

By:	Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning and Skills
To:	Education Cabinet Committee – 18 January 2012
Subject	Decision number: 12/02009 - Proposal to expand Southborough Church of England Primary School
Classification:	Unrestricted

Summary:	This report seeks to inform members of the results of the Public Consultation
Recommendations:	The Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and either endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education Learning and Skills on the decision to expand Southborough Church of England Primary School by issuing a public notice to expand the school

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 The Tunbridge Wells District section of the Kent Commissioning Plan 2012-17 indicates a need to commission additional primary school places in the Southborough area. This proposal is one of several for this district.

1.2 On 12 September 2012, Education Cabinet Committee recommended to the Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills that a consultation takes place on the proposal to expand Southborough Church of England Primary School.

1.3 This report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place between 15 October 2012 and 3 December 2012. A public meeting was held on 16 October 2012.

## **2. The Proposal**

2.1 It is proposed to enlarge Southborough Church of England Primary School by 30 reception year places taking their PAN to 90 (3FE) for the September 2013 intake. Successive reception year intakes will offer 90 places each year and the school will eventually have a total capacity of 630 pupils.

## **3. Bold Steps and the Kent Commissioning Plan**

3.1 This proposal will help to secure our ambition “to ensure every child will go to a good school where they make good progress and can have fair access to school places” as set out in ‘Bold Steps for Kent’

3.2 The Tunbridge Wells section of the Kent Commissioning Plan indicates a need to commission additional primary capacity in the Southborough planning area.

## **4. Outcomes of the Public Consultation**

4.1 A significant majority of respondents were in favour of the proposal. The comments and questions raised at the public meeting are explored in paragraph 5.2 below.

4.2 A summary of the comments received during the consultation period are given at appendix 1.

4.3 A copy of the questions, comments and responses made during the the public meeting are given in appendix 1.

## **5. Views**

### **5.1 Local Member**

The Local Member is Mr Roy Bullock.

“I am convinced by the present statistics that there is a need for additional places in this area of Tunbridge Wells. Due to the sibling rule I have seen children on the West Side of London Road Southborough not able to access this school and that is not tolerable. I am aware that the site is not over crowded and I am certain by careful design the whole school could be enhanced due to this expansion. I fully support the plan to increase the capacity of Southborough CEPS”

5.2 The following issues were raised at the public consultation meeting:

#### *Concern over the potential for a dilution in ethos or standards at the school.*

The responsibility for maintenance of standards at the school is vested in Mrs Emma Savage, the Head teacher and Chair of Governors. Both made it clear during the public meeting that they believed that neither performance standards nor ethos were at risk.

#### *Concern over the potential for an increase in traffic or local parking issues.*

There are two sets of access to the school that are in use, but both open onto the same road, Broomhill Park Road. Consideration of the access to the school, including surrounding roads may need to be considered as part of any redevelopment of the site and Property Group are factoring this in to their feasibility studies.

A new traffic survey will be sought in parallel to the planning process in order to clearly define the impact (if any) of additional traffic resultant from this proposal is needed. Solutions such as an off-road drop-off/pick-up area, walking buses and off site drop offs may form part of the solution and the School Travel Plan will be updated.

#### *Concerns about disruption to learning during build.*

A project manager will be appointed who will liaise closely with the head teacher. In this way, the head teacher will maintain complete control over any work being done, particularly if it is felt that health and safety may be compromised

Where possible, disruptive building work will be limited to times when the school is closed.

#### *Concerns over staff parking.*

There is limited capacity on the site and an increase in car parking spaces is an issue that will need to be considered and incorporated into the eventual plan.

### **5.3 Area Education Officer**

The Area Education Officer, Simon Webb fully supports this proposal and, having considered other commissioning options, is of the belief that this enlargement is not only necessary, but the most cost-effective and sustainable solution to increased demand in the immediate area.

Other school sites in the northern part of urban Tunbridge Wells have been considered, but Southborough CE Primary School remains the single most suitable solution to increasing local demand.

#### 5.4 Governing Body

The Governing Body of Southborough Church of England Primary School are supportive of the proposal subject to certain conditions and caveats over building and funding. The school comprises a Junior and an Infant block and it is the schools preference that these two parts are joined.

