

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 JUNE 2014

OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION FOR THE PROPOSED PRESCRIBED ALTERATIONS AT DANECOURT SPECIAL SCHOOL

Report from: Barbara Peacock, Director of Children and Adults

Author: Paul Clarke, Strategic Planning Analyst

Summary

This report outlines the outcomes of the informal consultation period on the Council's proposals to 'increase pupil numbers' and 'extend the range of SEN designation' at Danecourt Special School, by way of statutory prescribed alterations.

1. Budget and policy framework

- 1.1 The proposals to make prescribed alterations to Danecourt Special School are consistent with the provision of the School Organisation Plan 2011-16 and the Special Educational Needs Policy and Strategy, and with the Council Plan Priority of 'Children and young people having the best start in life.'

2 Background

- 2.1 Following consultation Medway Council published "Special Educational Needs – An Inclusive policy and strategy for Medway 2009 – 2014", which set out the ambition that wherever possible the special educational needs of Medway children should be met so that they are able to learn and achieve in local provision, close to where they live. Generally, provision for children with SEN in Medway is good and children with SEN make good progress. However, the number of children from Medway educated outside local mainstream or maintained special schools is too high, which includes a number of children educated outside the Medway area or in independent provision.
- 2.2 Medway has agreed the principle that the trend to place children out of area or in independent provision should be reversed where possible and aims to educate as many children as possible close to where they live and to reduce the number of children and young people being educated outside of mainstream or local maintained special schools.

- 2.3 In recent years, there has been a significant growth in the number of primary age pupils in Medway with moderate and severe learning difficulties. We expect numbers to continue to grow, resulting in a need for additional capacity. This capacity will be required initially in the primary phase, but also in the secondary phase in the longer term.
- 2.4 Danecourt Community Special School is an OfSTED rated 'outstanding' school providing education for pupils aged 2-11 with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- 2.7 In recent years, the Council has allocated basic need capital funding to develop additional SEN provision. More recently, the council was successful with bids for funding through the targeted basic need growth fund, including a bid for funding to support the expansion of Danecourt to provide up to 40 additional places.
- 2.8 On 17 December 2013 a report was presented to the Cabinet, who agreed to commence consultation on proposals to expand Danecourt Special School.
- 2.9 Under decision 206/2013, the Cabinet instructed the Director of Children and Adult services to commence the period of public consultation to allow views to be expressed on the proposal to make prescribed alterations to Danecourt Special School.
- 2.10 The first stage in the statutory process required the council to hold a period of informal public consultation. This took place over a six-week period between 24 February and 6 April 2014 and the results of this are set out in sections 4 and 5 of this report.

3. The Proposals

- 3.1 The proposals consulted upon were, by way of statutory prescribed alterations;
- To 'Increase Pupil Numbers' to allow for the expected increased demand for places at the school, and
 - To 'Extend the range of SEN categories' by adding Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) to the schools current range of provision.
- 3.2 It is proposed, subject to the outcome of the consultation period and subsequent period of statutory representation, to implement the changes on 1 September 2015.

4. Results of the Consultation

- 4.1 The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013, which came into force in January 2014 recommend that an informal consultation be conducted where the views of all interested parties can be expressed, and all views taken into consideration.
- 4.2 The period of informal public consultation, where proposals were published and made available to interested parties, ran for six weeks from 24 February to 6 April 2014. The process included:

- public consultation documents circulated to the stakeholders and organisations listed in Appendix 1;
 - publication of the consultation document (Appendix 2) on Medway Council's website, and on the schools' forum website;
 - hand delivered consultation documents to residents local to the school (a map highlighting distribution is attached as Appendix 5);
 - a public meeting held at the school on 3 March 2014 (transcript attached as Appendix 3).
- 4.3 There were 45 written responses in total to the consultation in the form of reply slips and emails, which were broken down as indicated below.

5 Proposals to 'Increase the number of pupils' and to 'Transfer to a new site'

- 5.1 The public consultation document (attached as Appendix 2) asked for a ticked response to one or other of the following statements:

"I approve of the proposal to 'Increase the number of pupils' and 'Extend the range of SEN categories' at Danecourt Special School."

"I object to the proposal to 'Increase the number of pupils' and 'Extend the range of SEN categories' at Danecourt Special School."

- 5.2 45 responses were received to this consultation, of which 41 (91%) supported the proposal; four objected.
- 5.3 Of the responses that supported the proposal, 21 were from parents, eight from members of staff at the school and nine from local residents. The remaining three came from the head teacher of a Medway junior school, the chair of governors at another Medway special school and Mark Reckless MP.
- 5.4 The objections came from one parent and three local residents.
- 5.5 Whilst three local residents objected to the proposals based upon parking and traffic management issues, six other local residents approved the proposals despite having some concerns about parking.
- 5.6 The response form also provided space for further comment. The comments have been summarised against a series of categories matching the comments and concerns of the respondents in the tables below. *Some respondents offered more than one comment, and some reasons were included in more than one response, which has resulted in there being a higher number of reasons shown in the tables below than actual response sheets received.*

41 approvals were received which included the following reasons

No. of responses	Reasons for response
9	No reason given
15	More children will benefit from the expansion
2	More space is needed
8	Benefit of the pupils

2	Better able to provide early intervention
14	Exciting/great/good idea
1	Yes, but current site not big enough
2	Yes, and can we see an extension of the age range.
8	Yes, but better parking facilities needed/ traffic management
2	Yes, but will the pupil to staff ration be maintained
2	Yes, but how will the Council ensure minimum disruption
1	Yes, so long as standards do not fall
3	Reduces the numbers of children educated out of area.
1	Will aid pupils' independence, outcomes, well being and social cohesion

Four objections were received which indicated the following reasons

No. of responses	Reasons for response
1	Will increase class sizes
1	Will affect pupil to staff ratio
3	Increased traffic and parking issues, particularly in Hotel Road and Hanway

6 Advice and analysis

- 6.1 The remainder of this section sets out officer responses to the issues and concerns raised during the consultation period and highlighted in sections 5 above; not only from the written responses received but also from the public meeting.
- 6.2 Will the size of the school affect the pupil's education in a detrimental way?**
- 6.3 No. The school will be staffed accordingly for the numbers of children attending. More staff means more experience and expertise. The build means better, more suitable accommodation in which to operate. There will be no change to the staff to pupil ratio, and no increase in class sizes. It is the schools and the Local Authority's intention that this will be beneficial to the children who attend Danecourt School.
- 6.4 Will the building work cause disruption for the children**
- 6.5 There will undoubtedly be some disruption, however the Local Authority works with considerate contractors who are experienced at delivering education projects and keeping any disruption to a minimum. There will be continuous liaison with the school to ensure minimal disruption.
- 6.6 Is there is any risk to the children already at the schools being disadvantaged from the integration of a higher level of needs?**
- 6.7 It is not expected that this will be the case. The school already provides for some children with more complex needs than was originally intended. This will continue

and children will be assessed as to which setting in Medway is the most suitable based upon their needs and a school's ability and capacity to deliver appropriate education.

6.8 How will the school prepare the current pupils for the changes ahead?

6.9 The school is best placed to understand the needs of their pupils and how best to manage this. The Local Authority will support the school as necessary to keep disruption to a minimum. It is usual in these circumstances to engage the children in the design of new accommodation where possible and practical.

6.10 Will traffic safety and parking be considered at the site; there is already lots of traffic and congestion at the start and end of the day. Increased staffing will mean increased parking requirements, which will exacerbate the current problems.

6.11 Yes, all projects have to go through the planning process, which includes consultation with traffic and highways officers. They will have input into traffic management. The situation regarding parking will also be considered as part of the design process and site management.

6.12 What if planning permission is not granted?

6.13 Officers will work with planners to iron out any concerns they may have; we are confident that planning permission will be granted for the proposed scheme.

6.14 Is the site big enough to support an expanded Danecourt?

6.15 The site is big enough; we are already working with the school and the design team to ensure that we make the optimum use of the available space.

6.16 Why have architects been commissioned and the design process started before consultation on the proposals has been completed?

6.17 The opportunity to expand Danecourt has arisen due to central government funding becoming available. However, a condition of the funding is that the additional places are provided by 1 September 2015. If the Council waited until the consultation had finished, it is likely that there would be insufficient time to deliver the additional places and some, or all, of the money may need to be returned. Therefore, the consultation and design processes are being managed in tandem. Of course, if the planning application is unsuccessful or the proposals are not approved following consultation then the expansion will not go ahead. However to make use of this opportunity the Council needs to operate this process in this way

7 Public consultation meeting

7.1 The public meeting took place at the school on the evening of 3 March 2014, where interested stakeholders were invited to listen to the proposals and then to ask questions and raise concerns. The meeting was chaired by the Children's Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor O'Brien, with an officer panel present comprising of; Juliet Sevier (Assistant Director Inclusion) and Chris McKenzie

(Head of Performance and Strategic Planning). An Observer panel was also in attendance.

- 7.2 The Observer Panel comprised of a member from each of the political groups represented on the Council. These were Councillors Smith, Gilry and Royle. The role of the Observer Panel was to ensure that all the points and concerns that arose at the meeting, and the responses given, are accurately reflected in this and the subsequent Cabinet reports.
- 7.3 A drop-in open session took place on 23 April 2014 at Gun Wharf. Members of the Observer Panel, Cabinet and the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited to review the written responses to the consultation and the transcript of the public meeting to ensure that the concerns raised at the meeting are fairly and accurately reflected in this report.
- 7.4 A transcript of the public meeting is available as Appendix 3.

