

My comments are as follows

Please continue on another sheet if necessary

Public Consultation

**Proposal to close
The Astor of Hever
Community School
and replace with a new
Government funded Academy**



Kent County Council would like to hear your views on the proposal.





Kent County Council is considering a proposal to close the Astor of Hever Community School and open a Government funded Academy. We would like to hear your opinions.

Please take time to read this important document and let us know what you think of this proposal.

Your views are important and will help shape the future. This document gives you the opportunity to let us know what you think.

I can assure you that all comments received will be carefully considered and will be used to develop the proposal for the school. We will then consult you again with these proposals.

*Martin Baker
Interim Director of Learning
Children Families and Education
Kent County Council*



Public Consultation Response Form

Proposal to close the Astor of Hever Community School and replace with a government funded academy

To: Chris Jones
Area Children's Services Officer
Maidstone and Tonbridge & Malling
Kroner House
Eurogate Business Park
Ashford
Kent TN24 8XU
Fax: 01233 898500

You can also email your views to: school.consultations@kent.gov.uk

PLEASE RETURN NO LATER THAN 21st December 2009

Do you agree with the proposal?

Yes

No

Undecided

The parent/carer of a pupil at the Astor of Hever Community School

A member of staff at the Astor of Hever Community School

A governor of the Astor of Hever Community School

A pupil at the Astor of Hever Community School

Other interested party

Name of other interested party:

.....

Name:

Address:

Kent County Council is a data controller under the Data Protection Act 1998 and will comply with the requirements of the Act at all times. We will ensure that your personal information is processed fairly and lawfully and in this instance used only for the purpose of validation, which will enable a fair and just consultation.

HOW TO TELL US YOUR VIEWS

If you would like to comment on the proposal there are several opportunities available to you.

► **Complete and return the response form.**

Send to:

Chris Jones
Area Children's Services Officer
Maidstone and Tonbridge & Malling
Kroner House
Eurogate Business Park
Ashford
Kent TN24 8XU
Fax: 01233 898500
(forms must reach us by 21st December 2009)

► **Come to a public meeting.**

Astor of Hever School
Oakwood Road
Maidstone
Kent
ME16 8AE

7.00 p.m. 25th November 2009

An elected member of Kent County Council will chair this meeting, at which all interested parties will have an opportunity to put forward their views. Officers from the Local Authority will also be present to clarify points of detail.