A second feasibility study has been commissioned to ensure that the future learning environment is appropriate for the children.

The AEO believes that with the more detailed feasibility study, the new accommodation will meet both the governors and the local authority requirement.

#### 5.5 Headteacher

The head teacher of the school has been fully consulted and is supportive, subject to the above conditions and caveats.

#### 5.6 Diocese

The Diocese of Rochester has been consulted and are happy to support the enlargement of church schools.

#### 5.7 Pupils

The pupils of the school have been consulted and their views are included within this report.

### **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the consultation. No comments were received and no changes needed to be made to the Equality Impact Assessment following the consultation period.

### **7. Recommendations**

7.1 The Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and either endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education Learning and Skills on the decision to expand Southborough Church of England Primary School by issuing a public notice to expand the school

### **8. Background Documents**

8.1 Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

8.2 Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2012-2017

8.3 Education Cabinet Committee report – 12 September 2012 – Primary Commissioning – Tunbridge Wells District

### **9. Lead Officer Contact details**

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## Proposal to expand Southborough CE Primary School Tunbridge Wells

### Summary of Written Responses

Printed Consultation Documents distributed: 600

Consultation responses received: 50

A summary of the responses received showed that:

	In Favour	Undecided	Opposed
Governors	2		
Staff	19	1	
Parents	6		4
Pupils	14		
Other	1		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>

#### Comments in favour of the proposal:

- A great opportunity for both the school staff and pupils
- Great opportunity for Southborough school to expand to enable it to serve the local community
- It will be lovely to see the whole school refreshed
- This is very exciting
- Reassurance that the school grounds will remain as pleasant and wildlife friendly as at present.
- It is important to provide primary school provision for all of our community
- I agree that there are more children in Southborough who need school places
- Southborough primary has space to expand so I have no objections
- The expansion will enhance provision for our current pupils
- My hope is that the expansion will provide current and future children with improved facilities and access to more opportunities
- It would be good to offer school places to local children so that they do not have to travel away from Southborough for schools elsewhere

#### Comments against the proposal:

- Increasing numbers will change the ethos or worse
- The head teacher is fairly new and does not understand how it has always been small
- Parents who move away should be made to go to their local school
- When collecting children, it is a free for all.
- It gets very busy at the infants entrance
- The school will need more space and this means losing the green/recreational space
- I believe that Southborough School will lose its community feel
- Huge reduction and loss of play space for the children
- The school will become far too large and lose its familiar feel
- It is already gridlocked and will affect neighbours and the children
- It is unconscionable that the council continue to address this issue by compelling Southborough and many other schools in Tunbridge wells to absorb extra capacity
- Southborough does not have the space or the facilities

### **Comments from the School Council:**

- I think it would be good for new children to come here.
- Good because we can get to know lots of new people. We can help new people settle in.
- It will be nice to look after new people coming to the school.
- It will be harder for teachers to do first aid and other work for the children.
- School trips might cost more money.
- More clubs is a good idea and more staff to look after us.
- We won't be as lonely.
- Good opportunity for people to come but disadvantage would be more people on the playgrounds.
- It might be hard to get new teachers.
- Good opportunity for others to join Southborough.
- Catering for more might be difficult. Older children might have to wait longer for lunch.
- Opportunities for new friendships is good.
- Reception will have a totally different experience.
- Field might not be as big with more children.
- Good to have more children in the school.
- Need more facilities for this and this will cost more.
- Worried about crowding on playground i.e. where football is played would be hard for 3 classes.
- Good for us because more sports games might happen.
- Worried about the cost of new tables and laptops.
- People need to learn and this is a good school for learning so it is a good idea.
- A good idea because it encourages more people to learn here and they won't have to go too far to school.
- Helping other people is a good idea.
- Pupils who come here won't be late because they are coming to a nearby school.
- A good idea for us to make new friends and we can buy new equipment that we can't afford at the moment.
- A good idea because more people can come to the school and it will help our school.
- A good plan for people in Southborough – they can walk to school and not have to use the car.
- There will be games to play – new pupils will teach us new games.

