

The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

Options for the Expansion of Primary Schools from September 2011

Summary of Consultation Responses

1) Introduction

The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames (the Local Authority) is currently experiencing exceptionally high demand for places in its primary schools with school roll projections indicating that this is not a temporary increase but part of a longer-term upward trend. As the Commissioner of School Places, the Local Authority has a legal responsibility to ensure there are sufficient school places in the borough for all children who need one. In order to meet rising demand, it is planning to increase the number of permanent primary school places available from September 2011.

In May and June 2009, the Local Authority asked interested parties to respond to an initial consultation document setting out how it plans to create additional places. For primary school planning purposes, the Borough is divided into four planning areas: Kingston Town, Surbiton, Maldens & Coombe and South of the Borough. The need for additional places is different in each planning area and this was set out in the consultation document along with a number of options to meet each area's need.

2) Consultation Method

The methods used for the consultation were driven by the need to maximise awareness of permanent primary school expansion and to provide people with options to contribute their views in any way they wished. A combination of methods was used: paper information and questionnaires, online information and questionnaires, and open meetings. Equalities monitoring was included on the questionnaire in order to demonstrate whether all members of the local community were represented.

Two consultation documents were produced, a full report and a two page summary. Attached to both documents was the same questionnaire. Paper copies of the full report, summaries and posters were distributed throughout the borough via primary schools, early years providers, GPs' surgeries, Guildhall reception, and libraries with enough summary copies to provide all parents and school staff a copy. A link to the Primary School Expansion page of the Local Authority website (where both consultation documents and the online response form could be accessed) was sent by email to all Councillors, Local Authority staff and professionals linked to the Children's Trust. In addition, the front page of the Local Authority website promoted the consultation and front-page articles were included in local papers.

To help people respond to the consultation document, a public meeting was held in each planning area during the first two weeks of June 2009. The meetings were designed as open drop in sessions (there was no formal presentation or question and answer session) with the aim of offering people the opportunity (at an early stage in the consultation process) to find out more about the Local Authority's proposals and to allow the Local Authority to gather as many views as possible.

The consultation document and the public meetings together constituted an initial informal consultation and were only the first stage in a longer process. The aim was to collect people's views to help work out the preferred mix of new schools and schools to expand. The final plan for the expansion of primary school places will combine the results from this consultation, availability of land for new schools, the likely outcome of planning applications and the practical issues of expanding the schools.

3) Responses to the Consultation Document

3.1) Statistical Breakdown

Please note this questionnaire was not envisaged to be a vote. These results should not be considered in isolation but as part of the whole consultation.

Key findings:

- 1,232 questionnaires were returned and a number of separate written responses were also received
- 90% (1,108) were completed by parents / carers
- 45.5% (561) added comments to their forms
- Expansion to four forms of entry was the least favoured option in each of the planning areas
- New three form entry schools were the most popular options
- The highest response was received from Kingston Town, 32.5% of responses

	Planning Area 1 Kingston Town	Planning Area 2 Surbiton	Planning Area 3 Maldens and Coombe	Planning Area 4 South of the Borough	Out of Borough
Total	400	316	258	119	60
Parents / Carers	91.5% 366	92.1% 291	94.6% 244	86.6% 103	88% 53
Residents	25.5% 102	21.5% 68	17.4% 45	23.5% 252	6.7% 4
Governors	4.3% 17	7.0% 22	4.3% 11	2.5% 3	5% 3
Teachers	3.8% 15	4.1% 13	5.0% 13	3.4% 4	6.7% 4
Other	2.3% 9	1.6% 5	1.2% 3	4.2% 5	3.3% 2

Planning Area 1: Kingston Town (4 extra classes needed)

School	Proposed total number of pupils per year	Proposed total number of classes per year	Proposed number of extra classes	Number of Responses	Ranking 1 = most responses	Planning Area 1 Residents only	
						Number of Responses	Ranking
Alexandra Infant	90	3	1	661	1	316	1
Fern Hill Primary 1	90	3	1	492	4	214	4
Fern Hill Primary 2	120	4	2	227	6	98	6
King Athelstan Primary	90	3	1	506	3	233	3
Latchmere School	120	4	1	419	5	194	5
St Joseph's Catholic Primary	60	2	1	581	2	252	2

Planning Area 2: Surbiton (4½ or 5 extra classes needed)

