PROPOSAL TO EXPAND WHITFIELD ASPEN SCHOOL, MAYFIELD ROAD, WHITFIELD, DOVER. CT16 3LJ

Introduction
Kent County Council is proposing to permanently expand Whitfield Aspen Primary School by 1FE across a split site from September 2018.

Contact Details
The proposal to expand Whitfield Aspen School is being published by Kent County Council, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1XQ. Contact Name and Address: David Adams, Area Education Officer, Kroner House, Eurogate Business Park, Ashford, Kent TN24 8XU.

School details and pupil numbers
Whitfield Aspen School is a maintained community school with a Specialist Resource Based Provision (SRBP) known as Aspen. Aspen supports children with Profound, Severe and Complex Needs (PSCN). The School currently caters for approximately 365 pupils in the main school and 81 pupils in Aspen.

In accordance with Section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 Kent County Council intends to make the following prescribed alteration to Whitfield Aspen School:

- To expand the school by 1FE, increasing the school to 3FE of provision over a split site.

The reasons for the expansion
Whitfield village has seen additional homes built during the past few years. Recently, planning consent has been granted for 1050 further houses in the village. These represent the first phase of a much larger proposed expansion of the village, which may see as many as 6,000 new homes built over the next 30 years.

As part of the planning agreement for 1050 new homes, the developer is providing a site for primary education, together with a financial contribution to the cost of a school building on the site. This site is located on the edge of Whitfield Village off Archers Court Road, about 500m from the present Whitfield Aspen School site.

Whitfield Aspen School currently has 446 pupils on roll (365 mainstream pupils and 81 in Aspen). The School cannot accommodate further children either in mainstream classes or Aspen. The School has been asked to take an additional 26 mainstream reception pupils in September 2016 and 16 pupils into the Aspen due to increases in the local population. In order to achieve this School will need temporary accommodation in place for September 2016.

Whitfield Aspen was judged good by OFSTED in January 2016. The Aspen provision delivers high quality education and support for pupils with Profound, Severe and Complex Needs. Aspen is full; indeed in 2014 Kent County Council opened a satellite of this provision in Aylesham Primary School in order to continue to help address the immediate need for places within the Dover community.
There is, and will continue to be, a need to open additional primary school places in Whitfield to meet the increasing population of the village. There is also a need for the specialist provision provided by Aspen in the Dover District. It is essential that we expand the capacity of Whitfield Aspen to ensure that children in the District of Dover can attend a school as local to their home as possible.

The Governing Body, Leadership and Staff at Whitfield Aspen School have the skills needed to provide a high quality education for mainstream pupils and those in need of specialist provision. Therefore, as the School cannot expand on the present site, Kent County Council believes that expansion onto a split site in the same village is appropriate.

The complete expansion will offer up to 56 additional SEN places in the area of significant population growth. It also reflects KCC’s aspirations to increase the number of SEN school places across the County in Specialist Resource Based Provisions (SRBPs) by 430 places, as set out in the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2016-20, a copy of which is available at this link: http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/education-skills-and-employment-policies/education-provision

Admissions and Curriculum Arrangements
The process for applying for places will remain the same. Admission to Reception Year will be via the co-ordinated admissions process operated by Kent County Council. Admission to other year groups will continue to be managed through the casual admissions process. However, we would propose a small change to the oversubscription criteria for the School. These criteria are used in the event that there are more applications for a place at the School than there are places available. The minor change would be to the distance criterion. Currently priority is given to those that live closest to the School, as measured between the home address and the School address. We would propose that for September 2018, distance is measured from the home address to the nearer of either the Mayfield Road site or the Archers Court Road site. Admission to Aspen will not change as the School would need to be mentioned on a child’s Education, Health & Care Plan.

The satellite site will provide for both mainstream pupils and Aspen pupils. There may be some movement between sites for Sports days and other celebrations. It is not intended that there will be movement of pupils between the sites on a regular basis.

Staff will work closely together. Currently the School operates two parallel classes in each year group. This means that the two class teachers in each year group plan together to deliver the same curriculum and learning opportunities to the pupils in both classes. As the School expands, the same thing will happen, but initially with three teachers planning together, and then four. The School will deliver the same curriculum and learning opportunities across both sites. The facilities across the two sites will be used for the betterment of all pupils whichever site is their base. For instance the hydro pool on the Mayfield Road site will be accessed by pupils based in the Archers Court Road Site who require that facility.

Governance and Administration
The School’s Governing Body and leadership team will lead both sites, and will quality assure the work of the School across both sites in much the same way they do now. Some staff, such as the Headteacher and SENCO will operate across both
sites on a daily basis. Others, like class teachers, will continue to work with their own class on a daily basis.

