

EXECUTIVE DECISION

From: **Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education**

To: **Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills**

Subject: **Proposed Expansion of Wrotham School**

Decision Number: **23-00016**

Key decision:

- *It involves expenditure or savings of maximum £1m*

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of report: Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee – 8 March 2023

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Harry Rayner – Malling West

Summary: This report sets out the proposed expansion of Wrotham School, Borough Green Road, Wrotham, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN15 7RD.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is asked to take the decision to:

- a) authorise the allocation of £6,880,428 from the Children Young People and Education Services Basic Need Capital Budget to fund the permanent expansion of Wrotham School, with the provision of 265 additional places across the year groups (years 7-11) to increase its Published Admission Number (PAN) to 210 places from September 2025.
- b) authorise the Corporate Director of Finance (s151 officer) and Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services in consultation with the General Counsel and Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council.
- c) authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts. Variations to contract value to be no more than 10% above the capital funding agreed by the Cabinet Member without requiring a new Record of Decision.

1. Introduction

1.1 KCC has identified the need for additional places within the Sevenoaks and Borough Green Non-Selective Planning Group. It has therefore agreed with the

Character Education Trust to permanently expand Wrotham School's PAN to 210 from September 2025 via the commissioning of 265 additional places across the school year groups.

- 1.2 Kent County Council (KCC) as the Local Authority (LA), has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places are available. The County Council's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2023-27 is a five-year rolling plan which is updated annually. It sets out KCC's future plans as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent.

2. Body of the report

- 2.1 In July 2021 Wrotham School was selected for rebuilding as part of the second round of the School Rebuilding Programme (SRP). The SRP is a Department for Education (DfE) scheme that carries out major rebuilding and refurbishment projects at school and sixth-form college buildings across England, with buildings prioritised according to their condition.
- 2.2 The Wrotham School project comprises the substantial rebuilding of the current school accommodation within its existing site. The rebuilding scheme will be managed and funded (via the SRP award) by the DfE.
- 2.3 Additionally, KCC has identified a need for additional places within the Sevenoaks and Borough Green Non-Selective Planning Group. It has therefore been agreed with the academy and the DfE to commission 265 additional places across the year groups (7 to 11) at Wrotham school to enable its PAN to be increased permanently to 210. The additional places will be included within the rebuilding project, which will be managed by the DfE and KCC will meet the associated costs of the additional works via Basic Need Capital funding.
- 2.4 The proposed expansion relates to providing additional places which are needed for the current population in the local area and existing permitted housing growth; the proposed expansion does not relate to any major developments within the area which may be proposed in future, either through the Borough's Local Plan process or planning applications which are yet to be made. Any such future development proposals would need to be considered and mitigated independently at the appropriate stage in the town planning and school place commissioning processes.

3. Alternative options

- 3.1 There are only 3 three schools within the Sevenoaks and Borough Green non-selective planning group, including Wrotham, and the other 2 schools have recently been expanded and therefore cannot easily accommodate additional places.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The total scheme cost is £34,432,292, with the DfE providing £27,551,865 from the SRP scheme to fund the rebuilding of the existing accommodation and KCC

providing £6,880,428 from the Basic Need Capital Budget to fund the additional places.

- 4.2 Wrotham School has offered over PAN for the school years commencing in September 2021, 2022, 2023 and is expected to in 2024. This was at the request of the County Council to ensure a sufficient supply of places within the area and represents bulge intakes prior to the construction of the permanent accommodation. These bulge admissions have been accommodated within the school's existing premises and also through the provision of mobile accommodation. The County Council has funded the hire cost of this temporary mobile accommodation which will be removed upon completion of the school rebuilding scheme. The total expected revenue cost of providing the temporary accommodation until September 2025 is £257,026.83, of which £221,801.58 has been incurred to date.
- 4.3 Revenue Funding: Should the scheme progress, £6,000 per new learning space would be provided towards the cost of furniture and equipment. This relates to the additional accommodation provided for the Basic Need element and not the rebuilding element. This would be provided to the school to purchase required equipment. 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. The school would receive funding for the additional pupils that it admits in line with the funding allocated to schools through KCC's funding formula. This also relates to the additional accommodation provided for the Basic Need element and not the rebuilding element.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 Planning permission will be required for the new accommodation to enable the rebuilding and expansion of the school. The DfE are responsible for securing the planning permission.

6. Equalities implications

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been produced and no issues were identified in the early stage EqIA, but the assessment will be reviewed as the project continues.

7. Governance

- 7.1 The authorise the Corporate Director of Finance (s151 officer) and Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services in consultation with the General Counsel and Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council. It will also authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts.

8. Consultation

8.1 In accordance with the DfE's Statutory Guidance 'making significant changes to an existing academy', the expansion proposal can be fast tracked without the Trust having to provide a full business case to the EFA. However, the academy is required to carry out a public consultation with stakeholders as part of their fast-track application.

9. Views

9.1 The View of the Local Members

The KCC Members for Malling West, Harry Rayner, has been consulted on this proposal.

9.2 The View of the Area Education Officer

The Area Education Officer fully supports this proposal as it will ensure that there are sufficient non-selective places within the Sevenoaks and Borough Green Non-Selective Planning Group.

10. Conclusions

10.1 This report sets out a proposal to expand Wrotham School to meet the forecast need for additional places within the Sevenoaks and Borough Green Non-Selective Planning Group. The proposed expansion would be completed as part of the DfE managed and funded rebuilding scheme. KCC would fund the expansion element of the build via Basic Need Capital funding and will benefit from the economies of scale and value for money from the work being completed as part of the larger rebuilding scheme.

11. Recommendation(s):

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13. Background documents

Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2023-27

14. Contact details

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