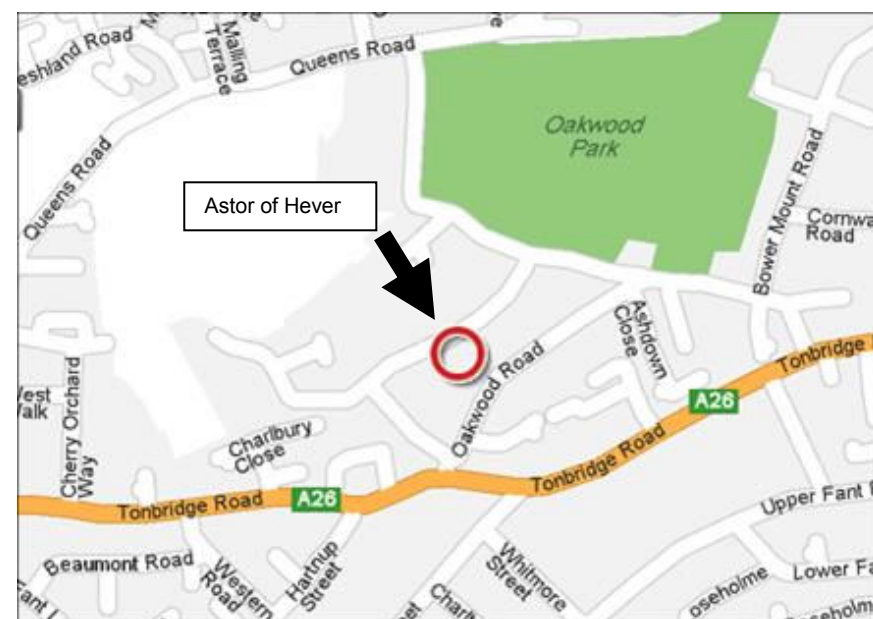
► **Email your comments**

school.consultations@kent.gov.uk

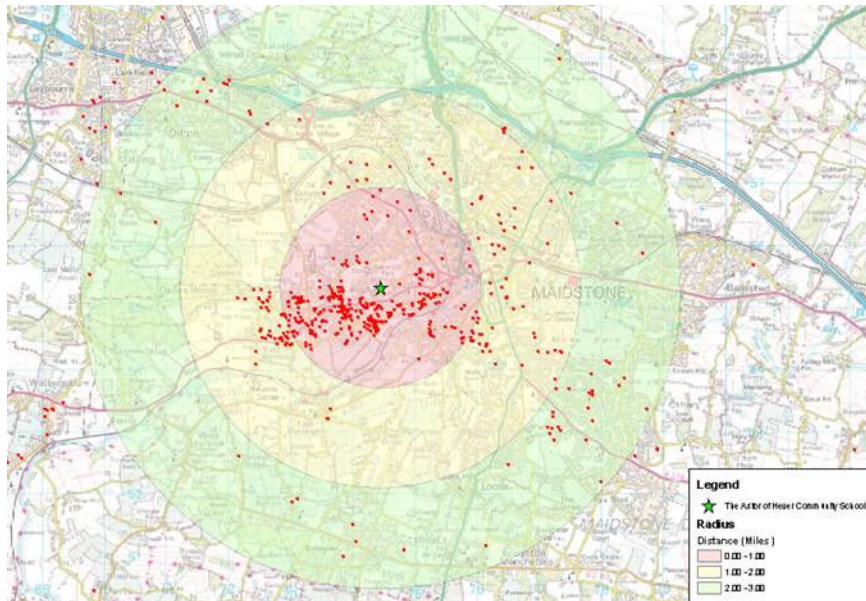
The Astor of Hever Community School

Astor of Hever (Community) School is a Specialist Sports College and admits up to 150 girls and boys into each year group. Its age range is 11 to 18 years. The school has the capacity to admit 869 pupils: 735 pupils into years 7 to 11 and 134 boys and girls into years 12 and 13 (the sixth form). As at spring 2009, the school had 568 pupils on roll in Years 7 to 11 and 93 in the sixth form, a total roll of 661 pupils.

The proportion of pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs is 2.3%, slightly above the Kent average of 2% and the National average of 2.1%. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is 14.4%, which is above the Kent average of 10.7%, but well below the current National average of 23.8%.



The school mainly serves the urban area of West Maidstone. The map below shows the spread of pupils.



Standards

The Astor of Hever School was last inspected by Ofsted on 29th/30th April 2009. The report graded the school as inadequate overall with achievement and standards being the most significant issue. All other areas of the school including personal development, well being, sixth form, teaching and learning were deemed to be satisfactory.

In the last year, the school has made an impressive gain of 8% in the proportion of pupils achieving 5A*-C GCSEs including English and mathematics, based on provisional results for August 2009. This is an encouraging improvement but still leaves the school as part of the National Challenge (the group of schools in which less than 30% of pupils achieved 5A*-C GCSEs including English and mathematics).

CONSULTATION TIMETABLE

9 th November 2009	Start of Consultation.
25 th November 2009	Public Meeting.
21 th December 2009	Close of Consultation.
	Seek the views of the School Organisation Advisory Board on issuing a Public Notice
	Report to Cabinet Member
January 2010	Public Notice issued, if agreed by Cabinet Member
March 2010	End of Statutory Representation Period
1 st January 2011	Astor of Hever school closes New Academy opens

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- Following this consultation, the outcomes will be reported to Members of the School Organisation Advisory Board of Kent County Council.

- A decision will be made on whether to take the proposal forward.

If so, a Public Notice will be published for six weeks.

- Representations about the proposal can be made.
- A determination will then be reached on whether the proposal is to be implemented.
- In certain circumstances this could include referral to the statutory Schools Adjudicator.
- All views will be considered before a decision is made.

How much will it cost?

Capital

The capital cost for this project will be met by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).

Revenue

The academy will receive its revenue funding directly from the DCSF each year. It will be funded at a rate equivalent to other Kent specialist schools.

