

From: Matt Dunkley, CBE, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education

Subject: Proposed expansion of The Maplesden Noakes School

Decision Number: 19/00023

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: 28 January 2019 - the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2019-23 - Cabinet

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Rob Bird and Dan Daley – Maidstone Central

Summary:

This report sets out the proposed expansion of The Maplesden Noakes School, by increasing the published admission number (PAN) from 180 places to 240 places from September 2021.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education is asked to:

- (i) Allocate £6.0 million from the Basic Need budget to fund the permanent expansion of The Maplesden Noakes School.
- (ii) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure in consultation with General Counsel to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council
- (iii) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts

The Cabinet Member's decision on the project will be conditional upon planning permission being granted.

1. Introduction

1.1 As the strategic commissioner of school provision, the Local Authority has a duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places for the residents of Kent as set out in the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2019-23. The Commissioning Plan is a five-year rolling plan which is updated annually that sets out our future plans as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent.

- 1.2 The Commissioning Plan forecasts indicate a growing demand for Year 7 places in Maidstone from the start of the 2019-20 academic year. The Maidstone Non-Selective Planning Group is forecast to have a deficit of 132 Year 7 places from 2019-20 that increases to a deficit of 365 places by the end of the Commissioning Plan period. This represents significant medium-term pressure for additional Year 7 places, which could not reasonably be met by a Free School in central Maidstone or via additional temporary provision.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 In response to the forecast of significant place pressure in Maidstone, Kent County Council (KCC) is proposing to expand Maplesden Noakes school by increasing the published admission number (PAN) from 180 places to 240 places (6 to 8 forms of entry) from September 2021. Prior to the permanent expansion, Maplesden Noakes will offer 30 temporary Year 7 places in 2019-20 and 2020-21.
- 2.2 The expansion project involves a phased programme of works to provide a new build teaching block, a single storey extension to a dining hall, a single storey infill to an existing courtyard, refurbishment of two rooms and additional car parking. The proposed project programme plan has two main phases, with the initial works to be completed for September 2019 and the second phase to be completed for September 2021.
- 2.3 Equality Impact Assessments have been completed for the education consultation in accordance with the Council's equality duty, having due regard to equality considerations when commissioning additional school capacity.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 **Capital** – The total cost is estimated to be in the region of £6.0m from the Basic Need budget. The costs are estimates and these may increase as the project is developed. If the cost of the project were to be exceeded by more than 10% the Cabinet Member would be required to take a further decision to allocate the additional funding.
- 3.2 **Revenue** – £6,000 per new classroom will be provided from Revenue Funding towards the cost of furniture and equipment.

The school will receive growth funding in accordance with the Pupil Growth Policy established by KCC and the Schools' Funding Forum.

- 3.3 **Human** - The schools will appoint additional staff as and when appropriate.

4. Raising Standards

- 4.1 Maplesden Noakes is a popular school that was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in November 2018. In their report, Ofsted inspectors noted that since the last inspection, 'the leadership team has maintained the good quality of

education and working with 'senior and middle leaders, have shaped a school in which pupils are happy and keen to learn'. Leaders 'are passionate in pursuit of high standards in all aspects of school life. There is a strong culture of nurturing, mutual respect and support, as well as high expectations'. 'The continued success of the school is based on leaders' knowledge of 'pupils, an unwavering determination to help them achieve well, and hardworking, dedicated staff.'