8 Diversity Impact Assessment

- 8.1 A Diversity Impact Assessment screening form is attached as Appendix 4 and considers how the proposed changes could impact upon various groups. The report shows that there could potentially be some impact upon certain groups, however it shows that any impacts are expected to be positive ones.

9 Impact of the proposal on arrangements for looked after children

- 9.1 Looked after children receive a high priority for admission to all Medway schools. If necessary, the Council is allowed to place looked after children in schools that would otherwise be deemed full. This ensures that the Council can secure appropriate provision for children that are looked after by the Local Authority.

10 Publication of a statutory notice

- 10.1 If Cabinet, at the meeting on 15 July 2014, accepts the recommendation to progress the proposals further, it would be necessary to publish a statutory notice and formal proposals of the proposed changes to Danecourt Special School, by way of prescribed alterations, to provide an opportunity for formal objection. This would run for a four-week period from 15 September 2014 through to 12 October 2014. The process would follow the guidelines set out in 'School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.
- 10.2 The statutory notice and full proposals will highlight and explain in detail the two prescribed alterations which are;
- Increasing pupil numbers at a special school
 - Extending the range of SEN designation
- 10.3 Cabinet will also be requested to approve that should no objections be raised during the statutory period, the determination on the proposals be delegated to the Director of Children and Adult Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services. However, if any formal objections are received during that time then the decision will revert to Cabinet.

11 Risk management

11.1 The following table highlights some of the key risks relating to the proposed project.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
Increase in cost of placements	Failure to develop additional provision would result in an increase in the number of pupils educated in independent / out of area provision, thus increasing cost pressures for SEN provision and transport	The development of additional MLD/SLD provision will reduce the reliance on independent provision for pupils
The available budget is insufficient to cover the full costs of the scheme	Detailed design work is currently being undertaken, and it is expected that a suitable scheme can be delivered within the current funding available	Working within the available funding envelope should mitigate this risk
Significant objection from key stakeholders	Key stakeholders could formally object to the proposals at the statutory representation stage	Engagement with the school and other key stakeholders has taken place both prior to and during the informal consultation stage, to ensure the proposals and their benefits are comprehensively communicated to stakeholders
Pupil forecasts do not accurately predict future levels of need	Recent increases in the birth rates and inward movement of families with children has resulted in significant additional need	The expansion of Danecourt, along with other SEN provision proposals will ensure that more capacity is available to cater for additional future demand
The timescale to deliver the additional capacity by September 2015 is not met	A condition of the targeted basic need funding is that the additional 40 places are delivered by September 2015	The aim is for the project to Be completed by the target date of 1 September 2015

12 Financial and Legal implications

12.1 Funding for Medway's maintained schools comes from central Government via the Local Authority in the form of the dedicated schools grant, which is a ring-fenced sum of money for the provision of education across all Medway maintained schools. This money can only be used for schools (and certain specified services to schools), and cannot be used to fund other council services.

12.2 It is intended that the project to expand Danecourt Special School will need to be funded via the Children's Services Capital Programme which is mainly funded by Government and targeted grants.

- 12.3 In addition, through the targeted basic need grant scheme, the Council has been allocated £1,225,722 to support the expansion of Danecourt.
- 12.4 The availability of this level of funding provides a unique opportunity to develop additional SEN provision in Medway, to address the increasing pressure on places and reduce reliance on out of area placements.
- 12.5 The Council has the power under sections 18 and 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to make “prescribed alterations” to a maintained school. The procedure for making prescribed alterations is set out in ‘School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.
- 12.6 From 24 January 2014 there is no longer a prescribed ‘pre-publication’ (informal) consultation period for prescribed alterations, there is however a strong expectation on Local Authorities to consult interested parties in developing their proposal prior to publication of the formal proposals as part of their duty under public law to act rationally and take into account all relevant considerations. This consultation satisfies that expectation.

13 Recommendations

- 13.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the responses to the consultation together with the advice and analysis from officers, and make comment for inclusion into the Outcomes of Consultation Report to be presented to the Cabinet on 15 July 2014.

Lead officer contact

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Email paul.clarke@medway.gov.uk

Background papers

1) The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2007/1289/schedule/4/made>

2) Medway’s School Organisation Plan 2011 - 2016
<http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/School%20Organisation%20Plan%202011-2016%20revised.pdf>

3) Special Educational Needs – An inclusive policy and strategy for Medway 2009-2014
<http://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?Ild=4073>

Appendices

- 1) List of consultees
- 2) Consultation document
- 3) Transcript of Public Meeting
- 4) Diversity Impact Assessment screening form
- 5) Maps showing which residents received hand delivered consultation documents

Danecourt - List of Consultees for Initial Public Consultation Documents Feb 2014	
John Avey (Con)	
Ted Baker (Con)	
Nicholas Bowler (Lab)	
David Brake (Con)	
Matt Bright (Con)	
David Carr (Con)	
Diane Chambers (Con)	
Rodney Chambers (Con)	
Rehman Chishti (Con)	
Jane Chitty (Con)	
Trevor Clarke (Con)	
David Colman (Lab)	
Pat Cooper (Ind)	
Sam Craven (Lab)	
Howard Doe (Con)	
Jane Etheridge (Con)	
Philip Filmer (Con)	
Dorte Gilry (Lab)	
Paul Godwin (Lab)	
Christine Godwin (Lab)	
Sylvia Griffin (Con)	
Glyn Griffiths (Lab)	
Pat Gulvin (Con)	
Adrian Gulvin (Con)	
Paul Harriott (Lab)	
Vaughan Hewett (Con)	
Peter Hicks (Con)	
Stephen Hubbard (Lab)	
Isaac Igwe (Lab)	
Josie Iles (Con)	
Chris Irvine (Con)	
Alan Jarrett (Con)	
Geoff Juby (Lib Dem)	
Sheila Kearney (Lib Dem)	
Barry Kemp (Con)	
Craig Mackinlay (Con)	
Andrew Mackness (Con)	
Raymond Maisey (Con)	
Vince Maple (Lab)	
Tom Mason (Con)	
Teresa Murray (Lab)	
Mike O'Brien (Con)	
Tristan Osborne (Lab)	
Adam Price (Lab)	
Wendy Purdy (Con)	
Peter Rodberg (Con)	
David Royle (Con)	
Julie Shaw (Lab)	

Diana Smith (Lib Dem)	
Andy Stamp (Lib Dem)	
Kelly Tolhurst (Con)	
Rupert Turpin (Con)	
Tony Watson (Con)	
Les Wicks (Con)	
David Wildey (Con)	
Children & Young People Overview & Scrutiny members	
Medway Youth Parliament members	
Mark Reckless MP	
Rehman Chishti MP	
Tracey Crouch MP	
Patrick Leeson, Director of Educational Services, KCC	
Alex Tear, Director of Education	
Professor Anne Bamford, Director of Education	
Mark Devlin, Chief Executive (PA – Michaela Jones)	
Dr Peter Green, Shadow Accountable Officer for Medway Clinical Commissioning Group	
Neil Davies, Chief Executive	
Robin Cooper, Director of Regeneration, Community & Culture	
Barbara Peacock, Director of Children's & Adult Services	
Simon Wakeman, Communications	
Mark Holmes, Early Years (cc Richard Cooke & Caroline Webber)	
Helen M Jones, AD Commissioning & Strategy	
Phil Watson, AD Children's Social Care	
Juliet Sevier, AD Inclusion (SEN)	
David Quirke-Thornton, Deputy Director of Social Care	
Richard Hicks, AD Customer First, Democracy & Governance	
Stephen Gaimster, AD Environment & Regeneration	
Stephanie Goad, AD Communications, Performance & Partnership	
Tricia Palmer, AD Organisational Services	
Andrew McGrath, AD Frontline Services	
Perry Holmes, AD Legal & Corporate Services	
Mick Hayward, Chief Finance Officer	
Richard Unsworth, Principal Accountant	
Tracey Stephens, Schools HR Manager	
Ralph Edwards, Head of HR	
Anne Robinson, Governor Services	
Norman Gregory, Insurance Officer	
Tracey Thompson, Health & Safety Adviser	
Christine Wilson, Head of Legal Services	

Steve Hewlett, Head of Integrated Transport	
Dave Harris, Development Control Manager	
Jill King, Section 106 Monitoring Officer	
Customer First Team Leaders	
Simon Harrington, Student Services Manager	
Shelley Marsh, Student Services Operations Manager	
Hilary Gerhard, School Challenge & Improvement	
Jacqui Moore, School's Commissioning & Traded Services	
Chatham Contact Point, Riverside One	
Rochester Contact Point	
Gillingham Contact Point	
Rainham Contact Point	
Strood Contact Point	
Medway Park	
Splashes Leisure Centre	
Deangate Ridge Sports Complex	
Hundred of Hoo Swimming Pool	
Kings Rochester Sports Centre (formerly Sterling Centre)	
Strood Leisure Centre	
Chatham Library	
Cuxton Library	
Gillingham Library	
Grain Library	
Hempstead Library	
Hoo Library	
Lordswood Library	
Luton Library	
Rainham Library	
Rochester Library	
Strood Library	
Thomas Aveling School Community Library	
Twydall Library	
Walderslade Hook Meadow Library	
Walderslade Village Library	
Wigmore Library	
Mr Mike Ongley	
John Somers	
Ms Julia Harris	
Allan Deacon & Nicola Brocklesby	
Ms Sue Calder & Mr Nick Childs	
Mr Michael Barton	
Julia Bell	
Assistant Branch Secretary Medway Towns LG	
Tania Earnshaw	
Ms Sharon Wentworth & Ian Methven	
Baha'I Community of Gillingham – Mr F Forghani	