Human

Consultation about the futures of staff in the existing school will take place in accordance with the requirements of Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment).

Transport and Road Safety Implications

Early discussions will take place with Maidstone Borough Council and Kent Highways. They will be fully consulted as part of the design and development phase of the new Academy and it is also expected that a travel plan will be produced prior to the opening in 2011.

Equality Issues

The development of an Academy will broaden the opportunities available to the young people and neighbouring community of West Maidstone and this proposal does not raise any particular equalities issues.

In 2008 (the latest data available) Astor of Hever School had 21 pupils with English as an additional language (3.6%). This compares against a Kent average of 3.6% and a National average of 10.5%.

What does this proposal mean?

The proposal is that the Astor of Hever Community School will close and in its place, a government funded academy will open. The governing body of Astor of Hever voted unanimously for the school to become an academy. This consultation is concerned with the principle of whether Astor of Hever should close in order to reopen as an academy. There will be a further consultation in the new year about the nature of the academy itself.

It is proposed that the Academy will open in January 2011 in the existing premises with a Published Admission Number of 150, a capacity of 750 11-16 pupils and up to 200 post 16 places. Any young person attending Astor of Hever at the time of its closure will be entitled to a place at the Academy and existing transport arrangements will continue. New buildings are expected to be built for completion in January 2014 on the Oakwood Park site.

Every academy requires a sponsor. The proposed sponsor for the Astor of Hever academy is Woodard Schools which have sponsored other academies in Great Britain. Woodard also has 23 independent schools and 17 affiliated schools. It is a Church of England educational charity which has been in existence for 150 years. The Woodard culture is to provide an excellent education within a caring environment in which each child is treated as an individual, and given opportunities to flourish and acquire the confidence and the tools needed to cope with the demands and responsibilities of adult life. Strong pastoral support, nurturing creativity and critical thinking, and the importance of recognising the spiritual, cultural and moral dimensions of life are strong themes in the Woodard philosophy.



What is an Academy?

Academies are publicly funded independent schools that provide a first class free education to local pupils of all abilities. They bring a distinctive approach to school leadership drawing on the skills of sponsors and other supporters. They give Principals and staff new opportunities to develop educational strategies to raise standards and address diversity in their communities.

They are all ability schools established by sponsors from business, faith or voluntary groups working in highly innovative partnerships with central Government and local education partners.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) meets the capital and running cost for the Academy in full.

Why is KCC proposing this change?

The closure of the current school and the setting up of the Academy would allow for new facilities, flexibility of curricula and enhanced opportunities to retain and recruit high quality staff.

It is intended that the investment in facilities, curriculum and funding flexibility that the academy would bring, would have the positive impact on standards that is required for the current and future students of Maidstone, and for improved life opportunities in the local community.

In addition, this is an opportunity for a fresh start for Astor of Hever with support from Woodard Schools and the resources and vision that this organisation can bring. KCC and Woodard are determined that from this new beginning, Astor of Hever will become a high-performing and popular school.

Regeneration

Part of any new academy proposal includes a rebuild of the school accommodation. The existing accommodation at the Astor of Hever school is a mix of new build, mobile classrooms and the original build from 1970.

Architects and designers will be appointed to work with all stakeholders to create an Academy for the 21st Century. It is expected that they will seek to retain the new building and replace those which are now too old to renovate to a standard fit for education today and into the future.

The Academy

Woodard have made clear that the vision for the school will be developed in full consultation with students, parents and the community, rather than being a pre-formulated one imposed on the school. Woodard Schools will bring to Astor of Hever an emphasis on developing young people's personal and social values, in addition to striving for high educational achievement. There will be a strong focus upon meeting the needs of the individual and developing the whole person.

Although Woodard Schools' origins are in the Church of England, it emphasises that it welcomes members of all faiths and none, and that the values which it espouses are ones which are essentially common to all major religions and our society at large. It will not include a faith requirement within the admission criteria for Astor of Hever.

Woodard has links to over 40 schools and believes that the pool of educational expertise upon which it can draw will be of value in supporting Astor of Hever's development. However, Woodard also strongly believes that the school should remain part of the family of Maidstone schools and colleges, with the continuing local collaboration which that implies.