing increased pressure on popular schools to expand. On present trends, this pressure will continue beyond 2018. The demand for places in secondary schools has also increased and is set to grow in line with the additional demand for primary places. schools in Kent.

Catholic schools in Kent are non-selective and provide school places where all children thrive and learn and where there is good progress in learning % Good and outstanding schools. In particular, reflect on their ambition for every child to have access to good or outstanding and point out the stats for Catholic Schools.

An inclusive and non-selective approach to place planning meets the ambitions of both Kent and the Catholic sector. We would be keen to support the Members’ desire to reduce travel time, especially for SEN students (Section 9.5). The Diocese could possibly contribute land and facilities to improving the SEND provision in Kent.

One of the priorities identified in the plan when considering schools for expansion, renovation or rebuilding is the condition and suitability of existing premises (Section 7.3) Of the £405, 612, 974 spent on school places over the last ten years £500,000 has been spent by KCCC on Catholic provision.

The Diocese has an excellent track record of delivery of new build and expansion building projects. We have considerable capacity to deliver high quality school buildings on time and on, or under, budget. Through careful planning, we have been able to ensure building projects can occur with the minimal disruption to pupils' learning while continuing the provision of pupil places.

The recently proposed elimination of the faith cap on free schools presents an opportunity for the Diocese and KCC to work together on provision, using the free school route. As part of our commitment to openness and a willingness to look for opportunities, the Diocese will be sharing maps showing the broader Diocesan land ownership information. That way the area officers might understand Diocesan land ownership rather than looking solely at school sites.

## Appendix One

Appendix One gives specific examples of possible school expansions and new school developments to be used to initiate further conversations aimed at securing additional schools places for Kent and boosting parental choice in terms of Catholic designated provision.

### **South Kent**

#### Ashford

St Teresa's, Ashford – Large enough site to expand by 1FE but would require a review of traffic management.

#### Dover

There will be additional places required in Aylesham in next couple of years. Section 106 funds could be used to expand St Joseph's in Aylesham.

Dover town area needs primary expansion in the next 2-3 years. Part of St Edmund's secondary school could be used for primary year groups if St Richard's expanded to 2FE.

### **East Kent**

#### Canterbury

A new primary school is required for new developments Mountfield Park (adjoining New Dover Road) at least 2FE. St Thomas primary could be relocated using Section 106 funds to expand St Thomas to 2 or 3FE.

#### Coastal

Potential opportunity for 2FE in Herne Bay (Golf Club and Stroud Farm developments)

KCC expressed interest in St Mary's, Whitstable expansion given the likely availability of adjoining Diocesan land.

#### Thanet

Expansion of St Gregory's to 2FE is moving slowly with a meeting with the adjoining developers scheduled for mid-November.

An expansion of St Ethelbert's in central Ramsgate is possible if use were made of adjoining Diocesan land.

There will be a requirement for a further 5FE in secondary by 2019. A feasibility study, including highway issues, could be undertaken at Ursuline College. Some use of the independent school site could be considered.

## **West Kent**

### Maidstone

There is an acute need for years R 1 & 2 that may be satisfied by short term bulges in 2017. No local plan strategy but there is a need in the Hermitage Lane area which might be satisfied by a bulge at St Francis (This could be achieved using land at St Simon Stock).

An additional 3FE in secondary will be required 2019 plus 1FE by 2020. St Simon Stock will increase its PAN by 1 FE in 2017 and could be expanded further.

### Tonbridge & Malling

Primary needs up to 13FE by the 2030's. Local plan is due to be published April 2017 when it will be clearer what and where expansion will be needed. It was noted that there is sufficient Diocesan land adjoining More Park to make possible expansion to 2FE.

### Tunbridge Wells

St Augustine's could be expanded to 2FE in the light of assessing local demand.

The area will probably require about an extra 6 FE of secondary school places from 2018. St Gregory's may be considered for an additional 1FE.

## **North Kent**

### Sevenoaks

While it would be desirable to expand St Thomas' by 1FE. The site is somewhat challenging but a really innovative solution could be arrived at.

### Swanley

The Swanley and Hextable Master Plan was under consultation and could lead to an additional 1FE being required in the area. St Bartholomew's would be expanding to 2FE from PAN of 50.

### Gravesham

A bulge was required in 2017 in Northfleet and it was agreed that St Joseph's would be approached to take the bulge funded by basic need.

There is a strong possibility of a new Catholic free school (at least 2FE) in the Ebbsfleet development. This would provide diversity of parental choice. Meeting has been arranged by Ian Watts with EDC Chief Executive, Paul Spooner to discuss Diocesan involvement including the possibility of relocating St Joseph's.

There will be a need for an additional 10 FE of secondary provision by 2020. St John's could be expanded subject to PFI negotiations.