Bangall Language School Shishu Kishor Club – Nilufar Chowdhury	
Community Interpreting Service – Elizabeth Bird	
Hindu Sabha – Mr Ajay Attra	
Kent Muslim Welfare Association - Dr Craig Kennett AKA Azeem Nader General Secretary	
Kent Ramgarhia Darbar Sikh Temple & Community Centre – Mr M S Paddom	
KUT O Chinese Association	
Medway English Training Community Interest Company – Cathy Rahmanzadeh	
Medway Town Gurdwara Sabha – Parminder Singh Upple	
Siri Guru Ravidass Bhawan	
Swarah Arts Foundation – B Balagopal	
Medway Human Rights & Equality Council – Azhar Mahmood	
Polish Saturday School – Monika Limanowska	
Czechoslovak Society in Medway – Lenka Wyatt	
All Playgroups, Pre schools & Nurseries within Medway	
Adjacent Residents to school	
All Governors, staff & students	
Chairs of Governors	
All Headteachers (schools forum & SIB)	
Medway Website	
Local press	
On the school gate(s)	
Any additional bodies i.e parish council	

Consultation on the expansion of Danecourt Special School 24 February 2014 until 6 April 2014



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Proposals to make prescribed alterations to Danecourt Special School

This document is designed to:

- **Notify you of Medway Council's proposals to make statutory prescribed alterations at Danecourt Special School with effect from 1 September 2015, which are;**
 - 1) To increase the number of pupils for whom the school can make provision. There will be an increase in the numbers that attend the school by up to 40 pupils, enabling more pupils to be placed at Danecourt where it is the most appropriate provision.**
 - 2) To extend the range of SEN designation by adding Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) to the schools current range of provision. This will enable the school to provide suitable education for those children with needs more complex than the school's current designation allows.**
- **Explain why these changes are being proposed**
- **Invite your comments on these proposals**
- **Inform you of, and invite you to, a public meeting to be held in Danecourt Special School's hall on Monday, 3 March 2014 at 6.30pm where these proposals will be discussed and questions answered.**

Background

Danecourt is a community special school, which currently provides education for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) between the ages of two and 11 whose needs are too complex to be supported within a mainstream setting. At its most recent

Ofsted inspection in October 2012, the school was rated as 'outstanding'.

In recent years there has been a significant growth in the number of primary age pupils in Medway with a wide range of complex learning difficulties. We expect numbers to continue to grow resulting in a need for additional capacity. This capacity will be required initially in the primary phase but also in the secondary phase in the longer term.

'Special Educational Needs – An inclusive policy and strategy for Medway 2009-2014' includes the following fundamental principles for SEN in Medway, which these proposals take into account and aim to fulfil:

- A child with special educational needs should have their needs met
- Children's needs will be met in an appropriate provision
- Parents and carers have a vital role to play in supporting their child's education
- Children with special educational needs deserve full access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum.

In recent years the council has allocated capital funding to develop additional SEN provision. More recently, the council was successful with bids for funding through central government's Targeted Basic Need Growth Fund, including a bid for funding to support the expansion of Danecourt to provide 40 additional places.

Why is there a need to expand Danecourt Special School?

An assessment of the current number of Medway children with statements requiring specialist provision by the main disability need type has been undertaken, alongside forecasts of the likely number of children with statements requiring specialist provision in Medway over the next five years. These forecasts are based upon information held by the council (Special Needs Team, Medway NHS Maternity System, Social Services and Planning Services) and external sources for national trends (Department for Education and the Office for National Statistics).

We expect that the number of children with statements requiring specialist provision in Medway will continue to increase over the course of the next five years. The reasons for the expected increase are:

- A recent increase in the birth rate, which will increase the overall number of primary age pupils.
- The raising of the participation age, which will result in some more pupils remaining in education for longer.
- An increase in the proportion of children with statements of special educational needs nationally.
- Inward migration to the Medway area, including an increasing number of children moving into the area with high level needs requiring specialist provision.
- Increase in survival rate of pre-term babies.

Medway is currently experiencing a period of significant demographic growth in the overall number of primary age pupils in Medway. Our mainstream forecasts show an expected increase in primary age pupils in Medway of 10 per cent between 2011 and 2016 (Source: Medway's School Organisation Plan 2011-16) resulting from an increased birth rate and significant amounts of net inward migration to the area.

The increase in the number of primary age pupils with statements requiring specialist provision in Medway is increasing at a quicker and more significant rate. Over a four-year period the number of primary age pupils with statements requiring specialist provision has increased from 281 in 2009, to 526 in 2012, representing an increase of 87 per cent. This growth is a result of a combination of the increase in the number of primary age pupils overall, and an increase in the proportion of those children with special educational needs.

The complexity of needs of the pupils attending Danecourt is increasing, as recognised in the latest Ofsted report, which states: "Originally designated as a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, Danecourt is now increasingly catering for pupils with severe learning difficulties and more complex needs, including speech, language and communication needs".

By increasing the range of SEN designation by adding SLD to the school's current range of provision it will enable the school to provide suitable education for those children with needs more complex than their current designation allows.

Pre-school pupils requiring specialist provision over the two years 2011 and 2012 have averaged 44 per year representing a significant increase in number prior to 2011, when an average of 20-23 pre school pupils per year required specialist placement. Of the 44 (per year) (2011/2012) an average of 22 pupils require placement at Danecourt.

The overall impact is that the number of pupils attending Danecourt has increased in recent years, with only very limited expansion of accommodation. Danecourt School's capacity is for 127 pupils. However, in recent years due to demand, the school has operated over its capacity. This has led to significant challenges for the school in organising its provision, and means that the school no longer has space for primary pupils with complex MLD who either move into the Medway area, or require placement in year from mainstream schools.

In addition, an historical lack of sufficient capacity in Medway based provision has resulted in a number of pupils needing to be placed in independent/non-maintained provision, often with significant cost implications. The development of additional Medway based provision would result in more children being educated in provision closer to home, as well as reducing the cost of placements over time.

Whilst it is possible to place children in the independent sector with most need types, recently this has been more difficult when trying to place children with these complex needs as there has been no appropriate provision in the independent sector, particularly in the primary phase.

Because neighbouring authorities are facing the same pressure on places as Medway, the ability to secure placements in other local authority provision is likely to be limited in the future. It is therefore reasonable to assume that any future placements not in Medway maintained provision would be in the independent sector.

Once a child is established in a particular provision it might not be in the best interests of the child for them to transfer to a different establishment outside of a key transition points, however in some cases this may be possible with the agreement of parents. For pupils not yet in specialist provision, however, the additional costs of a residential placement in the future could be avoided if appropriate provision was available in a Medway maintained school.

Funding for the scheme

This project would be funded through central government's Targeted Basic Need Programme. A sum of £1,225,722 has been granted under this funding scheme to provide the additional 40 places. Any financial requirement over this level would need to be funded from Medway Council's Children and Adults capital programme, but preliminary estimates suggest that the project can be delivered within this cash envelope.

Targeted Basic Need funding allocations are provided with the agreement that the local authority will deliver the additional places by September 2015.

The availability of this level of funding provides a unique opportunity to develop additional SEN provision in Medway, to address the increasing pressure on places and reduce our reliance on out of area placements.

The proposals will enable Medway Council to offer places to pupils with a wider range of needs, previously placed out of area or in independent provision. This will generate a cost saving and, more importantly, will lead to better overall control of the coordination of SEN provision, not only at Danecourt itself but across Medway. It will also ensure that the Council is in a stronger position to monitor the quality of the delivery of the provision. This in turn will improve the outcomes for children according to their individual needs by:

- Providing settings with skilled staff able to provide high quality teaching, with access to specialist help, support and guidance.
- Giving greater access to an early years Foundation Stage curriculum that addresses learning needs at an earlier stage.
- By enabling closer ties between education professionals and parents/carers taking into account the views of individual parents/carers in respect of their child's particular needs.

The next stages and proposed timeline

It is intended that following the six-week consultation period, Medway Council's Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee will review a report on the responses and comments received.

Following this, Medway Council's Cabinet will consider the responses to this consultation and the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. They may decide not to proceed with the proposals, or to authorise a four-week period of statutory representation when notices will be published to give interested parties the opportunity to formally object or comment.

If there are no objections to the Statutory Notice period, Medway Council can decide to go ahead with the proposals. If there are one or more objections, Medway Council as Schools Commissioner, under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, will consider the objections before determining the outcome.

This consultation is concerned with the statutory and legal framework to make changes to schools. The project to provide the additional physical premises will be consulted upon separately at the appropriate time; this will include the planning process.

Indicative consultation timetable

Six week Public Consultation period	24 February – 6 April 2014
Public Consultation meeting in Danecourt's school hall	Monday, 3 March 2014 (6.30pm)
Report to Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee with Outcomes of Consultation	June 2014 (Date to be confirmed)
Report Outcome of Consultation to Cabinet	July 2014 (Date to be confirmed)
Four week Statutory Notice period	15 September – 12 October 2014
Council decision on proposals	November/ December (Date to be confirmed)
Implementation of expansion proposals if approved	From 1 September 2015

This timeline is subject to change. No decisions will be made until the consultation has been completed and local views have been carefully considered.

