

By:	Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning and Skills
To:	Education Cabinet Committee – 18 January 2013
Subject	Decision number 12/02011 - Proposal to expand Stone St Mary's 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 comment and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education Learning and Skills on the decision to expand Stone St Mary's Church of England Primary School by issuing a public notice to expand the school

1. Introduction

1.1 The Dartford District section of the Kent Commissioning Plan 2012-17 indicates a need to commission additional primary school places in the Stone and Fleetdown areas.

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 Stone St Mary's' Church of England Primary School.

1.3 This report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place between 5 November 2012 and 17 December 2012. A public meeting was held on 8 November 2012.

2. The Proposal

2.1 It is proposed to enlarge Stone St Mary's 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 Dartford section of the Kent Commissioning Plan indicates a need to commission additional primary capacity in the Stone planning area.

4. Outcomes of the Public Consultation

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

4.2 The number of respondents to the consultation who were in favour of the proposal was equally balanced by those against. The Comments and questions raised at the public meeting are explored in paragraph 5.2 below

4.3 A copy of the questions, comments and responses made during the public meeting are given in appendix 2.

5. Views

5.1 Local Member

Mrs Penny Cole is a governor of the school and has provided the following comments: "I know the parents are not generally happy about the enlargement, and as a parent I can understand that but I think the overriding factor in this is the demand for places at the school and the sudden increase in the number of families coming into the area from London boroughs and this is a concern which we have to address and I think Stone, St Mary's is the best school in the area to do that. Again there is the parking issue which I would like to be considered at the planning stage if the enlargement is approved."

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 the Head teacher, Mrs Susan Taylor and the Governing body. Both made it clear during the public meeting that they believed that neither performance standards nor ethos were at risk.

The Chair of Governors, Mr Alaric Bonthron, delivered a clear and focussed speech in which he assured parents that he would not let the ethos or standards of the school deteriorate and that the governing body were fully supportive of the proposal to enlarge the school.

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

Access to the school is via Hayes Road. It and the surrounding roads are largely residential, and drop off and pick up parking can cause traffic issues. These issues would need to be considered in the wider planning, following a survey by Kent Highways. Possible solutions include additional parking/stopping restrictions, installation of a turning area inside the school and walking buses.

Concerns about disruption to learning during build.

Where possible, disruptive building work will be limited to times when the school is closed. The head teacher will have access to the project manager and will be able to exercise complete control over any work being done, particularly if it is felt that health and safety may be compromised.

Concerns over staff parking.

There is limited capacity on the site and an increase in car parking spaces is an issue. Part of the feasibility study will consider what options there are to increase the car parking capacity.

Concerns about the need for additional places that would require Stone St Mary's to expand.

The local authority has a statutory duty to ensure that sufficient school places are provided. The case for the expansion is predicated on the forecasting methodology in use. Forecasts clearly indicate a significant and sustained increase of school age children in the Stone planning area.

5.3 Area Education Officer

Following careful consideration of the above issues, the AEO fully supports this proposal. This enlargement is one of three proposals for the Stone/ Greenhithe/ Swanscombe area, due for September 2013. Demand in this part of Dartford district has currently outstripped capacity and forecasts indicate that this increasing demand is likely to continue. The AEO 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.

5.4 Governing Body

The Governing Body of Stone St Mary's Church of England Primary School are supportive of the proposal subject to certain conditions and caveats over building and funding, as indicated above. The AEO believes that these conditions are reasonable and can be incorporated into the planning for the school.

5.5 Headteacher

The head teacher of the school has been fully consulted and is supportive, subject to certain 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 offered the opportunity to contribute.

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 comment and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education Learning and Skills on the decision to expand Stone St Mary's Church of England Primary School by issuing a public notice to expand the school

8. Background Documents

Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

[http://www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/priorities, policies and plans/priorities and plans/bold_steps_for_kent.aspx](http://www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/priorities,_policies_and_plans/priorities_and_plans/bold_steps_for_kent.aspx)

Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2012-2017

[https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/education-and-learning/plans-and-consultations/strategic-plans/Commissioning%20Plan%20for%20Education%20Provision%20Kent%202012-17%20FINAL%20\(Sept-2012\).pdf](https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/education-and-learning/plans-and-consultations/strategic-plans/Commissioning%20Plan%20for%20Education%20Provision%20Kent%202012-17%20FINAL%20(Sept-2012).pdf)

Education Cabinet Committee report – 12 September 2012 – Primary Commissioning – Dartford District

<http://kent590w3:9070/documents/g4880/Public%20reports%20pack%2012th-Sep-2012%2010.00%20Education%20Cabinet%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

9. Lead Officer Contact details

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Proposal to expand Stone St Mary's Church of England Primary, Dartford

Summary of Written Responses

Printed Consultation Documents distributed: 400

Consultation responses received: 157

A summary of the responses received showed that:

	In Favour	Undecided	Opposed
Governors	3		1
Staff	40		
Parents	28	3	65
Pupils		5	5
Other	3	1	3
Totals	74	9	74

Comments in favour of the proposal:

- Good school which could be available to wider community.
- Need for more school places in area.
- Benefits local community and local children.
- Allow for school hall to be extended.
- Could alleviate parking issues by changing school start & finish times.
- Opportunity for children & local community to get involved with design/layout of new building.
- Would be nice for siblings to be at same school.

