

# **Notes of the Public Consultation Meeting at Danetree School**

**Wednesday 1 July 2015 7- 8.15pm**

The meeting opened at 7pm and closed at 8.15pm.

It was attended by approximately 20 people, representing parents, residents, staff and the governing bodies of West Ewell and Danetree Schools and staff from GLF Schools.

Joanna Woodward and Melanie Harris attended on behalf of Surrey County Council.

Melanie Harris and the Headteacher of Danetree School, Mr James Broad, presented to the meeting and then opened the floor to questions. Mr Ian Cooke-Abbot, acting Headteacher at West Ewell Infants, was also available to answer questions.

Q1 Is this the same consultation that took place last year?

A1 No. Last year we conducted an information consultation, but then hit planning issues. This is the formal consultation (with statutory notices). In the meantime, a lot of work has been done to resolve planning issues, and all being well, the proposal will go ahead this time.

Q2 Is the site at Ewell Grove big enough for extra buildings?

A2 There is a lack of playing fields – for which discussions are currently taking place (to lease sports premises near to the school). A new 2-storey building has been proposed, which will be sympathetic in style to the existing building; the proposed design is modern but does ‘echo’ its style. Ewell Grove is in a conservation area, and there are restrictions concerning use of the site. There may be some demolition of existing structures to provide additional space for playground and games.

Q3 If children have to travel off site for PE, won't this involve time being taken out of the school day?

A3 Discussions are underway to use Gibraltar Recreation Ground or maybe another facility, but no final decision has been made. The site will be within walking distance, and similar arrangements already happen at many schools in the county.

Q4 If planning is not approved at Danetree in October, is there a contingency plan?

A4 We will take advice from planning officers, and are hoping for October planning committee approval. If planning is not approved outright, it could be approved with conditions e.g. we may need more mitigation for traffic.

- Q5 The timeframe seems very short to have the school places ready at Danetree for September 2016.
- A5 The project may be delivered using off-site construction methods, which will save time. We are confident that we still have time to deliver this project, although it is a challenging timescale.
- Q6 The plan is currently for only 30 Year 3 children at Danetree in 2017-18. Will that be sufficient?
- A6 We think 30 places will be sufficient. We will review this once we know how many applications we get for that year.
- Q7 If births went down in 2013, is that the first time that births went down? Does SCC only consider birth data in school place planning?
- A7 We consider trends of movement in and out of an area, births and new housing.
- Q8 Is there enough provision? Will places be at the 'right' school – it is people's right to walk to school?
- A8 Families don't have a legal 'right' to walk to school. However the law states that parental choice is offered – therefore families might choose to drive to a school that isn't their nearest – we can't legislate on which schools families apply for. In any event I will try to ensure that there are sufficient places across the whole borough to meet the demand.
- Q9 2017-18 shows an extra 30 Y3 places at Danetree – what if these places are oversubscribed?
- A9 There will be sufficient Y3 places across the borough. The SCC admissions team will allocate places based on current criteria (i.e. special educational needs and disabilities, looked after children, siblings, home to school distance). They will also take into account parental preferences for certain schools.
- Q10 The consultation paperwork implied that you would have to apply for a place, and that the sibling rule would not apply?
- A10 If you have a sibling at Danetree you will be higher on the list of criteria for obtaining a place. But you still need to apply for a place and unfortunately there is no guarantee that we will be able to offer you your first preference school.
- Q11 Who allocates the places?
- A11 Although an academy, Danetree operates the same admissions criteria as Surrey County Council. The school sets its own own admissions criteria but GLF Schools use the SCC policy and the SCC admissions service operates a

co-ordinated scheme across Surrey and with neighbouring London boroughs and other Local Authorities. There is always considerable movement on waiting lists between March and May, so if you do not immediately get an offer of a preferred school you might subsequently be offered a place at a preferred school from the waiting list, if your name is on it.

Q12 Is it common in Surrey for infant and junior schools to convert to become all through primary schools?

A12 Yes. A number of similar projects have recently gone through in Elmbridge, and in other districts and boroughs.

Q13 What about transition arrangements for pupils? How will these be managed, and what support will be available.

A13 Mr Broad responded to this question: It involves forward thinking and planning. We are training Danetree teachers already, and thinking about new opportunities (staff development etc.). Between them, the existing staff has experience in infant, junior and primary schools. In terms of support, GLF Schools has a school improvement team, which works with schools in the group to consider practical elements. We are already thinking about lunchtimes etc. SCC maintained schools are well supported by SCC. At the end of the day, good teaching is good teaching, it doesn't matter what age group you have.

Q14 What about recruiting new staff?

A14 This is already happening. New staff recruited need to be flexible and willing and able to work in a primary setting.

Q15 Will the 2017-18 Y3 Reception cohort of 30 children who will go all the way through as a single form miss out by not having other class groups in their year group?

A15 If preferences exceed 30 (and are nearer 60) we may consider an extra bulge cohort. The school will ensure that the cohort is not disadvantaged and is provided with opportunities to participate fully in all aspects of school life.

Q16 Won't the first form going through Ewell Grove or the class of 30 at Danetree be lonely, as they won't have opportunities to play and develop friendships with other children in the same year group? Couldn't an additional class be included at both schools to avoid this?

A16 This is unlikely to happen, as it would potentially result in over provision, which would cause other schools to have half-empty classrooms (which would have a detrimental affect their funding).

Q17 If this cannot be offered, how would Danetree propose to manage the situation?

A17 The class would integrate more with the class above it. In future, we won't be able to fit the entire school in the hall for assemblies. Even now we group year groups in pairs for certain activities. These children will be immersed in school life and integrated with older children.