How to make comments

We would like to hear your views on these proposals. Please let us know by completing the reply slip at the end of this leaflet or by writing a letter to:

Engagement and Strategic Planning

Medway Council
 FREEPOST RRUU-XYXR-SGYY
 Level 4, Gun Wharf
 Dock Road
 CHATHAM
 ME4 4TR

Alternatively hand the form or letter in to the School Office at Danecourt Special School, who will forward it on your behalf.

You may also email your comments to prim.reorg@medway.gov.uk

All responses must be received by **Sunday, 6 April 2014.**

Unfortunately it will not be possible to acknowledge receipt.

Proposals to make prescribed alterations to Danecourt Special School

REPLY SLIP

Please complete this form, and add any comments you wish below.

Forms and letters should reach us by **Sunday, 6 April 2014.**

Please return to:

**Engagement and Strategic Planning
Medway Council
FREEPOST RRUY-XYXR-SGYY
Level 4, Gun Wharf
Dock Road
CHATHAM
ME4 4TR**

Alternatively hand the form or letter in at the School Office at Danecourt Special School in Hotel Road, Watling Street, Gillingham, Kent, ME8 6AA, who will forward it on your behalf.

It would be helpful to have the following information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

I am (please tick)

- ☐ Parent / Guardian
 ☐ Governor
 ☐ None of the above (please specify)
- ☐ Member of Staff
 ☐ Local Resident

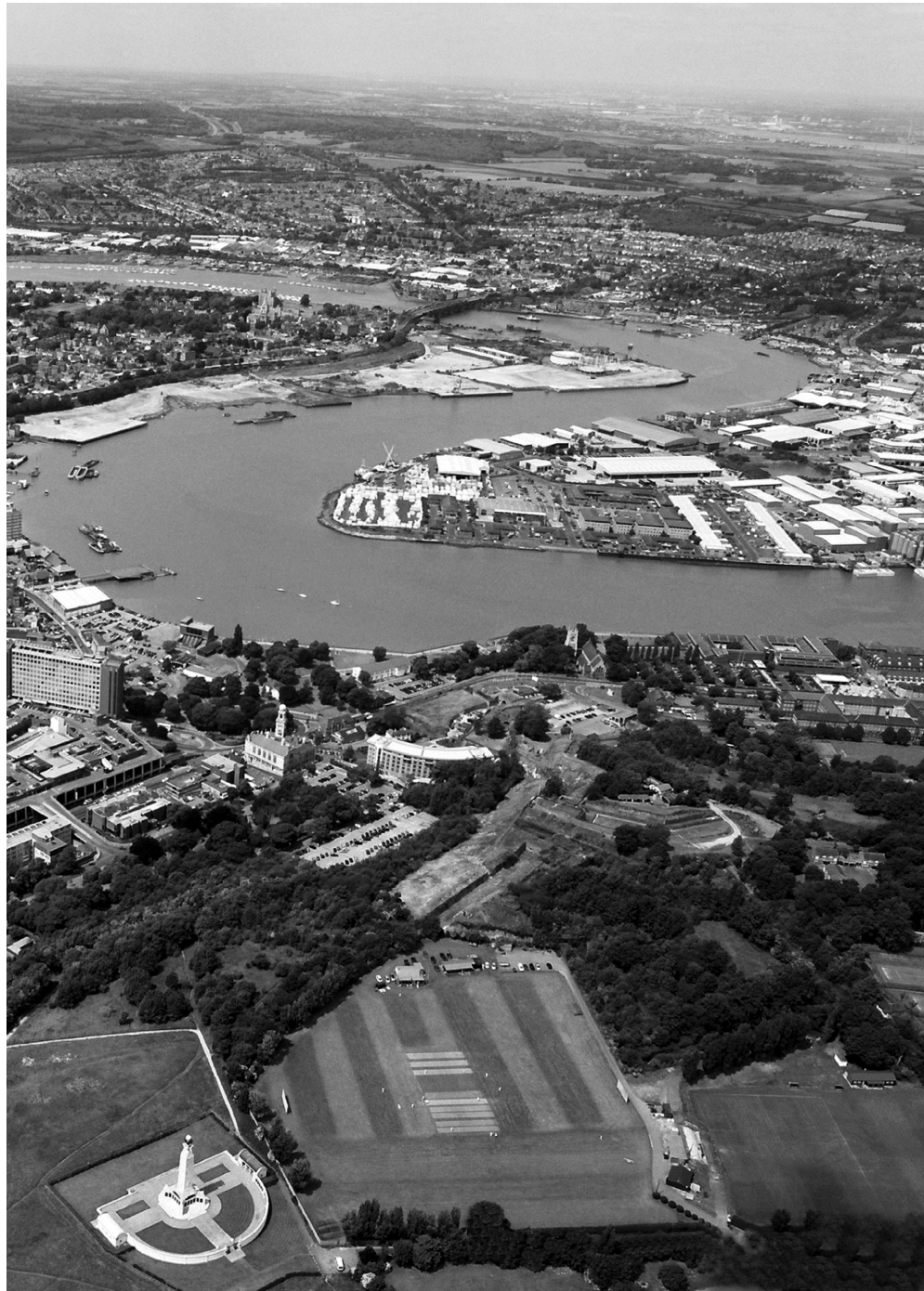
With regard to the proposals to 'Increase the number of pupils' at Danecourt Special School to enable the school to expand in line with demand and to 'Extend the range of SEN categories' to include SLD:

Please tick one box

- ☐ I approve of the proposals to 'Increase the number of pupils' and 'Extend the range of SEN categories' at Danecourt Special School
- ☐ I object to the proposals to 'Increase the number of pupils' and 'Extend the range of SEN categories' at Danecourt Special School

Comments

Please give your reasons as fully as possible. This will help careful consideration to be given to the arguments in favour and against the proposal. You are able to provide additional sheets of paper as required.




Who to contact

 Engagement and strategic planning, Medway Council, Level 4, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR

 Email: prim.reorg@medway.gov.uk

 Website: www.medway.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

 Minicom: 01634 333111

This information can be made available in other formats from **01634 333333**

If you have any questions about this leaflet and you want to speak to someone in your own language please ring **01634 335577**

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PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING
PROPOSED EXPANSION OF DANECOURT SPECIAL SCHOOL

HELD ON 3rd MARCH 2014

Chaired by: Cllr Mike O'Brien

Listening Panel: Cllr David Royle, Conservative Group, Chair of Children's and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Mrs Dorte Gilry, Labour Group
Cllr Diane Smith, Liberal Democrat Group

Officers: Chris McKenzie, Performance, Intelligence and Strategic Planning Manager
Juliet Sevier, Assistant Director, Inclusion

Welcome by Mike O'Brien who chaired the proceedings.

Cllr M O'Brien

First of all can I thank the Head, John Somers and the chair of governors, for allowing us to hold the consultation here this evening, offering the kind hospitality that has been extended to us here and can I introduce first of all the Council Officers, who will be playing a major part in the presentation this evening. Here we have what we call the listening panel; they are going to be listening to everything that is said this evening, particularly your questions so they get a true reflection back to the O&S committee for this consultation. The O&S is cross party and they hold us to account on what we do with Children's Services amongst other things.

Can I assure you that everyone will have their opportunity to say what they want to say; you will all have the opportunity. First of all Chris will explain the proposal, set out the sequence of events and stages of the process. Then we will open up the floor for questions, and then, as I have already told you, everything is being recorded for transcription. I am Cllr Mike O'Brien, I'm the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, I am the facilitator this evening, and all of the questions will be answered by the team of experts sitting behind me.

Chris McKenzie

Good evening everyone; thanks very much for coming this evening to listen to the proposals about the expansion and change of designation for Danecourt School. I will talk through a brief presentation that will last about 10 minutes and explain what is being proposed and why we are proposing it and then we will go to questions and comments at the end.

First of all the purpose of this evening's meeting. I will start by explaining what is proposed and why the local authority is proposing the changes that we are. I will talk a bit about how the process works as well. This evening's meeting is one part of a formal consultation process that the Council has to go through when we are looking to expand a school or change the designation of a school and the meeting this evening is just one part of that, so what I want to do in this presentation is make sure everyone is clear about what the next steps are, what the consultation involves and what you need to do to make sure you have your say.

It is really important that at the end of the presentation, if you do have any questions, please do ask, if there is anything that is unclear, it is really important that you ask. This evening's meeting is a really good opportunity to understand and to ask questions for clarification if there is any aspect of the proposals that you don't understand. Also we record your questions and your comments to ensure we have taken them all on board as part of this consultation process. There are a number

of ways you can make your views known, you can ask questions at this meeting, and as Cllr O'Brien said it is recorded and we will be producing a transcript of the meeting as well. You can respond by completing a consultation form and there are some spare consultation forms available here this evening if there's anyone that hasn't got one. You can also just write to us at the Council, you don't have to use a consultation form if you don't want to but please do make sure you make your views known.

The proposals that are presented today support our wider aims as a Council which we set out in our SEN strategy, what I have done here is set out some of the wider aims of the SEN strategy so that we can put the proposals in relation to Danecourt into some context and in terms of what we aim to do with the SEN provision within Medway.