Comments against the proposal:

- Provision for existing pupils may be compromised.
- Disruption to children whilst building works undertaken.
- Lose Christian/family ethos.
- Traffic congestion.
- Lack of car parking.
- Speeding cars and lack of consideration for residents.
- Health & safety concerns.
- Possible loss of play areas.
- School will be unable to cope with additional pupils.
- Feel consultation period insufficient – should be 12 week consultation period
- Insufficient information available to make informed opinion.
- Loss of special garden for Taylor Joel Stockford (pupil who died)
- Li`- 111e our school just the way it is.
- No access to public transport.

Proposal to expand Stone St Mary's, Dartford

Summary of Public Consultation Meeting

Purpose of the Meeting

- To explain the proposal to enlarge Stone St Mary's CoE (VC) Primary School
- To give you an opportunity to ask questions
- To listen to your views and opinions

Kent County Council is proposing that Stone St Mary's CE 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.

Stone St Mary's has an outstanding headteacher, staff and governing body and KCC are confident to enlarge the school.

Building work will be agreed with school to ensure the health & safety of the children on site. It is hoped that the majority of the building work takes place during the summer holiday period.

Statement from the Headteacher, Susan Taylor

- Our staff are committed to providing a friendly, caring learning environment in which all children are encouraged to achieve their potential.
- We also a Rights Respecting school – support UNICEF charity for children.
- Is it a morale obligation to provide more places for children?
- Have received responses from parents, staff, governors and children – one being from a child who says, children need to have the chance to have a school near their home.
- A lot of responses have been positive because of morale obligation, however not everyone is in favour and need to think very carefully.
- Vast majority are in favour but everyone has questions.
- We are a family school and I know most of the children's names but if we go to 600 can we maintain this – we will endeavour to do so.
- Having a larger community means we have greater diversity, offering more opportunities.
- One of biggest reservations people have is the traffic. County Council have installed zig zag lines and would like more but it is a real concern.
- Could develop walking buses – encourage more children to walk to school, choosing the healthier option.
- See as exciting opportunity for young staff to develop leadership skills and remain at the school.
- How is the building going to work – where can we put 7 more class rooms. A lot of work and a lot of disruption.

In 2005 had less than 250 children was an inadequate school, made tough decisions but always maintained our focus to keep improving the quality of our education for the children.

We are now an outstanding church school, looking forward to Ofsted coming and hopefully they will say we are a good school moving upwards.

Speaking to a Y6 he said, 'I think we should then hopefully more children can come here and enjoy the school as much as I do'.

Whatever the decision, can see for's and against like everybody. You as parents need to know that I, the staff and governors will keep our focus and passion of every child having the best education we can offer.

Statement from the Chair of Governors, Alaric Bonthron

- Staff doing a tremendous job to raise standards within the school. As governors, it is our duty to make sure that everything we do is to the benefit of the children.
- Finances, maintaining the staff is difficult as there a few opportunities for them. If the school enlarges it will give us the opportunity to attract more staff.
- If bigger school transition to secondary easier for the children.
- Major issue is the car parking – make sure your issues are raised as part of the consultation process so can take into account.
- Opportunity for the children in the area as school has gone from having spaces to a waiting list – people who are slightly further away want to come to the school.
- CoG urged the parents to take part in the consultation process.

Rochester Diocese Representative, John Constanti

Apologies were received from John Constanti of Rochester Diocese.

<p>Thanks for the presentation. Not so concerned about the logistics – major concern is levels of attainment. Are you going to maintain same class sizes? Will the school be able to recruit new staff in time?</p>	<p>In terms of class room sizes, ratios of children to teachers – that will not change and will remain a class of 30. No matter how many children in a class we will do our best to maintain the progress we are making. KS2 results are fantastic and want to keep this going. In terms of recruitment it gives one term to recruit.</p>
<p>Tick on box – do you agree or do you disagree, how many ticks will it take for you to make a decision one way or another. What is the percentage?</p>	<p>No minimum or maximum number – everyone’s views will be equally considered. You are not actually voting on this – it is a consultation and you are providing us with your opinion and we make a considered judgement.</p>
<p>How can we agree without seeing a plan of the final building and at what stage will this be available?</p>	<p>A feasibility study will be carried out and I encourage the governors of the school to have an open evening for parents and local to view.</p>
<p>I understand you take into consideration the traffic situation but there is a problem with construction vehicles around here. The school was originally built as a 2FE school and I feel does not allow expansion to 3FE.</p>	<p>There is no spare land around this immediate area (where the children live as priority of the County is to ensure that local children get to their local school).</p>