Physical characteristics of the school
Both the present and new sites are easily accessible to the community served by the School. The new site is approximately 500m away from the present school site. It is intended that both sites will have the facilities needed for mainstream pupils and the specialist facilities needed by pupils in Aspen. However, some very specialist facilities, such as the hydrotherapy pool cannot be replicated on both sites and will be accessed regularly by pupils from both sites.

Objectives (and how the wider proposal would increase educational standards and parental choice)
The School is regularly oversubscribed. Not all pupils in the Village have been able to access the school. As Aspen is also full some pupils are travelling across Kent to attend specialist provision. By expanding Whitfield Aspen Primary School more places will be available for local pupils including those in need of the specialist provision provided by Aspen. This will also ensure that specialist provision places will be available at schools in other districts currently attended by Dover children.

Implementation
Phase one will see an additional 26 Reception Year places being offered in each September 2016 and 2017. There is also a need for up to 16 places for pupils in the Aspen unit. Temporary accommodation would be located on the existing site for a short period to provide four class bases. Phase two will see the creation of a new building on the site off Archers Court Road. This will provide up to 1FE of classroom accommodation, with central infrastructure for a 2FE school. It will also provide additional Aspen provision. It is expected that this satellite building will be opened for September 2018. The temporary accommodation will be removed from the Mayfield Road site at this point and used elsewhere. Phase three will be for the final one FE expansion taking the school up to 4 FE. The date of phase three will be dependent on the rate of house building and will be subject to a separate statutory notice.

The effect on other schools, academies and educational institutions within the area
This proposal will help alleviate pressure for places in the Whitfield and Dover Town planning areas. It will also alleviate the pressure for places at local Special Schools such as Foxwood and Highview Schools in Shepway allowing those provisions to provide places for children local to them.

Impact on the community
As the additional places will be closer to the homes of many of its future pupils, this will reduce journey times and distances. It will enable all local children to be part of their Community and establish friendship groups within it, something which supports parents integrate into the Community. As more pupils will be able to attend a local school there will be fewer journeys out of Whitfield. There may be a few more taxis journeys as more pupils will be accessing Aspen. This will be mitigated however as the school will be on the split sites.

The school will appoint additional staff as required. Additional parking spaces will be provided on the present school site to mitigate the increase in staff due to the temporary accommodation.
Special educational needs (SEN) provision
This proposal will offer more local parents the opportunity to educate their children at a good local school with a specialist provision. The expansion onto the second site will include purpose-built permanent accommodation, additional staff will be employed by the school and children currently attending the school will not be adversely affected by the proposed changes.

Travel
The school will revisit their school travel plan as part of the planning process should the matter go ahead. Additional parking will be provided on the current School site. Mitigation methods to ease traffic congestion in Mayfield Road continue to be explored. The proposal seeks to reduce traffic movements through and out of Whitfield and into other communities.

Consultation
A public consultation was carried out by the Governing Body from 14 March 2016 to 18 April 2016. A public meeting was held at the school on 23 March 2016. The outcome of the consultation was reported to the Governing Body on 24 April 2016. 18 of the 19 members of the Governing Body gave their approval to continue with the proposal. The outcome of the consultation was reported to Kent County Council’s Education And Young People’s Services Cabinet Committee on 11 May 2016. The Cabinet Committee recommend that the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform agree to allocate £7.99m from the Basic Needs budget to enable the project to go ahead. The report, which includes summaries of the public meeting and responses received by the Governing Body is available at this link:
http://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/school-consultations

Project costs and indication of how these will be met, including how long term value for money will be achieved;
The total cost of phase two of the project is estimated to be in the region of £7.99m. The developer is to provide the land and a contribution of £3.5m through the Section 106 agreement. This funding would not be available for use in expanding alternative provision. Appropriate funding has been identified as part of KCC’s Medium Term Capital Programme. The new building will be fit for purpose and will be easy to maintain going forward. In the event this project did not proceed, comparable capital investment would be required in both mainstream and the specialist sectors to create the capacity needed. However, revenue cost in respect of transport would be higher. Further, it is probable that capital works would be required on the highway network in the location of any alternative expansion.

The procedure for responses: support; objections and comments
A public notice was published in a local newspaper on 26 May 2016. The notice is displayed at all main entrances to the School, in Dover District Council’s reception area and in local libraries. It is also available on KCC’s website:
http://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/school-consultations

Within four weeks from the date of publication, any person may send in a response supporting, objecting or commenting on the proposal to David Adams, Area Education Officer, Kroner House, Eurogate Business Park, Ashford, Kent TN24 8XU;
or email school.consultations@kent.gov.uk. The final date for sending in written representations is 22 June 2016.