What we aim to do is to educate as many children as close to home as possible, so children with special education needs are educated close to their home. We also want to increase the number of who are educated in locally maintained provision and, where it is appropriate, in mainstream schools as well, so we want to educate children closer to home and in the most appropriate provision as well. What we also want to do is reduce the number of children we are having to educate in out of area provision. Historically, particularly in recent years, more children have had to be placed in out of area provision that is largely because there haven't been sufficient places available in Medway to education those children within Medway and that is a trend that we want to reverse. So the SEN strategy and this proposal sets out how to do that, our proposal is to increase the provisions available to do that and the only way to do that is to extend the provision available.

These aims will be very challenging for us for a number of reasons. We have seen a lot of demographic changes in Medway and what we have seen in recent years is quite a significant increase in the birth rate in Medway, so more children are being born which is putting more pressure on the number of places we have available. At the same time we have also seen an increase in the number of families moving into the Medway, which has again put additional pressure on places within Medway.

More housing developments are starting to be built within Medway and all this is leading to an increase in demand particularly for primary aged places in Medway. There has been a significant increase in need for the primary places we are having to provide, and the impact of that it's not just to provide additional places in the mainstream sector but also for additional places within our SEN schools as well.

In addition to that, the greater increase in children requiring specialist provision is increasing at an even faster rate. Nationally, so this isn't just in Medway but nationally the proportion of children overall that have special educational needs is increasing. So that, combined with the increase in the overall child population in Medway means that more children are going to require specialist placements. We also know that the complexity of need is increasing and that is particularly in relation to Danecourt school, in the last Ofsted inspection commented that the complexity of the needs of children attending this school have become more complex and that is true of provision in Medway as well.

All of this means that because of historical under capacity in these schools means we have had to send some children to out of area provision.

So Danecourt is an outstanding school and that was how it was judged in its last Ofsted inspection and because it is an outstanding school we are able to bid for funding to expand the number of places to expand the number of places available at Danecourt. The dept of education gave us the opportunity to bid for additional funding to support the expansion of good and outstanding schools and as a result of that we put in a bid for funding to specifically to provide additional places at Danecourt and we were successful in that and that is one of the reasons we are here today to propose the expansion of the school.

Because Danecourt is an outstanding school, by expanding the school and increasing the number of places available, more pupils in the area will be able to receive an outstanding local education.

The proposals we are introducing today are two-fold. We are proposing increasing pupil numbers at the school, that is one of the areas we are consulting on, and the other part of the consultation is to extend the range of education offered at the school to include severe learning difficulties moderate learning difficulties and children with autism spectrum disorder. Actually as I said in the earlier slide, the change in designation doesn't mean that suddenly the needs of the children will significantly change, it will reflect formally the complicated needs that this school has already had to cater for in this area. So it won't result in a sudden change or a sudden influx.

It isn't a consultation on the building project, we will have to go through a separate process as part of the process of getting planning permission in regards to the physical expansion on the site and you will have an opportunity to comment on those proposals separately. This consultation is just about the proposal to increase the size of the school to admit additional pupils and also to change the designation of the school to increase the number of children with severe learning difficulties.

So we have to follow a statutory process and there are steps we have to go through. This evening's meeting is just one part of that. The first part is what is called the formal consultation process, so the formal consultation process lasts 6 weeks and has just started, so you have got quite a bit of time yet to consider the proposals and come back to us with a response, you can respond right up to the end of the consultation period that is set out in the consultation document.

Once we get to the end of the formal consultation process, the first step is that we prepare a report for the Council's O and S committee of which some of the members are on the observer panel. That report will set out the nature of these proposals that we have seen both in terms of your responses and also will capture any comments raised at the public consultation this evening. So all of those views will be presented in a report for scrutiny and to consider. Cllr O'Brien will have the opportunity to review the consultation responses and the report before it goes to the O&S to make sure it is an accurate reflection of those views transparent process and to make sure these views are accurately reflected. No decisions will be taken yet; this is the first stage of that consultation process, so it is very important that you make your views known. That meeting of the O&S committee will take place on 3rd June.

Once the report has been to the O&S committee it then goes to the Council's Cabinet, it is the Council's Cabinet that is the decision maker here, so it's not O&S job to make a decision, it's a job of the Cabinet and it's for which Cllr O'Brien is the representative for Children. The Cabinet can then make a decision, it can either decide not to proceed with the proposals, and they will take into account the views put forward or they can decide to proceed to the next stage of the process. The next stage of the process is called the statutory representation period and this gives a further opportunity for people, particularly for people if they have any specific objections to the proposal to put those forward formally for further consideration. That is a formal period and that will start in September 2014.

At the end of that process, one of two things can happen; if no objections are received, then typically the Cabinet would agree that the director of children services can make the final decision in consultation with the portfolio holder, Cllr O'Brien. If there are objections, then typically the Cabinet will ask the proposals to come back to Cabinet for them to consider any objections before taking the proposals forward to the next stage.

This slide is just a summary of the timeframe, as you can see we are at the very early stages with regards to the consultation period, as I said we will then move on to report to the O&S and Cabinet, for the statutory representation period. As I said at the start, it is really important that we hear your views and I would be very happy to answer any questions that you have, if you require any clarification or in terms of any concerns you have in relation to the proposals.

Cllr M O'Brien

Can I ask the chair of governors if you have anything to add to the presentation tonight?

JA

No, not at the moment.

Cllr M O'Brien

Headteacher, Mr Somers, is there anything you would like to add?

John Somers

I have been headteacher here now for 10 years, in that time the school has become more successful. The out of county provision that can be offered it is very expensive, and we would like to provide it in a more cost effective way. Parking, I know there are issues in Hotel Road, the chicane set up was set up to stop parking on the opposite side of the road. We hope as part of the planning process with the architects that the parking will specifically be increased on site to reduce the pressure on the road and it is being looked at. We have got to tackle that and it is a priority.

Cllr M O'Brien

Planning will be taken into consideration as part of the planning application but this is not really the place to discuss it tonight.

Mr S. Resident Hotel Road

You said it's not the place tonight to talk about parking, but parking has been an issue for a number of years now. You sent us a form about whether we had any objections, the objection comes when the school including extra, so it is part of the consultation. We have been putting up with traffic problems for many years, I don't know why, I even sent a recent email to Cllr ... he's never emailed back, we've had questionnaires sent to us, we've filled it in, nothing's been done, he told me on the phone personally this week that he thought we didn't have any concerns but we do. It's alright with things going to planning and it is commendable.... but you have got to take into account our considerations, the way we live. I unload my van on Featherby Road, to walk to my garage to store my stuff, if I leave after 8.30 I can't get out. If I come home between twenty past 2 and 3.30 I can't get in. I know the teachers have got to park somewhere but they're queuing up down in Featherby Road. We knew the school was here when we moved here, but the parking is a problem, you say this is a consultation but it is making our lives a misery.

During the sports days, I had people parking across my drive and I've had to wait and they are parents at this school and teachers. My wife, when she leaves to go to work, she has to drive up the road to drive out because she can't turn left out of our drive. It is causing us problems. If the school hasn't got the capacity now for the staff and children to come into this area and park they shouldn't be parking there, it's a danger to the children it's a danger to everybody. There was a fire at No. 13, 3 or 4 years ago we had to get the cars moved to get the fire brigade in. It isn't about the school, we haven't got objections to the children coming to the school, we've got objection about the fact that no one has done anything about parking.

Cllr M O'Brien

It will be noted and can I say that will also form part of the discussion with the architects about the parking provision.

Chris McKenzie

Just to reiterate that we are early stages of discussions with the school about providing extra provision and that is obviously one of the things we will need to take into account when we are planning this scheme. Your comments are noted and although the purpose of this evening's consultation is about the proposals to expand the school and to change the designation, everyone is welcome to make their views known, either through the consultation this evening or by returning a form to the Council and we will report those views to the O&S committee as well.

Mrs E, Hotel Road

We personally don't object to the expansion of the school, we don't object to changing the status of the school, we are again concerned about the parking issues and why the Council Take Chatham South for example, a massive school, big area, plenty of parking, a much bigger site, yet you're trying to squeeze more of the school on a very small site with not enough parking. Also when we moved here it was just a school, but now it is a training centre too and that is causing more traffic and people parking. I don't object having yellow lines outside but people are parking right on the end of Hotel Road and all that has done, or is going to do will be, at the moment you're going to put in restricted timing, is move the traffic further up the road and it's blocking the whole corner, and the traffic is coming around and it can't turn sharp enough and people, staff and trainers are actually parking across the cycle lane at the end. It's dangerous, we have the incident of the fire, we've had our car hit, it is just moving the problem further up the road and I think unless you've got a site big enough to accommodate the traffic, you're not going we don't have any objections to the fact about the expansion of the school.

Cllr M O'Brien

I understand what you are saying, and your comments are noted.

Mrs S

How many extra staff will you need to teach the additional number of children?

Chris McKenzie

In terms of the relative number of children, actually the school is already taken over and above its capacity for a number of years. The additional capacity we will be providing will be the same as the number of children already there.

John Somers

Probably 2 extra classes, it will be 2 extra teachers and

Mrs S

So there will be more people parking? We're also going to be down Hanway, which is causing a problem, they come to Hanway to pick up the children, if they're not being bussed in that is, all we're concerned about is that Hanway is going to be turned into another Hotel Road

ES, Hanway Road

My concern is about the inward movement of children to the area, you said on the presentation earlier about the inward movement of children, what does that mean, the inward movement of children? Does it mean new residents, or, the inward movement of children where do they come from?