<p>If the County Council are proposing to expand this school and also Knockhall does this not demonstrate the need for a new primary school?</p>	<p>We were anticipating the need for a new school near the Ingress Park development but there was no pupil product coming from that site so no demand for a new school. Two years on we have more children coming off that development so that is why we are expanding Knockhall.</p>
<p>In Bluewater the Borough Council are planning to build over 3,000 houses so shouldn't you be anticipating this increased demand and build a new school rather than trying to accommodate the children at Knockhall and Stone.</p>	<p>There going to be about 7,000 units across the Ebbsfleet Valley – the distance between the new development and demand at Stone is too far for a 5 year child to travel. KCC policy is to try to ensure young children do not have to travel far too local school.</p>
<p>Can you clarify which schools expanding in the area, is it just Stone St Mary's.</p> <p>You are not expanding Cray lands, as they are only a 1FE school.</p> <p>Is this building work going to be subject to any kind of PFI involvement.</p> <p>Obviously we want to protect standards because the school has made great strides in the last few years. Would it not be the wisest thing to have people distracted from ensuring that standards remain high?</p>	<p>As well as Stone St Mary's, the following schools are being considered, Knockhall – from 2014 and Fleetdown.</p> <p>I am not sure the site is big enough to house a 2FE school but also it is the only PFI (Public Finance Initiative) school and to put more buildings on the site will probably cost two or three times more enlarging a maintained school.</p> <p>No.</p> <p>Want Ofsted to come tomorrow as we think they will see a difference. I do agree during things like this we can lose our focus – if proposal did go ahead need to look at staffing, including someone to project manage that side of it, so my focus remains on standards.</p> <p>It is up to the governing body to ensure that focus is not lost and hold people to account about that drive and performance.</p> <p>The aim of the County Council is to improve standards in all its schools and actually in last two years we are starting to drive standards up in primary schools across Kent. To be a good school requires good teaching and good leadership and that is what you have got here.</p> <p>The County will provide you with a Project Manager and will work with the school to make sure standards are maintained and the headteacher and teachers not distracted.</p>

<p>We have been aware this might happen for a number of months and our budget for example to renew our ICT suite has been put on hold. If this proposal doesn't happen until next summer, will you allow us to have a bigger roll over?</p>	<p>As a primary school you are allowed to have reserves up to 8% before the claw back occurs. The answer is yes but it needs to be associated with a specific programme. If the reserves had just built up it would not be allowed.</p>
<p>What you are going to do about those 27 children that have been taxied out to schools like Temple Hill. What happens to Y1 next year – are you planning to put an extra class in for those children that want to go to the local school?</p> <p>The County did put an extra class of Y1 in my present school rather than putting them in taxis to travel to another school.</p>	<p>We will leave the children where they are in their current schools; as if we removed them it could cause a lot of turbulence in those schools.</p> <p>We could consider placing those 27 children in the school if the expansion takes place. Not ruling it out but preference is not to move the children.</p> <p>Am very keen to minimise the disruption to the children in their existing schools. To minimise disruption means probably doing it one year group at a time. Each school needs to be looked at on individual merits.</p> <p>Lovely idea to try to accommodate the children who have to travel but have morale obligation to children and other local schools and do not want to upset the schools because we have opened up an extra class.</p>
<p>Surely if you don't start building a new school because of future developments you are going to have the same situation as Ingress Park, you may find yourselves in a situation of constantly expanding existing schools</p>	<p>When new development comes on stream a S106 agreement is signed and developer contributions are awarded to the local authority to help fund the building of a new school. The funding is not released to build a new school until a certain number of housing units are built. The local authority will need that new school, of that we are sure because all the primary schools will be full.</p>
<p>Have concerns that not all the children can fit into the school hall, if it is being expanded will the children eating their lunches in the classroom be brought back into eat with their friends.</p>	<p>We want a hall, size appropriate to accommodate all the children for worship and all the other activities. As governors we feel it is really important to have all the children mix and it will double up as a dining room as well.</p>
<p>Worried about how long the disruption will carry on for.</p>	<p>Wish would be for foundation work for large buildings, i.e. school hall, class rooms will be undertaken during the summer holidays – estimation of when likely to finish March 2014 and then from September everyone one of the classrooms fitted out.</p>

<p>As school gets bigger, gradually by 30 per year, will the support be there for the school, i.e. dinner ladies, administration staff, and you need necessary staff in situ to make sure the transition is smooth.</p>	<p>Members took decision 3 years if expanding a school, the schools budget will increase in September 2013 by 30 lots of money for reception age children from Sept to March so in next financial funding will continue for those children for that year. In the past we use to expand school and give no money until following April but now forward fund to enable headteacher to ensure sufficient staff and resources in place.</p> <p>The amount of money each child gets as they pas through school is enough to secure support staff – heating/lighting money will also increase in the budget.</p>
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40 people attended