## Proposal to expand Southborough Primary School, Tunbridge Wells

### Summary of Public Consultation Meeting

#### Purpose of the Meeting

- To explain the proposal to enlarge Southborough CofE Primary School
- To give you an opportunity to ask questions
- To listen to your views and opinions

Kent County Council is proposing that Southborough CofE Primary School increase its Year R intake to 90, taking the proposed total capacity of the school from 420 places to 630 places.

A short presentation outlining the proposal for expansion was given by Simon Webb.

#### Statement from Archdeacon of Tonbridge, Clive Mansell

Apologies were received from Alex Tear and John Constanti who were unable attend the meeting. In principle the Diocese are happy to support the enlargement of church schools and hope to work closely with the headteacher and governors with this proposal at Southborough Primary School.

#### Statement from Chair of Governors, Rob Crumie

The governors welcome the opportunity to improve the attainment and achievements of the children at Southborough Primary School. Governors have debated the pros and cons of this proposal and believe there are benefits and challenges which through negotiation can have a positive outcome for the school.

#### Statement from Headteacher, Emma Savage

Southborough Primary School did not seek to expand the approach came from the local authority. Broadly the school are supportive of the proposals to increase to a 3FE primary school and have talked to larger schools and those who have temporarily enlarged. The proposals are dependent upon the outcome of a feasibility report but give us an opportunity to build on what we already have, a successful school.

Question	Response
By expanding the school to take an additional 30 pupils, how many of those children are likely to be local and how many from schools farther away? Because if more children are coming from other schools it will increase traffic flow and quite frankly why isn't the local authority investing money in schools which have surplus capacity to help raise standards and encourage parents to use.	<p>A huge amount of investment is being put into underperforming schools to help try and raise standards but it does not matter how much you improve a school, there is parental choice.</p> <p>Currently some of the more local parents will not apply for Southborough as they feel they will not get in. With the increase the concentric circle will widen to take in children nearer to the Southborough town centre to ensure parents get first preference.</p>
Southborough School is a successful school with happy children, strong leadership, high teaching standards and over subscribed year on year. With a distance criteria of a 1/3 <sup>rd</sup> of a mile the schools responsibility is to the local community and not taking children from farther afield.	Reassurance was given by the headteacher that standards would not drop if the school expanded as staff will continue to maintain high levels of teaching. With expansion comes improved resources which will benefit the pupils

<p>What exactly are the benefits to children already attending the school?</p>	<p>The headteacher added that although Southborough Primary School was one school it was housed in two separate buildings and it would help with transition if they were physically joined in some way. In order for the school to enjoy whole school activities the hall will have to be extended, there will be improved IST facilities, improved areas, such as break out rooms. As a result of any expansion the classrooms would have to be reorganised but the headteacher hoped the small, family feel of the school remained.</p>
<p>Asked whether the capital investment was incremental and whether timing was dependent on affordability.</p>	<p>The local authority confirmed the spend is incremental and money will be available as and when required during the different phases of build. The funding is guaranteed but unfortunately the local authority cannot guarantee the amount as those costs will be determined once feasibility undertaken.</p>
<p>The school will be taking an additional 30 children next September but you do not anticipate the building works to start later, with a completion date around March 2014 so will we have temporary accommodation in the meantime?</p>	<p>If the proposal is accepted, it is hoped that the major building works are carried out during the school holidays. Demountable, steel framed, air conditioned units will be used temporarily. Once building work is completed, the children will move out of the demountable into new school accommodation.</p>
<p>I am concerned about the parking and road access and there will be 50% more parents driving to school. Also the playground area is quite small so will expansion of the outside play areas is considered?</p>	<p>The new infrastructure includes all the hard play areas so there will be expansion to accommodate the extra children, which will impact on the green spaces.</p> <p>Parking will be part of a two stage planning process. Full consultations will take place with KCC Highways, Planners and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council before a formal planning application is submitted.</p>
<p>I am concerned as the concentric circle moves out it will create more traffic around the local road network and houses so how will the school manage this?</p>	<p>Traffic is a very emotive subject and the school will have a travel plan to consider possibly the use of walking buses and other initiatives to try and keep volume of traffic down. This may involve talking to the Police and Local Community Liaison Officer.</p>

29 people attended