

Examination of the Tunbridge Wells
Borough Local Plan

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Hearing Statement

**Matter 4: The Strategy for Paddock
Wood**

Issue 2: Education Provision

Document Reference: TWLP/135



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Matter 4 – The Strategy for Paddock Wood

Issue 2 – Education Provision

Inspector’s Question 1: [re. Primary and Secondary need]

What is the projected requirement for primary and secondary school education as a result of the suggested changes to the Plan?

TWBC response to Question 1

Introduction

1. With the removal of the Tudeley Village allocation, the revised strategy for the proposed strategic sites growth at Paddock Wood and east Capel, involving the need to maximise housing growth on the safest land in Flood Zone 1, resulted in a reduction of 918 dwellings, with up to 2,532 dwellings overall still being delivered. As such, by virtue of this reduction, the need for Flood Zone 1 land for housing growth and the need to provide a new secondary school for Paddock Wood (as a result of the loss of additional secondary provision as part of the Tudeley Village allocation), there is a need for a different strategy to deliver additional education infrastructure at Paddock Wood. This is set out within the Strategic Sites Masterplanning Addendum [[PS 046](#)], paragraphs 2.19 to 2.24.

Consideration

2. Through the Masterplanning process, the Council has liaised with Kent County Council (KCC), as Education Authority, regarding the revised quantum of growth for the Strategic Sites and the educational need this would generate.
3. Through these discussions, KCC have confirmed a need for 3FE of additional secondary provision is necessary in Paddock Wood. This is below the typical 6FE requirement for a viable new secondary school, and the Masterplanning Addendum

document [\[PS_046\]](#) considers the available solutions for this. This element is discussed under the response to question 2 in this hearing statement.

4. For Primary education provision, KCC have confirmed the requirement for a maximum need of 4FE of additional provision. This would be split between 2 new schools with up to 2FE scale each and the Masterplanning Addendum document [\[PS_046\]](#) maintains the strategy (from the Submission Local Plan), to balance the new primary provision across the eastern and western parcels within Paddock Wood and east Capel.
5. Further discussion of the proposed education strategy is set out within the following question responses set out within this hearing statement.

Inspector’s Question 2: [re. Strategy for meeting the required education needs]

How will the needs for secondary school education be met? Will this be through the expansion of Mascalls Academy and/or provision of a new school? What evidence has been produced which considers the merits of each option?

TWBC response to Question 2

Introduction

6. As set out within the response to the previous question, a revised strategy to deliver education provision for Paddock Wood and East Capel, was necessary as part of the revised growth Masterplanning for the Strategic Sites. Once the level of education need was established through liaison with KCC, the feasible options available to deliver expansion, were considered as part of the Masterplanning Addendum and is set out within the Strategic Sites Masterplanning Addendum document from paragraphs 3.2 to 3.14 [[PS 046](#)].
7. The issue of secondary school provision is also discussed within the Development Strategy Topic Paper Addendum [[PS 054](#)] at paragraphs 4.36 to 4.52.

Consideration

8. The Masterplanning Addendum [[PS 046](#)] sets out at paragraph 3.2, that there are two options for accommodating the secondary education need generated by the strategic sites: -
 - “Expansion of an existing school – in this case Mascalls Academy in the south of Paddock Wood, as the only existing secondary school in the town. This would, when added to other growth planned at the school, make it a 12FE school and one of the largest in the county.
 - A new school within the growth sites. To be viable, secondary schools would need to be 6FE. Additional funding would need to be sourced to ensure capital funding of a school, as the growth at Paddock Wood is only projected to need 3FE”.

9. Taking these options in turn, firstly the potential expansion of the existing secondary school in the south of Paddock Wood (Mascalls Academy) formed a part of the education strategy for the Submission Local Plan 2021 with a 2FE expansion. A greater expansion is now necessary by 3FE in order to meet the need and the Council has been in discussion with the Leigh Academy Trust, who operate the Mascalls Academy, who support the potential expansion of Mascalls School at this level. Discussions have continued with KCC as Education Authority regarding their views on this level of expansion (who agree in principle) and the parties agreed that a Feasibility Assessment should be undertaken to assess the potential for Mascalls Academy to be able to accommodate the 3FE expansion necessary to meet the needs of the housing growth from the Strategic Sites. A scope of what the feasibility assessment should cover, was also agreed.
10. Such an assessment was commissioned jointly by several of the Strategic Site developers (Redrow, Crest and Persimmon) and was undertaken by IDP in discussion with the Leigh Academy Trust. The Council were provided with the completed IDP assessment which concludes that both a 2FE (with a further 1FE delivered at another school within the educational area) and a 3FE expansion of Mascalls Academy can be accommodated. The Council understands that the IDP Assessment will form part of the statements submitted by the developers in response to the MIQs.
11. Following receipt, the Council considered a peer review of the report by the Council's consultant (Atkins Realis) would assist in independently examining its findings and providing additional comfort to the Council to support decision making on this issue. The Atkins report has also now been concluded and in short, supports the conclusions reached within the IDP assessment that the school has potential for both a 2FE and 3FE expansion. The full feasibility review by Atkins is attached under Appendix 1 of this hearing statement. Whilst some matters are highlighted within the Atkins report which require further review and refinement, the report is clear that the matters raised are issues which could be resolved through further design stages if the scheme is progressed.
12. Discussions are continuing between the Council, KCC, Leigh Academy Trust and the developers regarding this matter and a Statement of Common Ground is being discussed with a view to reaching an agreed position prior to the Paddock Wood

hearings sessions. This includes the baseline Published Admissions Number (PAN) of the Mascalls Academy at the point at which the expansion of the school would be necessary. The Leigh Academy Trust's position is that this will be a PAN of 240 (8FE) resulting in the overall size of the school becoming 11FE overall post expansion, as opposed to 12FE as originally considered within the Masterplanning Addendum.