School	Proposed total number of pupils per year	Proposed total number of classes per year	Proposed number of extra classes	Number of Responses	Ranking 1 = most responses	Planning Area 2 Residents only	
						Number of Responses	Ranking
Christ Church C of E Primary	90	3	1	343	5	113	5
Maple Infant	90	3	1	355	4	119	4
Grand Avenue Primary	90	3	1	467	3	207	1
St Matthew's C of E Primary	60	2	½	489	2	182	3
Tolworth Infant	120	4	1	201	7	68	7
New School 1 (Surbiton Hospital Site)	60	2	2	232	6	96	6
New School 2 (Surbiton Hospital Site)	90	3	3	527	1	184	2

Planning Area 3: Maldens and Coombe (4 extra classes needed)

School	Proposed total number of pupils per year	Proposed total number of classes per year	Proposed number of extra classes	Number of Responses	Ranking 1 = most responses	Planning Area 3 Residents only	
						Number of Responses	Ranking
Burlington Infant	120	4	1	231	4	55	4
Christ Church New Malden C of E Primary	90	3	1	422	2	117	2
Corpus Christi Catholic Primary	90	3	1	329	3	93	3
New School 1 (site to be agreed)	60	2	2	208	5	55	4
New School 2 (site to be agreed)	90	3	3	510	1	137	1

Planning Area 4: South of the Borough (2 extra classes needed)

There were no options to choose from for this planning area. The proposals are to provide one extra class at Ellingham Primary School and one at Lovelace Primary School.

3.2) Equalities Analysis

The analysis below provides information on the six equalities strands monitored by the local authority.

Gender

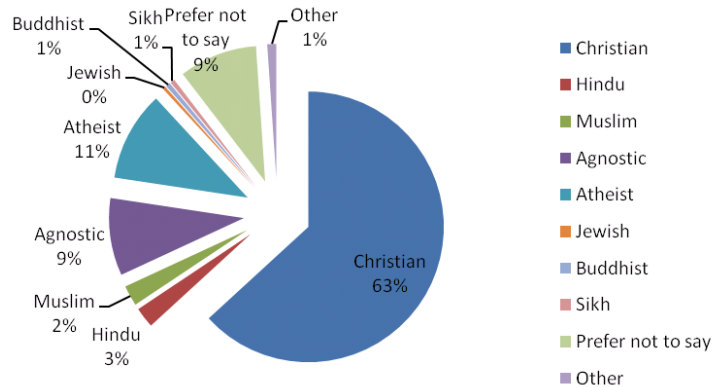
- 93% of people responded to this question, of these
- 81% (930) female : 19% (220) male

Age

- 92% of people responded to this question, of these
- 83% were aged between 26 – 45. This was entirely expected as 90% of respondents were parents.

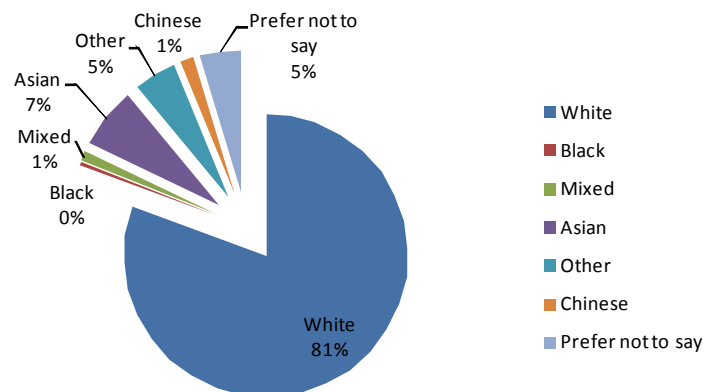
Religion / Belief

- 89% of people responded to this question. The pie chart below shows the religion / belief of those that responded. This data is more detailed than census data (2001 Census) but the proportions of religious groups are similar.



Ethnicity

- 90% of people responded to this question. The pie chart below shows the ethnicity of those that responded. In comparison to the 2001 Census data there is a higher proportion of white respondents and a low proportion of mixed respondents. Other groups are in line with expected proportions.



Disability and Health

- 92% of people responded to this question. Of which 2% (20 people) said they had a long-term physical or mental health condition or disability. This is lower than the estimated 13% within the borough.

Sexual Orientation

- 90% of people responded to this question. Of those that responded 89% were heterosexual and 10% preferred not to give that information. Available data estimates that 6 – 10% of the population is lesbian, gay or bisexual. Less than 1% of those that responded to the consultation fell within this category but as the majority were parents this was to be expected.