Chris McKenzie

This is in relation to the whole of Medway and not this area specifically. What I was saying earlier was to put the proposals in relation to Danecourt into some kind of context in terms of approximate figures, so there has been in recent years movement of families into Medway, some of those families are moving into new developments, families will be moving in. There is also increase in the number of families seeking to move into more suitable accommodation and there are additional families with children all looking for places within Medway. That doesn't necessarily directly mean families moving to the area and looking for places at Danecourt, it just means that overall in Medway there has been an increase of families moving to Medway.

ES

So you will still bus children in.....

Chris McKenzie

No we're not talking about bussing children in; we're talking about families who have physically moved house into Medway.

ES

The traffic problems, I know you said the traffic shouldn't be discussed tonight I think like a few other people here, I am worried about it because we're used in Hanway at the moment for visitors to the school, they use the footpath at the side, park the car down in Hanway, use this footpath at the side what concerns me is on the notice on the lamppost they mentioned something about that footpath. The Council has mentioned that footpath from the cycle barrier into Hanway I don't know why the Council would put down that they are going to amend the plan to put that footpath adjacent to....

Cllr M O'Brien

That will be something that we will have to take up with our planning colleagues....

ES

I have asked both officers here tonight and they look at me with a blank stare, they don't know what the plans are, they've never heard of it, they don't seem to know, the same with the parking, they don't seem to know too much, the Council officers.

Cllr M O'Brien

Well until it goes forward to planning of course, it is not part of this consultation....

ES

My concern is that this parking problem, which is the thing that effects most people and was mentioned earlier, where the staff park, will it be shuffled along to the end until it is too late. Sylvia was talking about the parking, I had hoped tonight that we could all bring this forward for us to literally show our strength of feeling about the parking, our concern.

Cllr M O'Brien

That strength of feeling is noted. Can I say that in addition to the fact that the headteacher is already in consultation with the architects in relation to the proposed extension and parking will be taken into account by him and then it needs to go to our colleagues on the planning committee who are independent and very experienced cross party group of members and they have to be

convinced at the planning stage, that's why I said tonight there is no one here from planning. Certainly your concerns will be passed on...They are not here to give an answer on planning.

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We're not here to give an answer but we are all.....

Cllr M O'Brien

They can make a comment but that's all and rest assured it is noted.

??

You're expanding the school, is it extra buildings?

Chris McKenzie

Yes it will involve extra buildings. We are at the very, very early stages of the design and what those buildings will look like, in with conjunction with the school and the school will be heavily involved in that design....

??

What impact will that have on the houses in Hanway.

Chris McKenzie

We will have to take that into account and because we have to go through the planning process, this is why we have to take that into account.

John Somers

Can I just say that we are not proposing any building on that side the only thing some of the plans, is our current parking that goes down the drive at the side but we are not proposing any building on the side there

Cllr Harriott Representing Twydall Ward also a member of the governing body here

There are two points I would like to ask if I may. First of all we are aware of the over capacity at the existing school at the present time, and also the actual money allocated to complete project, £1,225,000 it also goes on to say there that funding may not be sufficient and therefore the Council will have to find it themselves if they overspend. What concerns me is that we are going through this process asking us to go ahead with this proposal and yet listening to the headteacher who tells us we are already discussing plans for the extension. Is that cart before horse or is there some way Medway Council normally proceed? I would have thought for example, we should get the process out of the way first before we actually even consult architects as that would be a complete waste of money if the consultation went belly up and they actually refused to allow the school to expand on the site. Bearing in mind what the audience have said tonight about the problem on the site it is a very small site and we need to sort this planning situation out, as part of the process. Once you approve the process it will go ahead. The planning committee will be told they will have very little option after the process of planning is put forward. We've had many planning reports, that say, yes there is plenty of capacity for cars as most of the pupils will walk to school and we all know that is a load of rubbish. The times I've read that on Planning Committee reports, I just hope the officers do take on board what is being said tonight. This is a public consultation and I don't think we should proceed to planning stage and drawings until such time as that has been resolved.

Cllr M O'Brien

Can I just say that planning committee of which I'm not a member, I am sure they will deal with that when it comes up, without fear or failure..

Juliet Sevier

In terms of whether it is cart before the horse it is actually a very good opportunity that we had to get some money from the DfE to be able to do the expansion and whether we get that money or not is dependent on being able to deliver the places by a particular point in time, so by 2015. So absolutely it won't go ahead if the planning process isn't right but at this stage to be able to get to that deadline and to be able to deliver the places and not have to give the money back to the DfE we have to move forward, so the drawings are being done, the planning permission will be sought while the consultation carries on.

Now I understand the concern about cart before horse but if we did it just in a serial way we would end up having to give that money back to the DfE because we would run out of time and the alternative use of public money we would have to spend more than we want on placing children out of county and when I say out of county, that is children maybe having to be mini bussed to Kent or further into Surrey and into Sussex and for the little ones to be on a minibus or in a taxi for several hours in the morning and several hours in the afternoon to come home again, that's very difficult for them, often they will get travel sick and the stresses and strains that puts on the family is absolutely not what we want. I am not going to ride rough shod over any process but we have to keep on track here so that if there is any possibility of us keeping the money from the DfE to enable to extend and offer extra places for the children we have to do it.

I appreciate your concerns. With a special school the expectation is that the children are brought by minibus or by taxi so with a special school there is never that expectation that the children will walk. The reason for that is a special school is a special provision and takes children from the whole of the authority. Ordinarily a school serves its community and we would want our children to if they could and I agree that too many children go in a car when they could walk, but that's another argument but this school, the planning, the parking, the travel arrangements will be dedicated on drop off points for taxis and drop off points for minibuses and to do it in a safe way. So the developer will have to look at travel arrangements the dropping off and picking up of children as well as the parking that is needed for parents who want to visit, or professional wanting to deliver services for children as well as staff.

??

Can I just come back on that? It is mentioned in the financial side of the scheme, if the project can be delivered within the cash limit and what concerns me is that it does not include sufficient amount of money for car parking spaces. It cost about £2000 per car parking space. If we are oversubscribed at the present time for parking then I think I would like to see a proper plan within the drawing to show what's the requirement for parking on the site.

Mr E. Hotel Road

I've had my van hit twice. I'm right on the end, one was a coach and thankfully enough one of my neighbours saw it, but I still have another dent in my van which was from one of the mini buses that drive up and down. The road is not suitable for minibuses or coaches. It is not suitable, so there needs to be some alternative made, I know you have got a path at the back and one by the school, make that an the entrance, make that a car park, because I'm sick and tired, it's putting my insurance up. Parking is ridiculous, you've got teachers parking their cars opposite our house, we can't even park our own car outside my own house. If they want to make a battle of, then we will, we'll park our vehicles there and they won't get the coaches in, or mini buses

I am listening to what you are saying, I'm all for improving the school, I think it's fantastic, I think it's really brilliant, but you need to sort the parking out.

Cllr M O'Brien

That will be one of things that will be discussed with planning stage

Mrs E

Can I ask if there are any plans or some parking beside the school, how much more parking will you be allowing for?

John Somers

We haven't got that far on the plans yet, we have three rough ideas about possible places to expand parking. Certainly one of the plans is to actually change the entrance at the far side and have that as parking, here over this side, but

??

Also can I ask, the amount of extra children coming to the school?

John Somers

It will be about 17....

John Somers

Based on a figure of 127 children, but we already have 101.

??

So there won't be many more minibuses, because currently you get about 6 or 8.....children per bus?

John Somers

There are 18, they are very large buses. The issue with parking and transport is a big headache for me, they used to block us in on the side, it took a lot of work to do that, they don't like me because they used to line up and chat outside the front of the school, but we couldn't get out.....

??

They would be there before school finished, we couldn't move.....

John Somers

There has been a positive change in that respect and I am hoping we will carry on doing that. It is a real frustration, it's worse there, I am hoping that the initial plans will be looking at that will definitely improve this site, but it's too early to say, but I'm hoping at the moment, the biggest frustration for us at the school is that this is our main hall, which is far too small and we have got a big sports hall and we usually try hard on sports day, to use this car park but I think it will be interesting to see how the architects find a solution.....

Mr E

In response to that, you mention that, I live in Hanway, it's a nightmare, I've had so many close shaves because of these coaches. You're saying tonight that this isn't up for discussion tonight but this is affecting us now, and you're saying Sept 2015 you are talking about, but the point is, you've pushed this on to us now and we've got this coach, if you'd like to come out to Hanway and turn left into Hanway or right into hanway or turn right out of The Chase and I've had some really close ones, especially this week, a near collision because you can't view the road, they've taken the sight lines off so you've already pushed this on to us now, we're worried for the future.

Cllr M O'Brien

If you don't mind me saying, I have listened to what you're saying, what we are talking about here is the expansion of the school. You will have the opportunity to make those representations when it goes planning stage.

Mr E

What I'm trying to tell you is this is happening now....

Cllr M O'Brien

That is another thing you need to take up with the Council, for what's happening now, that's a separate issue.

John Somers

The transport, we don't have any say over, we don't employ them. If we did I wouldn't allow them to come anywhere near the school until 2.45pm but I don't have that say. Now maybe it could be something the Council could negotiate in the contract for transport. At the moment, we are effectively trapped here from 2.30pm onwards, this is a problem and we will try to alter it but ideally I wouldn't let them here until 2.45pm.... You wouldn't expect a taxi to come half an hour earlier, would you?

