

By:	Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning and Skills
To:	Education Cabinet Committee, 21 June 2013
Subject	Decision number: 13/00006 Proposed expansion of Lower Halstow School (Community Primary), Lower Halstow, Sittingbourne
Classification:	Unrestricted
Future Pathway of Paper	Cabinet Member decision
Electoral Division	Swale Central

Summary:	This report sets out the results of the public consultation.
Recommendation	The Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform on the decision to issue a public notice to expand Lower Halstow (Community Primary), Lower Halstow, Sittingbourne

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Swale section of the Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2012-17 indicates a need for additional places in the Sitingbourne area.
- 1.2 On 19 March 2013, Education Cabinet Committee recommended to the (former) Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills that a consultation takes place on the proposal to expand Lower Halstow School (Community Primary), Lower Halstow, Sittingbourne.
- 1.3 This report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place between 15 April 2013 and 24 May 2013. A public meeting was held on 8 May 2013.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed to enlarge Lower Halstow School by 10 reception year places, taking their PAN to 30 (1 FE) for the September 2014 intake. Successive Reception Year intakes will offer 30 places each year and the school will eventually have a total capacity of 210 pupils.

3. Bold Steps and the Kent Commissioning Plan

- 3.1 This proposal will help to secure our ambition, "to ensure every child can 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 Swale section of the Commissioning Plan indicates a need to commission additional primary capacity across the whole of Swale, including the Sittingbourne area.

4. Outcomes of the Public Consultation

- 4.1 A total of 26 responses were received with 9 objecting to the proposal, 13 supporting the proposal and 4 undecided.
- 4.2 A summary of the comments received during the consultation period is given in appendix 1.
- 4.3 A summary of the views and comments given at the public consultation meeting is attached as appendix 2.

5. Views

5.1 Local Members

The local members are Mr Roger Truelove and Mr Lee Burgess

5.2 Governing Body

“The Governing Body of Lower Halstow and Newington CEP Schools fully supports the proposal to expand Lower Halstow School from a Published Admission Number of 20 to 30. This would enable the school to become a single form entry school and remove the present situation of 5 mixed year classes thus allowing children to move through the school with their peers. From a teaching perspective the school would be able to broaden the range of staffing skills and expertise. The facilities already on site, i.e. the Dining Hall, Sports Hall and ICT Suite, will accommodate the increased numbers. As a Governing Body we are keen to revise our School Travel Plan to take into account issues which arise through the proposed expansion.”

5.3 Pupils

The pupils were consulted and these are some of their views:

- Good because children in the same year group will be in the same class.
- Good because we will be able to make more friends.
- Not good as there is not enough space at the moment.
- Good as there will be more chance of going to school with people who live in your area.
- Not good because the village would become too busy and we might lose the small village community.
- Good as the school will be more popular.

5.4 Area Education Officer

This is a popular and successful school that is regularly oversubscribed. Increasing pupil numbers in the Sittingbourne area, including in the vicinity of Lower Halstow, mean that expansion is necessary to ensure sufficient school places for local children. We will work closely with the school on the provision of additional accommodation and the planning for the works on site in order to ensure that this supports the smooth running of the school, is in keeping with the vision that the governing body has for Lower Halstow School and provides for a permanent solution for September 2014. The school at that time would also produce a new travel plan in liaison with Highways and taking into consideration the views of the local residents.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out at the start of this consultation and is available via the following link:

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/LowerHalstowSchool/consultationHome>

The conclusion following the public consultation is that the presumptions made in the initial assessment still remain and that it is not necessary to initiate a further Equality Impact Assessment.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 The Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform on the decision to issue a public notice to expand Lower Halstow School.