3.3) Comments

A wide range of issues was covered in the responses. Some comments applied to the Borough as a whole whilst others referred to one specific planning area or individual school. There was a number of very general comments and some criticism of the Local Authority. The responses were mostly quite short covering one or two issues but there were also some very detailed responses addressing a number of different points. The main issues that people raised in their responses were (the number in brackets indicates the number who commented on this issue):

- 1) Build new schools rather than expanding existing ones (109)
- 2) Schools should be no bigger than three forms of entry (97)
- 3) Concerns there appeared to be proportionately fewer proposals to expand faith schools, particularly in the Kingston Town planning area (56)
- 4) Dissatisfaction with consultation approach / methodology (41)
- 5) Concerns whether the need for future secondary expansion is being addressed now (36)
- 6) Concerns about expanding Ellingham Primary School, Chessington (36)
- 7) Concern that a new primary school was not proposed for Kingston Town planning area (29)
- 8) Issues relating to previous decision to amalgamate Buckland Infant and Nursery School and Moor Lane Junior School and suggestion that Moor Lane Junior School site be reopened as a new primary school for Chessington (25)

a) Key Issues

The need to build new schools was a priority for many as it was felt that this is the best way to address the demand for extra places. The need is felt to be greatest in the Kingston Town planning area and many did not see it as fair that new schools are being proposed in two other planning areas but not here. Concern was expressed about overcrowding, already seen as an issue in some schools. Many people stated a preference for small schools seeing them as more effective at being able to cater for a child's welfare and educational needs and are worried that this aspect of the Borough's good schools will be lost as a result of expansion. Some parents are unhappy that they had chosen to send their child to a school because of its small size only to find that it was then temporarily expanded causing unwelcome disruption to the child. One criticism is that many (if not all) of the schools do not have the physical space to expand and adding additional classrooms would eat into valuable outdoor play space and impact on pupil's ability to lead a healthy lifestyle. Some parents felt that some schools are already struggling to cope with additional classes and building new schools would be a better option.

Lots of comments were received about what the optimum size of a primary school should be, the bulk of these being of the definite opinion that **no primary school (in the borough of Kingston at least) should be bigger than three forms of entry**. The definition of a small school seemed to vary - some people commented only that schools should be kept small whilst others stated a preference for two or three form entry and a few even opted for one or four form entry schools. Whatever the preferred size of school, the reasons for wanting it were very much the same. There was a clear perception that small schools are able to deliver a better standard of education and cater for a child's social and emotional needs more effectively.

A number of respondents felt that schools should provide a caring environment to allow small children to make the transition from home to school life quickly - something it is thought larger schools, in particular those greater than three form entry, are unable to deliver. To help achieve this, respondents considered it important that every teacher (including the head teacher) knows every child by name and fosters a sense of belonging and that there are few enough pupils for there to be good levels of interaction between year groups. Concerns about lack of resources, impact on lunch and play times and increased numbers of adults at school drop off and collection times making it more frightening for young children were also highlighted.

There was criticism of the Local Authority in particular **the inadequate way it had handled the consultation**. Many respondents felt that they did not have enough information to be able to respond in an informed way – for example, how much space each school has to expand, to what extent a school is over / undersubscribed, the outcome of the feasibility studies and planning applications, access arrangements to schools. They also thought that it was unreasonable to expect people to comment on areas other than the one they lived in. There was concern that some people would adopt a ‘not in my back yard’ approach and vote on the basis that they did not want their own school to expand so this would be to the detriment of other schools. Some believed the exercise to be a waste of time as the Local Authority had already decided which schools to expand and parents’ opinion would make no difference.

Lots of comments were received about **the need to address the increased demand for secondary places** in several years time when the current bulge in reception reaches Year 7.

Concern was expressed about plans to expand Ellingham Primary School. Whilst a small number thought it a good idea to expand the school (because it’s small and popular but difficult to get into) with some having reservations which could be overcome if we addressed certain issues, most considered it out of the question. Main concerns were lack of land and expansion taking away valuable green / outdoor play space, increased traffic congestion and parking / access problems (already a major issue that people are keen for us to address), negative impact on the character of the school and facilities that would be inadequate to cater for the additional numbers. There was some concern about the fact that the school is co-located with two other schools - Chessington Community College (a secondary school) and St Philip’s School (a special school) which means space is therefore very tight and small children can overhear older children walking through the site and are able to overhear older pupils’ sometimes inappropriate conversations.

