

By:	Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning and Skills
To:	Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education & Health Reform
Subject	Decision number: 13/00013 Proposed relocation of Laleham Gap (Special) School and increase designated number
Classification:	Unrestricted

Summary:	This report seeks the agreement of the Cabinet Member to issue a Statutory Public Notice to relocate Laleham Gap (Special) School and increase the designated number of pupils on roll, following the completion a public consultation. The decision is being taken without consideration by a Cabinet Committee, in accordance with procedures set out in the Council's Constitution for such occasion.
Recommendation	The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform is asked to consider the outcome of the consultation and agree to issue a public notice to relocate Laleham Gap (Special) School and increase the designated number from 152 to 170.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Special Educational Needs section of the Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2012-17 identifies the current provision available across the County and outlines plans for providing new/enhanced accommodation for ten Special schools including Laleham Gap School.

1.2 On 19 March 2013, Education Cabinet Committee recommended to the Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills that a consultation takes place on the proposal to relocate Laleham Gap (Special) School and increase the designated number.

1.3 This report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place between 15 April 2013 and 27 May 2013. A public meeting was held on 2 May 2013.

2. Proposal

2.1 The proposal is coming forward following a successful bid for funding to rebuild the school through the Government's Priority Schools Building programme. This will mean that for the first time the school can be consolidated in purpose built buildings on a single site. The proposed new site is at New Haine Road in Ramsgate currently owned by EKO at Westwood Cross, adjacent to the Marlowe Academy. It is intended to agree a land swap with EKO to the value of the land required for the new Laleham Gap site and to commence building, subject to planning permission, from November 2013 with the intention that the school will be operating from the new site from January 2015. It is also proposed to increase the designated number of the school from 152 to 170.

3. Bold Steps, the Kent Commissioning Plan and the SEN Strategy

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 to support vulnerable pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, so that they achieve well and make good progress”.

3.2 The Special Educational Needs section of the Commissioning Plan relating to the future provision for children with special educational needs will be updated in line with the development of the Kent’s Strategy for SEN and Disability. Kent’s Strategy for SEN and Disability’s overarching aim is to improve the health, well being, attainment and progress, and quality of provision, for children and young people with SEN. An important aspect of this is to review and develop the capacity of special schools.

4. Outcomes of the Public Consultation

4.1 A total of 22 responses were received with 14 supporting the proposal and 7 objecting to the proposal.

4.2 A petition containing 28 signatures was received from local residents against the re-location of Laleham Gap School if by doing so the site would be used for a housing development.

4.3 A summary of the comments received during the consultation period are given in appendix 1.

4.4 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 for Thanet that cover the divisions in which both the current sites and the proposed site come are:

Mr Alan Terry, Ms Zita Wiltshire, Ms Mo Elenor, Mr William Scobie, Mr Trevor Shonk and Mr Martyn Heale.

Mr Terry has responded that he supports the proposal.

5.2 Governing Body

Peter Hawthorne, Chair of Governors spoke at the public meeting and said that the Governing Body took their responsibilities seriously and would be scrutinising the plans. The Governing Body has concerns that this consultation is running concurrently with the consultation on Kent’s Strategy for SEN and the timing of the decisions.

5.3 Area Education Officer

The move to the new site will enable the school, currently operating over two sites, to operate as one all through school in modern purpose-built buildings with improved ability to meet the needs of its pupils.

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/LalehamGapSchool/consultationHome>

6.2 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 Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform is asked to:
- (i) consider the outcome of the consultation
 - (ii) agree to issue a Statutory Public Notice to relocate Laleham Gap (Special) School
 - (iii) increase the designated number from 152 to 170 pupil places.

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 and relocation of Special Schools (Special School Review) – Thanet District

<http://kent590w3:9070/documents/s38884/Item%20B9a%20Primary%20Commissioning%20and%20Relocation%20of%20Special%20Schools.pdf>

The public consultation document is available via the following link:

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

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The Proposed Relocation of Laleham Gap (Special) School.