5. Policy Framework

- 5.1 These proposals will help to secure our ambition "to ensure that Kent's young people have access to the education, work and skills opportunities necessary to support Kent business to grow and be increasingly competitive in the national and international economy" as set out in 'Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement (2015-2020)'
- 5.2 These proposals reflect KCC's aspirations to provide sufficient school places across the County, as set out in the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2019-23.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 The process to be followed to increase the physical capacity of an Academy is outlined in the Department for Education (DfE) advice for Academy Trusts on "making significant changes to an existing academy". Expansion proposals can follow a 'fast track' process without having to provide a full business case to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). However, academy trusts will need to seek approval from the Secretary of State through the ESFA.
- 6.2 Maplesden Noakes, with support from KCC, are in the process of completing a public consultation on the education case for expansion prior to submitting their fast track business case. The consultation is scheduled to run from 25 February 2019 to 25 March 2019 (midnight). The consultation document has been distributed to parents/carers, school staff and governors, County Councillors, Member of Parliament, the Diocesan Authorities, local libraries, Parish Councils, Maidstone Borough Council and others. The consultation document, together with an Equality Impact Assessment, have also been posted to KCC's website and can be accessed via the following link: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/school-consultations>
- 6.3 The consultation provides an opportunity to send in written responses using paper and digital versions of the response form and via email. A 'drop-in' information session was held at The Maplesden Noakes School on 6 March 2019, 4.00pm to 7.00pm. This provided interested parties with the opportunity to ask questions and complete a response form.
- 6.4 As at 13 March 2019, 12 responses have been received and all are in support of the expansion. Of the 12 responses: 2 parents responded and supported the expansion plans on the basis that places at 'good' schools are limited and without extra places available some parents would otherwise be disappointed; 10 staff have responded in support, on the basis that the

expansion will provide significant benefit to the area and education provision for the students and it will support greater parental choice.

- 6.5 A verbal update will be provided by the Area Education Officer at the cabinet committee to update members on the final result of the consultation.

7. Views

7.1 The View of the Local Members

The KCC Members for Maidstone Central, Rob Bird and Dan Daley, have been consulted on these proposals. Mr Bird provided the following comment after consultation with Mr Daley:

‘Whilst we appreciate the need for more secondary school places due to the growth of population in delivery of the Maidstone Local Plan to 2031 (and beyond): and the duty of the County Council to provide such places, we both feel that great consideration should be given to the effect on local residents in the localities of those places where this demands expansion of established schools which already are giving rise to really bad local traffic congestion.

This is certainly something that must be considered relative to the present Application and the site occupied by Maplesden Noakes school.

It is set in an already overstretched traffic situation next to another major high school, and yet another primary school,at the end of a cul de sac with no possible opportunity of amelioration.

So, whilst we recognise the pressure of making provision for expanded school places, we feel that in providing them at this location, the Council will be creating yet more problems of road congestion which will inevitably add to local gridlock on a daily basis during term times and that this will make the local residents' daily lives very difficult.

In Highways terms therefore, this Application should be refused.

We regret this, but hope that our attitude may be seen as being based purely on common-sense.’

7.2 The View of the Headteacher and Governing Body

The Governing Body are fully supportive of these proposals and have been integrally involved in the formation of the proposal.

Headteacher, Richard Owen: ‘This is such an exciting development for our school and will ensure that our environment becomes something that we can all be even more proud of. We are determined to ensure that all of the features that make Maplesden so special such as our individualised care and support are even more prominent and investment in additional staff will ensure that every student still feels part of a close-knit and caring community.’

7.3 The View of the Area Education Officer

The Area Education Officer fully supports the proposal and feels that the scheme would deliver much needed Year 7 places within the town centre area of Maidstone. It would also develop the facilities at Maplesden Noakes and offer parents additional places at a popular and successful local school.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 This report highlights the significant demand for Year 7 places in the Maidstone Non-selective Planning Group. The proposed expansion of Maplesden Noakes from 180 places to 240 places from September 2021 would help to meet the identified demand for Year 7 places in the Maidstone town centre area. The expansion would also increase parental choice by offering additional places at a popular and successful local school.

9. Recommendation(s)

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education is asked to:

- (iv) Allocate £6.0 million from the Basic Need budget to fund the permanent expansion of The Maplesden Noakes School.
- (v) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure in consultation with General Counsel to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council
- (vi) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts.

10. Background Documents

- 10.1 Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement 2015-2020 <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/corporate-policies/increasing-opportunities-improving-outcomes>
- 10.2 Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2019-2023 https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s88604/KCP%202019%20-%202023%20_Cabinet%20Committee%20-%20FINAL%20PW.pdf

11. Report Author

- Marisa White, Area Education Officer
- Telephone: 03000 418794
- Email: marisa.white@kent.gov.uk

12 Relevant Director

- Keith Abbott, Director of Education Planning and Access
- Telephone: 03000 417008
- Email keith.abbott@kent.gov.uk