There was concern about the role **faith schools** have to play in the expansion of the Borough’s primary schools, in particular that they **should expand to share the problem**. Many people felt that they are being given special treatment by being allowed to ‘refuse’ to expand and thus enjoy their privileged status of being small popular / oversubscribed schools at the expense of other schools who do not select on the basis of religion. There was a view that this is an issue for the whole community and faith schools take public money so have a responsibility to ‘share the load’. Some thought that the admission policy of faith schools should change to become more inclusive as selecting on the basis of faith alone is discriminatory. The need for faith schools to expand was a particular issue in the Kingston Town planning area where three out of four faith schools were not included as options for expansion and this may mean less popular schools expand – an unpopular concept with parents.

A high number of respondents were **critical of the Local Authority for having amalgamated Moor Lane Junior School and Buckland Infant and Nursery School and opening a smaller Castle Hill Primary School on the Buckland Infant School site**. Some thought that this had been shortsighted and had caused the shortage of places in the South of the Borough planning area. Many people want Moor Lane Junior School to re-open as a school as it is a large school site and could easily accommodate the extra pupils.

b) Other Borough-Wide Issues

Popularity of Schools – concern that less popular schools should not expand and that we should improve the performance of such schools to increase choice for parents. Some schools are seen as less popular because of prejudice regarding catchment area. Fear that unpopularity of schools may push non-religious parents to opt for religious schools.

Nursery Provision – concern that we need to increase nursery provision in tandem with primary places. This was seen as a particular issue in the Surbiton planning area.

Admissions Criteria – a number of comments were received about the need to change admissions criteria particularly in nurseries and faiths schools to make it easier for parents to obtain a place in a local school. Catchment areas, the sibling rule and ‘no coverage’ zones all got a particular mention.

c) Planning Area Specific Issues

Planning Area 1 – Kingston Town

Apart from this planning area needing a new primary school (see above), the main issues were:

- Concerns about expanding Latchmere School (already too big/does not have space/against 4 form entry/reasons given above regarding size of school)
- Concerns about expanding Fern Hill Primary School (going to 3 form entry has already had negative impact/does not have space/will ruin pleasant ethos of school/reasons as above regarding size of school)
- Issues regarding the expansion of Alexandra Infant School / St Paul’s Church of England Junior School (mixture of expand two sites in tandem and schools are too small to expand)
- King Athelstan Primary School (mixture of need to improve and in favour of expansion)

Planning Area 2 – Surbiton

The main issues were:

- Build new school(s) in Surbiton (great demand – a number of possible sites were suggested eg Tesco Tolworth, Fishponds)
- Need to expand nursery provision
- Surbiton Hospital site – a mixture of views, some in favour and some against (main concerns about access / traffic congestion)
- Christ Church Church of England Primary School, Surbiton – one or two in favour of expansion but the majority against (reasons relating to size of school as above)
- Grand Avenue Primary and Nursery School – a mixture of views (should have been expanded when rebuilt / expand as they have space, some want assurances before expanding)
- Maple Infant School / St Andrew’s & St Mark’s Church of England Junior School – one or two in favour of expansion but most against (for similar reasons outlined above)
- Tolworth Infant and Nursery School / Tolworth Junior School – concern that positive ethos of school would change if expanded
- St Matthew’s Church of England Primary School – mostly in favour of expansion as it is small enough to take extra half class and could take more
- Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Primary School – a couple in favour of expanding

Planning Area 3 – Maldens & Coombe

The main issues were:

- Keen to know where new school will be
- A number of sites suggested – land owned by Thames Water opposite Green Lane / Cocks Crescent site / Tolworth / The Groves area of New Malden (non church school)
- Coombe Hill Infant School – comments both in favour of and against expanding it despite it not being proposed for expansion
- Christ Church New Malden Church of England Primary School – most who commented on this wanted it on one site and suggested it could be new school as it would be easier to manage and create more space for extra classes whilst others had concerns about it expanding (mainly lovely ethos of school being spoiled and traffic congestion)
- Burlington Infant & Nursery School – most didn’t want it expanding for reasons relating to size of school outlined above

- Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School – a mixture of in favour of expansion and against (traffic congestion cited as main reason not to)
- Green Lane Primary and Nursery School – one person in favour of expanding it