8. Background Documents (and links to them)

COMMISSIONING PLAN FOR EDUCATION PROVISION 2012-17

<http://kent590w3:9070/documents/s34295/FINAL%20VERSION%20Kent%20Comm%20Plan%20Ed%20Prov%202012-17%20attached%20to%20WEB%20SITE%2020%20SEPT.pdf>

Education Cabinet Committee report – 19 March 2013 Primary Commissioning - Swale District

<http://kent590w3:9070/documents/s38809/Item%20B9b%20Primary%20Commissioning%20Swale%20District.pdf>

The public consultation document is available via the following link:

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/LowerHalstowSchool/consultationHome>

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The Proposed Expansion of Lower Halstow School from 140 pupil places to 210, increasing the PAN from 20 to 30.

Summary of written responses

Consultation documents (hard copies) distributed: 250
Responses received: 26.

	Support	Against	Undecided	Total
Parents/Carers	4	6	1	9
Governors	2	0	0	2
Members of Staff	7	0	0	7
Interested Parties	0	3	3	6
Total	13	9	4	24

In support of the proposal

Parents

- The school should expand as more families are moving into the village.
- I agree with the expansion; however the ongoing problem with parking will need to be addressed.
- Single age entry classes would be of benefit to the children.
- The choice available to local children would be improved as Lower Halstow is a very popular primary school.

Staff

- One form year groups will be more beneficial for the children and staff and children will be able to stay with their own peer group all through the school.
- Lower Halstow is a great school with great facilities and more children should be able to attend.
- Single age classes will allow teachers to plan for clear progression.
- The staff will work hard to ensure the current ethos of the school remains the same

Governors

- It would negate the need for mixed year group teaching
- It should further enhance curriculum opportunities for all pupils
- It would allow the school to benefit from the monies that additional pupils will bring.
- On the whole my view is that this is a positive proposal as long as the traffic situation in and around the school can be managed in a way that is safe for the pupils.

Other interested parties

- We live in the village and our son will be starting school in September 2014 and we are concerned that if the school is not expanded, he and others in his friendship group may not get a place at the village school.
- As a local resident we share the access road with Lower Halstow School. The school is well managed, with good standards and I agree with the expansion but

with vehicles turning in the road, mounting the footpath it is a serious health and safety issue.

Against the proposal

Parent

- We do not want further expansion in the village.
- The teacher to pupil ratio would increase.
- Increasing the size would no doubt mean more traffic in an area that it already overwhelmed.
- The extra places would probably be filled by children from outside the village. This would also implicate that more traffic would be travelling through the village, adding to pollution and increasing the congestion and parking problems at the beginning and end of the school day.
- Lower Halstow is a village that requires a village school to accommodate the children that are here, not children from Sittingbourne, etc.
- Proposed expansion of the school building will lead to a reduction of sports areas and larger class sizes.

Other interested parties

- The school should be for the residents of the village.
- The increase in vehicles, either parked or not, would increase the danger to children.
- The village is still struggling to come to terms with the very recent imposition of an entirely new housing estate and should the school be expanded I fear there will be more people within this closely knit community moving out of the village.

The Proposed Expansion of Lower Halstow School from 140 pupil places to 210, increasing the PAN from 20 to 30.

Summary of the public meeting held on Monday 30 April at Lansdowne Primary School

The meeting was chaired by Mr Kevin Shovelton and was attended by approximately 30 people including parents, governors, staff and other interested parties such as local residents.

A short presentation outlining the proposal for expansion was given Marisa White, Area Education Officer

Cathy Walker, Headteacher spoke in support of the proposal explaining the current issues with teaching in 5 mixed age classes including managing resources for mixed ages and children having to spend two years in a mixed Year 1 and Year 2 class. The facilities of the school are very good and would more than cope with increased numbers. Although there could be concerns about the atmosphere and ethos changing as the school expands, the children and teachers would remain at the heart of the ethos.

Peter Marshall, Chair of Governors spoke in support of the proposal and saw it as an opportunity to move forward. A larger school would help to finance better facilities for the children and extra staff would bring extra skills and could ensure the security of the local village school.

Views and comments are listed below:

The main concerns raised at the public meeting were:

- The number of applications for places at the school from families living outside of the village.
- Parking and dangerous access.
- The school being part of a federation with Newington Primary School and the capacity to expand with only one headteacher leading the two schools.