

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

**Shellina Prendergast
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills**

DECISION NO:

22/00009

Unrestricted

Key decision: Yes, Expenditure exceeds £1m

Subject:

Proposal to Expand Rosherville Church of England Academy and relocate the school to a new site

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, I agree to endorse and progress a proposal to expand Rosherville Church of England Academy, London Rd, Northfleet, Gravesend, Kent DA11 9JQ, increasing the Published Admission Number (PAN) from 20 places to 60 places in two phases, facilitated by a relocation onto a new housing development.

Reason(s) for decision:

Kent County Council (KCC) as the Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places are available. The County Council's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2022-26 is a five-year rolling plan which is updated annually. It sets out our future plans as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent.

The Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC) is overseeing three new developments in Northfleet, Gravesham. These developments are known as Cable Wharf, Harbour Village and Grove Road. The total of new housing is not yet fixed, but it is anticipated that the developments will generate between 1FE and 1.5FE of new primary demand. Analysis of the provision in the Northfleet and West Gravesend planning group indicates that there is insufficient capacity to accommodate this demand.

The Rosherville Church of England Academy is a small 20 PAN primary school, sited on a challenging site on top of a quarry cliff. The site is unsuitable for several reasons. It is restricted by topography on the south and east boundaries, and by the B2175 (London Road) to the north. The site is made up of several smaller parts that have separate freeholders, including the Church Wardens of the Diocese of Rochester.

The school buildings are either very old or in need of replacement, with the main building being of Victorian era. The remaining buildings require constant maintenance to remain fit for purpose. Whilst there is no immediate danger to the school buildings on the existing site, the chalk cliffs are sheer, at about 12m high. The school cannot expand on its existing site.

The proposal addresses two issues. That of increasing the primary provision in the area and providing Rosherville Church of England Academy with a new site and modern buildings, within the Cable Wharf development, but less than 200 metres from the existing school site. This issue has been mentioned in previous Kent Commissioning Plans.

With a PAN of 20, Rosherville Church of England Academy has to carefully manage smaller class

sizes to remain a viable school. Increasing the school's PAN to 1FE and then again to 2FE will make the school much more financially viable and support the future of the school.

Ofsted deems Rosherville Church of England Academy to be a school that 'requires improvement'. It is a popular school with parents. The school is part of the Aletheia Anglican Academies Trust.

The proposal would see Aletheia Anglican Academies Trust expand Rosherville Church of England Academy by 40 Year R places, each year to become a 2FE primary school. This expansion will be in two phases.

The first phase will see the school expand from 20 PAN to 1FE. This expansion should take place for the September 2024 intake. This phase will be facilitated by a move from the London Road site to a new site and building in the Cable Wharf housing development. The new building will initially be constructed to provide the core and infrastructure of a 2FE school, with 1FE of teaching accommodation (seven classrooms), ready for use. Another seven teaching rooms will be built, but not finished. This maintains a 1FE net capacity that reduces the risk of the school having to exceed that capacity.

The second phase will see the school expand from 1FE to 2FE, facilitated by the finishing of an additional seven teaching rooms. This expansion will take place when demand requires it. Most of the new primary demand is forecast to be generated from the aforementioned Cable Wharf Harbour Village and Grove Road developments in Northfleet.

The new building is being designed to incorporate additional space to facilitate either a nursery, a specialist resource provision or both, if future consultations and forecasts indicate that such provisions are required for the community. This will be formalised during the planning process.

Legal Implications

Contracting for KCC framework building contractors.

The provision of sufficient school places is a statutory duty and contributes to the Strategic Business Plan Priorities to ensure that "Children and Young People in Kent get the best start in life"

KCC legal colleagues will ensure that no caveats, conditions or legal constraints exist that could create challenges to the proposal

Equalities implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed which applies to this project and the proposal has been assessed as offering improved facilities for students with disabilities and for students of faith and no faith.

Data Protection implications

An impact assessment identified no adverse implications and KCC did not handle any personal data relating to this decision.

Financial Implications

Capital

Feasibility studies have been undertaken and identified that the cost of the scheme will likely be in the region of £10m to 10.5m. There are a lot of uncertainties in the construction trade at the moment. However, each component of the cost will be considered separately to see what can be reduced. A further paper will be presented to the Cabinet Committee once the financial aspects of the scheme are finalised.

The land is being awarded to KCC as part of the Cable Wharf housing developer's S106 contribution.

There are several funding streams that are being investigated. Gravesham is a Section 106 authority and nearby, there are a number of extant S106 monies that have not yet been allocated to a project. Work is underway to ascertain how many could be put towards this project, and this amount is likely to be between £4.7m and £5m, once index linking calculations have been completed.

The Rosherville site on London Road is not owned by KCC so no direct capital receipt can be received. However, talks are underway with the Rochester Diocese and the Church Wardens to investigate the possibility of securing a capital receipt from the Church Warden's land which can be applied to the project cost.

Negotiations are also underway between the Academy Trust, KCC and the Department for Education (DfE) to try to secure a contribution towards the project cost.

The residue would be sourced from the CYPE Capital Budget. A better indication of this amount will be available if the proposal is progressed and the planning process complete.

In addition, an allowance of up to £2,500 may be payable to outfit each new teaching room with appropriate ICT equipment, such as touch screens or projection equipment.

Revenue

Should the scheme progress, £6,000 per newly provided learning space would be provided towards the cost of furniture and equipment. This would be provided to the school to purchase required equipment. The school would receive funding for the additional pupils that it admits in line with the funding allocated to schools through KCC's Schools Funding Formula.

Human

The school will appoint additional staff as required; utilising revenue funding allocated through the Schools Funding Formula for these additional pupils.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The decision was considered by the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 1 March 2022.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

There is one other alternative option to provide additional provision, that of expanding Lawn Primary School. This alternative was rejected, because Lawn Primary School, being a very small site and will encounter challenging Highways constraints.

A completely new 2FE school would cost in the region of £10m, but comes with a possibility of creating overprovision in the area, which could have a detrimental effect on Rosherville Academy and other local schools. Therefore, by relocating Rosherville Academy into the new building, it would result in the provision of 240 additional primary places rather than 420, thus mitigating the risk of overprovision whilst providing the academy with new, fit for purpose premises.

If no further action is taken in the longer term, Kent County Council will find it extremely difficult to provide sufficient primary school places in the Northfleet and West Gravesend planning group.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken, and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer: None



S. Rendegast

10-03-22

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Signed

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Date