Planning Area 4 – South of the Borough

Apart from issues relating to what was Moor Lane Junior School and to Ellingham Primary School (see above), the main points were:

- Criticism that there is no choice of options of schools to expand
- Lovelace Primary School – a mixture of view (some in favour of expanding / some against / some want issues addressing)
- St Mary's Church of England Primary School – a couple of people want it to expand
- St Paul's Church of England Primary School – one person wants it to expand

d) Criticism of the Local Authority

Apart from criticism about the way we consulted (see above), the main points were:

- A lack of foresight / planning – the Local Authority should have predicted this situation and acted much earlier
- Some people questioned the need to ask equalities information - in particular sexual orientation
- The Local Authority doesn't take any notice of people's views
- Poor town planning is to blame as the Local Authority should not keep granting planning permission for new house / flats - this is leading to extra pressure on existing schools and the land could be used to build new schools

e) Other Issues

A range of miscellaneous issues was raised. Apart from people saying they only commented on their own area or school because they did not know about the others to respond (covered above), the main ones were:

- How does the Local Authority plan to meet those with special needs / disabilities when expanding schools?
- Concern about disruption to pupils and local residents during expansion
- Concern there still won't be enough places after expansion
- Not enough information available to respond
- Not in favour of expansion in general (i.e. unrelated to a particular planning area or school)
- In favour of expansion with conditions (if there is space or it's economically feasible)
- In favour of overall expansion (need the extra places)
- Use of space – expand where there is space / don't take away valuable outdoor play space
- Schools need additional resources / facilities / support to expand (funding / teachers / buildings)

4) Feedback from the Public Meetings

Planning Area 1 - Kingston Town

Attendance – 67 people registered as attending – the highest of the four meetings. The majority of people were parents of children already attending Fern Hill Primary School and Latchmere School.

Key Comments:

- Some dissatisfaction about the format of the evening as quite a few people came expecting a formal presentation and question and answer session but there was also some support
- Concern about the method of consulting in particular that it allows people to return multiple responses, that people don't have enough information to make informed choices and they have no real choice ('it is a done deal')
- Concern about Fern Hill Primary School and Latchmere School in relation to size of school – reports that they are already struggling with increased numbers and that people are coming from further away increasing traffic levels
- Concerns that the Local Authority is not planning quickly enough to address the need for secondary school places and that the capital investment needed in primary places may delay building a secondary school
- Clarification wanted about September 2010 Reception Year places
- Some criticism of the Local Authority in that it should have been able to predict this earlier and respond accordingly
- Clarification sought about suitability of sites for expansion and sites for new schools

Planning Area 2 - Surbiton

Attendance – 51 people registered as attending – the second highest attendance rate. A more mixed attendance – parents of existing pupils, pre-school children's parents and local residents with a community interest.

Key Comments:

- Concern about the number of faith schools being inaccessible to non religious parents – people generally not in favour of them expanding or if they do admissions criteria should be changed to increase choice of schools
- Support for Surbiton Hospital site for a new school but some concerns about who owned it
- Explore other sites for new schools
- Need to expand nursery provision too
- Concern about how the Local Authority has handled this – should have planned for it earlier / unhappy with feedback form / doubt about ability to put new places in on time
- Concern about getting a place at Maple Infant School
- Dissatisfaction with admissions criteria specifically parents who move away but sibling still allowed place, people abusing system to get place and catchment areas meaning cannot get place in nearest school

Planning Area 3 – Maldens & Coombe

Attendance – 32 people registered as attending – the lowest of the four meetings. They were mainly local parents.

Key Comments:

- Vociferous complaint about format of evening and there not being a presentation but some said they were in favour of the format
- Want to know where new school will be
- Concern about admissions criteria particularly affecting ability to get child into local school

Planning Area 4 – South of the Borough

Attendance – 41 people registered as attending – the second lowest attendance rate. It was mainly parents of children at Ellingham Primary School and local residents with community concerns.

Key Comments:

- Lots of concern about expanding Ellingham Primary School – parents chose it because it is small and has a nice atmosphere and they are worried this will be lost with expansion. Also concerns about access / traffic / parking which are already an issue and would get worse and some concern about taking away valuable outdoor play space
- Issues relating to Moor Lane Junior School – should not have been closed and could be reopened to accommodate extra pupils
- Concern that there was no choice of options of schools to expand and the need for extra places is greater than we think