AF, Parent

I appreciate what people are saying but this school needs to expand, our children don't have a choice. I have to travel 20 minutes, my son can't go anywhere else, so I am sorry but we need to expand Danecourt. If you can't expand Danecourt because of the parking then you need to move site. Because we can't reduce the amount of children who need to come into this school we need to bring more people into the school. There are not enough people trying to fight for our corner. I take it you all have normal children and not special needs children because if you had you might just understand where we are coming from, just getting him to school in the morning is an absolute nightmare. Just trying to getting our kids ready and through of the door. I try and be as considerate as possible, it's so annoying when you hear people moaning about parking, when we're trying to educate them and let them have a normal life. Our kids aren't not going to be world leaders they're not going to do great things in industry, we just want them to survive with the rest of you. I'm sorry I'm emotional but I feel very passionate about it.

??

We're not against the school, we're not against the children, we're not against anything, but you're saying you have to fight hard to get your children to school but when you go home, you can sit in your house and close your door and you haven't got the traffic.

AE

I live near a school, but that's my choice...

??

You've asked the question yourself, is this school big enough or in the right place?

??

No it isn't in the right place but we need to expand it.

??

The point I was going to ask when you said in this consultation there are going to be drop off points, will they be outside the school or in the school?

Chris McKenzie

As explained earlier we are going to create additional parking place within the school site.

??

Why can't it be done first? You talk about the consultation but if the Council were to go up there and visit the area, we've had the questionnaire and they keep saying, 'so we put one little line in'....

Cllr M O'Brien

That's a separate thing.....

??

You spoke about putting the cart before the horse, surely the first thing they should have done is a consultation about the access to the school?

Cllr M O'Brien

We have until 2015 to spend the money or give it back. What we have got to do first is go through the statutory process on the expansion, then it's got to go to planning and we have got to convince our colleagues on the planning committee....

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This lady wouldn't be upset here tonight, because we wouldn't be here if this problem had been solved by the Council first, most of us wouldn't be here complaining about the parking and the traffic access.

Cllr M O'Brien

It has all been noted and recorded and will all be passed on and you will all have another opportunity when it goes to planning.

Parent

I'm not going to be very popular, you haven't considered the expansion over and above the 40 places, because you spoke at great length about the need for an additional 40 places and that's

great but if you don't increase places for senior children you are going to have the same problem again with the next generation.

Juliet Seviar

At the same time as looking for funding to expand this school, the primary sector we have also got some funding to be able to expand and relocate Abbey court. Abbey court is an all through school but it will increase the capacity at the secondary age phase. Then we have got Bradfields which has already had some expansion, so I take your point as to why are we expanding primary when it may be sensible later to increase secondary. But this particular round of bidding we were constrained by the criteria that we were allowed to bid for. You would think that it would be entirely sensible and if you were bidding for funding for a primary phase it would followed that you would need capacity at secondary phase but we weren't allowed to do that this time round because the funding was limited. We are expecting in the future there will be an opportunity to bid for future funding so we will have the opportunity to expand at the secondary phase...

Parent

.....?

Juliet Seviar

Bradfields is good with outstanding leadership, from memory, Abbey court is outstanding. Our special schools in Medway are very good.

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Apart from the parking!

??

Going on the secondary, my son is coming up to 10 so we have only got one more year and we are quite concerned because I don't think kids with special needs have much choice, we only have Bradfields. I'm not happy for my son to go to Bradfields I want him to go out of area, of course I know that's going to cost more money and that is what we don't want because budgets are constrained. I actually do feel supportive as a fellow parent as well that we do need to consider definitely in the future secondary provision because Danecourt is an outstanding provision as well, not on this site obviously we would need to go to another site, but that is what all of us parents would love, we don't want our children to leave Danecourt but we don't have many choices as it is, it is an excellent outstanding school and we want them to stay here for secondary as well.

Cllr M O'Brien

I think Juliet has

Mrs S

87% increase over the last two years, are we going to be back here again in another three years because you want to expand again?

Chris McKenzie

We do need to be mindful of the overall size of this site and the expansion we are proposing now is probably pushing towards the limits of what will be a reasonable on this site. If we want to expand Danecourt further than that then we would have to reconsider whether the site is appropriate. Having said that we have got very limited sites within Medway and we only have a certain amount money and therefore we can only do certain things within those constraints. The Council's

committed significant sums of funding to develop additional special educational needs provision, some of that has come from national sources, so as we explained we have made a successful bids for funding enabling us to expand the Danecourt but also some of the funding for Abbey court expansion is coming from that same pot. The Council has invested significant sums in order to expand its SEN provision and we would expect to continue to do so. Danecourt we're obviously spending just over £1m on the expansion here, Abbey court, the first phase of that expansion, we intend to spend around £11m on that expansion. We will also continue funding the expansion of other special educational provision within Medway and will be investing in additional provision at Bradfields school, and we also plans to develop other provision in Medway as well so this isn't something we are approaching on an individual basis, we are looking at how we can develop overall provision within Medway and Danecourt is just one part of that expansion.

Parent

I've got two children with special needs, one comes here and one goes to Abbey court school. I love the school and obviously want it to expand. You're saying about Abbey court.....

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I work at the school, I manage the children centre mentioned earlier, I just wondered could you tell me why Abbey court gets £11m and we only get £1m please?

Chris McKenzie

The reason why there is a difference in funding is because as well as expanding Abbey court we're also relocating it to another site. With Abbey court it's obviously not just a single phase, it's not just primary, it's primary and secondary education as well and currently both sites are separated by a distance of 12 miles on different sites in Medway. That causes significant problems for the school in terms of how it uses its resources, so if you can imagine Danecourt if it was split across two sites 12 miles apart it would be limited in how that can be shared across both sites. It has implications for pupils that attend Abbey court in terms of the resources, so for example Abbey court has a therapy pool which is on the strood site, but if the pupils that attend the rainham site need to use that provision, they have to travel 12 miles across Medway during the school to access that provision, and it has a significant impact.

So there are a number of reasons why we believe that Abbey court would be better served by having a single school on a single site and that is what we intend to do. The first phase for that will be relocating the Primary provision to the strood site, so we are planning not just for the expansion of the school and the number of places but we are also having to fund the relocation and the provision to the strood site. The other reason is that we needs the children are very different, so actually Abbey court caters for children with the most severe and complex disabilities and it is the only school in Medway which includes Gillingham with those learning difficulties. The needs of those children are very different, much larger proportion of those children have physical disabilities as well, so the equipment and resources that they need are very different to Danecourt. So there are clear areas that are different and the Abbey court proposal is for expansion and relocation of the school

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What about places then. If Abbey court is moving to another site could that be something we have as well?

Chris McKenzie

We absolutely feel we have to make the best use of all of the sites available in Medway and we want to use that, not only to expand the provision but also to ensure that all of our children with special education needs have access to good quality accommodation that is suitable and fit for

purpose. We have a number of other special schools in Medway with accommodation that isn't fit for purpose. It is difficult for me to go into too much detail because at this stage we haven't yet started consultation on the other proposals in relation to that site but we will be doing that and we will be making a separate consultation in the very near future for proposals which will involve the relocation of other special educational provision which frankly is in accommodation which isn't fit for purpose currently.

Parent

Reading through this I just find it rather short sighted because you're already saying that there young people that need special education needs we're talking about just 40. This is going for two years ahead. In 2 to 3 years you're going to have a lot more than 40 children needing special educational needs places and this is an excellent school, it is an excellent provision here for children with special needs and I think it's rather short sighted to think that if they increase it by 40 they should be considering increasing it for far more places because others will need these places. We are picking up youngsters with special educational needs much earlier and they can't be catered for in mainstream. So I really feel you need to think more than 40 places, you need to think in the future you are going to need a lot more places.

Cllr M O'Brien

We are very conscious of that, I can assure you.....

SH, Staff

I just wanted to point out for some people that don't have children with special needs and what it actually means and what it actually means to me as a member of staff here. I have been a carer for more years prior to coming to this school for adults with learning difficulties and unfortunately years and years ago these people were put in an institute and never ever had the opportunity to have the facilities that Danecourt offer now. I know that parking is a nightmare, I find it a nightmare, I'm a disabled person myself and to actually come to school, we all understand about the parking.....

??

We're not objecting to the school.....

SH, Staff

I'm just trying to explain to you, how we feel about the parking, we don't like it either, we try our best but for me these provisions that this school provides now, give people who years ago were stuck in an institution, are given these opportunities and actually given opportunities to be employable so that is why I really feel the expansion of these schools are for the children, this is coming from someone who has care for people who were institutionalised, I had an aunt as well who was institutionalised who actually didn't need to be, she could have been catered for if she was alive now, so the site, if we could magic more ground it would be wonderful because I know the staff don't want to be parking down the road, I don't, especially when I'm having a bad day with my disability, I don't want to be parking half a mile down the road. These provisions are really needed for our children...

Live in Hanway

I'm sorry to say I would rather not have more cars parking there. I have worked hard all my life and I did have a partly disabled brother and father who were disabled so I understand a little bit about that, but they did work, they did manual work but had to retire early but even so, I have also worked very hard and also helped my father my two brothers.... and my property now is something I've worked for and to me if there's extra parking around here and, I think in the future if

I need to sell my property if I need to go into a home, then if someone came around and saw loads of cars parked there it would affect the value of your property when you want to sell it.

Cllr M O'Brien

If I could sum up here, the broad consensus is in support of the school. The main issue seems to be the current parking and the anticipated parking. Could I ask the members of the listening panel if you have any questions that you would like ask?