Summary of written responses

Consultation documents (hard copies) distributed: 450
Responses received: 22

	Support	Against	Undecided	Total
Parents/Carers	15	3	-	18
Governors	-	-	-	-
Members of Staff	-	2	-	2
Interested Parties	-	2	-	2
Total	15	7	-	22

In support of the proposal

Parents

- A new purpose-built school will enable the excellent work of the staff to continue for many years.
- Currently the children have to move between mobiles and buildings in all weathers.
- The old buildings are not fit for modern teaching and it will be great for the excellent staff to work in a modern purpose built building.
- Having both primary and secondary departments on the same site can only be positive for the children as they move through the school.
- The proposed site is in a good location easily accessible to most.
- Amalgamating the two departments would reduce costs and provide up to date technology.
- There are insufficient places within this county for children with ASD and any plan to expand the available placements is a positive thing for this county.
- I feel strongly that if the rebuild goes ahead that the school should include 6th form provision as in the future children will have to remain in education up to the age of 18.
- Being on one site will make transition between the primary and secondary so much easier for the children, as children with ASD do not like change.
- I broadly agree with the proposal but I am surprised that the proposed school is not larger. Is this not an opportunity to provide a 6th form and increase the school roll?

Against the proposal

Parent

- We are very impressed with the primary site and we like the beautiful old school and wonder if there are any good points for being taught in an architecturally pleasing and homely environment for both pupils and teachers. The proposed site is smaller and in an unpleasant and unsuitable part of Thanet.
- Combining the two schools means there will be too many students on one site and this would be detrimental to the younger children.
- The proposed site is smaller than the 2 separate sites and is basically on an enormous retail park.

Members of Staff

- The school would lose its nurturing, calm, natural environment which helps balance pupils.
- There would appear to be inadequate parking for staff.
- The proposed site is too small and there would be no room for future expansion.
- Access to the proposed site would be difficult and taxis would have to queue on the main road.

Other interested parties

- As a local resident I object to the proposal if it means that the future of the site would be for a housing development.
- The Westwood Cross area is already very busy with traffic and with further housing proposed in the area, it would be almost impossible for parents to get their children to and from the school.
- Building a school that is not big enough to accommodate the amount of pupils that Laleham Gap has at present would seem to be very short sighted.
- If the school has to relocate then surely it would be in the best interest of the public purse to use the present site for the expansion of Cliftonville Primary School.
- The current school is beautiful and has such character – what is the point of building a new school with little character.

Thanet District Council

A letter was received from Thanet District Council saying that the council has no comments to make with regard to the consultation but will be interested to see the outcome and receive formal consultation should the proposals for the sites continue.

The Proposed Relocation of Laleham Gap Special School.

Summary of the public meeting held on Thursday 2 May at Laleham Gap School, Northdown Park Road, Margate

The meeting was chaired by Mr Kevin Shovelton, Director of Education Planning & Access and was attended by approximately 50 people including parents, governors, staff and other interested parties.

A short presentation outlining the proposal for expansion was given Marisa White and Philip Houghton from the EFA, who will be project managing the Priority Schools' proposals in Kent.

Views and comments are listed below:

Issues raised	Response
Will the proposed school site impact on the Jackie Baker playing fields? - (land donated for community use).	No the proposed site will not encroach on the Jackie Baker playing fields
What will the designated number be in the future as the school is likely to have 180 in September?	The designated number is allowed to be increased or decreased by 10% so with 170, it could 17 more or 17 less allowing for peaks and troughs and the school would not be asked to take more.
If the Specialist Teaching Service is not to be included and it has to move can this be completed by September?	It was agreed with the other special schools that another school would be considered to host and manage the service in the best interests of the service and the children of Thanet, but this cannot be assured for September.
Would it not be sensible for County to provide additional funding so that sixth form accommodation, accommodation for the Specialist Teaching Service, to enable the school to continue with the management of the service, and accommodation for outreach and running courses could also be included on the new site?	Although there may be good evidence for including these within the scheme, this has to be balanced against the money available to deliver the project. County has to look at all the projects and consider how to make the best use of facilities and deliver best value for money.
Will there be a specialist classroom for pre-school children?	In every district there is a pre-school observation and assessment unit. Foreland Special School provides that provision for the district called First Leap.
How will vulnerable children be gated and protected?	Fencing will be provided to ensure a level of safety and wellbeing that the school can agree and sign up to.

Issues raised	Response
<p>What are the plans for the current site and the playing fields as surveyors have been looking at the land?</p>	<p>Part of the land swap deal with the developers will involve a site survey for valuation purposes. That developer would have proposals to take forward which may be housing but this is not definite at present.</p>
<p>6th form provision should be part of the new site.</p>	<p>This will be considered as part of the consultation process for the SEN and Disability Strategy and further Special School consultation later in the year.</p>
<p>Will the playing fields at the back of the school be retained?</p>	<p>There is a discussion as part of the land swap to look at whether it is possible to retain the playing field to improve and expand Cliftonville Primary School.</p>