Cllr Royle

In reference to one comment from one person, the Chatham South site I have to inform you is already earmarked and is being refurbished for a new primary school so that was never going to be available. The other thing I would say is as my two colleagues here are members of the planning committee we will take great care when this comes, but before it comes to planning it has to go out to public consultation, 21 days from the date that it is published and it is then up to you to put your representations in to Medway Council planning department. Then the planning committee and the planning officers will look at the whole thing, including somebody from Highways. I can only say that any possible extra provision for children with any sorts of learning difficulties is very urgent and it is so important that we do more of it in Medway because in the end it is much better value for money for Medway itself and especially for the children who go enormous distances to school.

Cllr Gilry

The parking problem is the biggest issue the Councillors all through Medway and probably England face whichever school, wherever it is, especially a school or any of the schools on Twydall estate. I'm a member with my colleague there, our postbag is just parking because modern day life it is a car, and if anybody could get the car into the classroom without any parking they would be very happy. But we can't do that.

It has been a long journey to actually get to this stage for Danecourt because Medway local authority has worked very hard to get in-house provision for children with specialist educational needs and one of the reasons why there is inward traffic, well we used to send our children to a unit on the Isle of Sheppey, now that that has been sold, so this is one of the ways we are providing in-house facilities for our children within Medway. It's not going to be the panacea of everything but there will be extra spaces for parents to bring their children not a too far distance within the Medway authority. The parking I agree with what everybody is saying. We know the problems, we know you have got here. The A2 is just there, people come to Roko and instead of using the car park there they park down here. We all know and I can assure you that it has been known to all in writing and in our various capacities will fight for the best for the school, for the children and for the residents.

Cllr Smith

Parking or planning but when it does come, when it is advertised that it is coming to planning, there will be consultation as far as no, no, the parking, the planning application will go to the relevant houses. Also it will be displayed outside this school so, do keep your eye out because you will all get a letter to say about the planning, we're not here to talk about it now but I am sure Cllr and Cllr will let you know

Cllr M O'Brien

Thank you everybody for all your points. They have been recorded and will be written down and I thank you very much for your patience. Can I thank once again the Head Mr Somers and the Chair of Governors for their kind hospitality?

JA - Chair of Governors

I want to thank you all for coming and I just want to assure everyone here that the Board of Governors do take the parking seriously. We have been looking at parking problems for years and trying to sort it out and actually did extend the car park a few years back, we know there is a problem. John has worked very hard with Medway Council with regard to the buses, there is nothing we can do about that. The children need to come in, the buses do come in, we take them off the street into the car park to get them out so it should only be a minimal time that they drive up and down Hotel Road. The rest of the time we hold them in the playground. We obviously as a board of governors will take into consideration what has been said tonight.

We will work with the architects as much as possible and John and I have another meeting coming up and we will try and sort this, it is a small road it has always been a small road. Whether there are any other accesses that we can use to get into the school, I don't know whether it is possible, I assure you we will look at whatever is possible to try and alleviate the parking and alleviate the parking for staff, but we will work hard with Medway Council, with the architects and with the local residents and community to try and do this and expand, get the capacity that is needed with the minimum problems to the local residents.

Diversity Impact Assessment: Screening Form

Directorate Children and Adults	Name of Function or Policy or Major Service Change Expansion Danecourt Special School	
Officer responsible for assessment Paul Clarke	Date of assessment 7 April 2014	New or existing? New
Defining what is being assessed		
1. Briefly describe the purpose and objectives	<p>The proposals are to expand the physical buildings at Danecourt Special School, which will provide capacity for an additional 40 pupils over their current capacity of 127.</p> <p>It is intended that the expansion will provide an outstanding education for more children than is currently possible, as well as providing more suitable accommodation for all pupils.</p>	
2. Who is intended to benefit, and in what way?	<p>The children at Danecourt who will benefit from more spacious and appropriate accommodation.</p> <p>The staff at Danecourt who will benefit from better teaching and learning environments.</p> <p>Parents of the students who will see the benefits enjoyed by their children reflected in their education, integration and well-being. All parents will be able to share experiences and support to a wider group.</p> <p>The additional children who will be able to access the school and enjoy the benefits that Danecourt can offer to a child's education and well being as the expansion will create at least 40 additional places.</p> <p>Medway Council who will have more places available to accommodate children with severe and moderate learning difficulties where currently they may be placed in an expensive independent or out of area provision, or a less suitable setting within Medway.</p>	
3. What outcomes are wanted?	That Danecourt Special School is expanded to enable more students to attend. Better and larger spaces and facilities are expected to lead to better teaching and learning capabilities and therefore even more positive outcomes for the children than currently exists at this Ofsted rated 'outstanding' school.	
4. What factors/forces could contribute/detract from the outcomes?	<p>Contribute</p> <p>Support of the school, council and community to focus upon delivering the physical project of the new school to enable the relocation.</p>	<p>Detract</p> <p>Insufficient funding to complete the phased expansion.</p> <p>Objection from local residents, opposed to the likely increase in traffic and local parking.</p>
5. Who are the main stakeholders?	The children, staff and parent at Danecourt school. The community as a whole and Medway Council.	

6. Who implements this and who is responsible?	Barbara Peacock – Director for Children and Adults

Assessing impact		
7. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>racial/ethnic groups</i> ?		NO
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?	A public consultation has been carried out over a 6-week period when views were expressed and any concerns regarding this issue could have been raised. Of a number of concerns raised and comments made, none related to the potential for any differential impact due to racial groups. Local authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality and all schools in Medway are responsible for ensuring equality in their schools and for promoting community cohesion. Any impact upon any person would not be due to racial or ethnic group.	
8. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>disability</i> ?	YES	YES. Danecourt currently provides education and care for children and young people with moderate learning difficulties. These proposals will extend the range of need that will be catered for and therefore more children will benefit from Danecourt's education
What evidence exists for this?	Whilst there could be a differential impact due to a person's disability, it is intended that any impact will be positive. The proposals will lead to the creation of better learning environments for the children, better facilities and surroundings, which will lead to better outcomes.	
9. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>gender</i> ?		NO
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?	A public consultation has been carried out over a 6-week period when views were expressed and any concerns regarding this issue could have been raised. Of a number of concerns raised and comments made, none related to the potential for any differential impact due to gender. Local authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality and all schools in Medway are responsible for ensuring equality in their schools and for promoting community cohesion. Any impact upon any person would not be due to gender	
10. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>sexual orientation</i> ?		NO
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?	A public consultation has been carried out over a 6-week period when views were expressed and any concerns regarding this issue could have been raised. Of a number of concerns raised and comments made, none related to the potential for	

		any differential impact due to sexual orientation. Local authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality and all schools in Medway are responsible for ensuring equality in their schools and for promoting community cohesion. Any impact upon any person would not be due to sexual orientation.
11. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a have a differential impact due to <i>religion or belief</i>?		NO
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?		A public consultation has been carried out over a 6-week period when views were expressed and any concerns regarding this issue could have been raised. Of a number of concerns raised and comments made, none related to the potential for any differential impact due to religion or belief. Local authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality and all schools in Medway are responsible for ensuring equality in their schools and for promoting community cohesion. Any impact upon any person would not be due to religion or belief.
12. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to people's <i>age</i>?		NO
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?		The school will continue to provide for children aged from 2-11 as is currently the case. The school will be able to provide for more pupils than it can now, and so more children will benefit from these proposals.
13. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>being transgendered or transsexual</i>?		NO
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?		A public consultation has been carried out over a 6-week period when views were expressed and any concerns regarding this issue could have been raised. Of a number of concerns raised and comments made, none related to the potential for any differential impact due to being transgendered or transsexual. Local authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality and all schools in Medway are responsible for ensuring equality in their schools and for promoting community cohesion. Any impact upon any person would not be due to being transgendered or transsexual.
14. Are there any <i>other</i> groups that would find it difficult to access/make use of the function (e.g. speakers of other languages; people with caring responsibilities or dependants; those with an offending past; or people living in rural areas)?		NO
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?		The expansion will make the school more accessible for more children, students, parents and visitors and the community as a whole.

15. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a have a differential impact due to <i>multiple discriminations</i> (e.g. disability <u>and</u> age)?		NO
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?	The sections above indicate that the only impact expected, caused by these proposals, will be for children with a disability. The impact is expected to be positive.	

Conclusions & recommendation		
16. Could the differential impacts identified in questions 7-15 amount to there being the potential for adverse impact?		NO. All impacts are expected to be positive ones.
	NO	
17. Can the adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group? Or another reason?	YES	N/A
	NO	
Recommendation to proceed to a full impact assessment? NO		
NO	This function/ policy/ service change complies with the requirements of the legislation and there is evidence to show this is the case.	
NO, BUT ...	What is required to ensure this complies with the requirements of the legislation? (see DIA Guidance Notes)?	
YES	Give details of key person responsible and target date for carrying out full impact assessment (see DIA Guidance Notes)	

Action plan to make Minor modifications		
Outcome	Actions (with date of completion)	Officer responsible

Planning ahead: Reminders for the next review		
Date of next review	None advised, unless further proposals for Abbey Court School are put forward in the future.	
Areas to check at next review (e.g. new census information, new legislation due)	N/A	
Is there <i>another</i> group (e.g. new communities) that is relevant and ought to be considered next time?	NO	
Signed (completing officer/service manager)	Date	
Paul Clarke – Strategic Planning Analyst	7 April 2014	
Signed (service manager/Assistant Director)	Date	
Juliet Sevier – Assistant Director Inclusion		

NB: Remember to list the evidence (i.e. documents and data sources) used