13. The second education option comprises a new school within the north western parcel. Following discussions with KCC, it is understood that a 4 FE Secondary School can be delivered and be operational at that size which is the minimum size needed. A new school would need to comprise land sufficient for a 6FE secondary school and its associated land for recreation etc (to ensure that some level of future proofing is embedded/capability to expand). The school could then be expanded at a later date, if required to do so, from further growth anticipated beyond the 10 year period into a 6 FE (the minimum size secondary school that KCC would ultimately deliver).
14. In this scenario, the 3 FE growth needed from growth at PWeC would be met by developer contributions and the remaining funding gap up to 4 FE would be met by the Education Authority. It is feasible that further developer contributions for secondary provision are received by KCC Education from developments outside of TWBC Borough, but within the education area which could meet the 1FE gap.
15. The Masterplanning Addendum document also sets out, at paragraph 3.10, that two spatial options were considered for a new secondary school. An alternative position to the south of the railway (straddling the north western and south western parcels) was considered. However, the position within the north western parcel was considered more appropriate for several reasons, including the need to maximise the efficiency of land uses relative to flood zone extents, the potential to co-locate facilities and due to greater potential for enhanced accessibility.
16. The Strategic Sites Policy (STR/SS1) incorporates the safeguarding of land to deliver both options in order to ensure that the education needs generated by the strategic growth can be sufficiently met. The further feasibility work which has been undertaken, in respect of the Mascalls Academy expansion, is positive and further discussions are continuing regarding this option with the relevant stakeholders.

Inspector's Question 3: [re. Justification for safeguarded land within the North Western Parcel]

What is the justification for safeguarding an area of land for a secondary school to the northwest of Paddock Wood? Is the site developable for the type and size of school envisaged?

TWBC response to Question 3

17. Through the Masterplanning process for the revised growth scenario, a review of the available options for education expansion was undertaken. The potential for Mascalls Academy to accommodate the necessary education expansion was highlighted early on and it was established that further assessment work would be needed to understand the likelihood that this level of expansion could be achieved, as well as any limitations that exist. The Council was already aware that the options for expansion of other secondary schools within the borough is very limited, which contributed to the strategy for a new secondary school to be delivered as part of the Tudeley Village allocation and this position has not significantly altered.
18. In order to ensure robustness in the growth strategy overall and that the educational needs would be met, the Council considered a precautionary approach should be adopted. With this in mind and the context as set out above, a further site for a new secondary school was considered appropriate.
19. Given the ongoing feasibility work for Mascalls Academy, the safeguarding of land for both education options was considered to be the most suitable mechanism for ensuring that sufficient land is delivered. The Strategic Sites Policy (STR/SS1) incorporates wording to safeguard the land to deliver both options (should each be needed) in order to ensure that the education needs generated by the strategic growth can be sufficiently met. This approach is considered to be justified given the context of this issue as outlined above.
20. In terms of characteristics of the safeguarded site, the Masterplanning Addendum document [[PS 046](#)] has factored in sufficient land to accommodate a 6FE school at this scale within the north western parcel as part of the Masterplanning work. This takes account of the updated flood mapping assessments which the Council has undertaken

(incorporating updated elevation and rainfall data) and ensures that any school buildings could be located within flood zone 1. The associated playing fields and recreational spaces would largely be located within flood zone 2, although this is a common occurrence for school sites and is not considered by KCC to be a concern in principle.

21. The site is largely flat, well positioned to the proposed growth areas and would be easily accessible through improved routes. The Council's discussions with KCC have informed this option as well as KCC's experience in delivering other new secondary schools elsewhere in Kent. The site does not suffer the same complexities as any potential expansion of the Mascalls Academy, due to the site being greenfield in nature with no existing development. Should this education option be progressed, the Council consider that any constraints can be adequately address through the stages of design to ensure a school of the type and size necessary is developable.

Inspector's Question 4: [re. Strategy for delivery of education provision]

How and when will the proposed secondary school be provided? Who will fund and deliver the project and is this sufficiently clear to users of the Plan?

TWBC response to Question 4

22. Due to the difference in nature between the two education options, the delivery process would differ. With regard to the expansion of the Mascalls Academy, the IDP feasibility study outlines some initial proposals for how the expansion could be delivered. Due to this being an existing school, it would need to remain operational during any building works and is likely to involve a phased delivery.
23. There are benefits to this approach as it allows the expansion to be delivered in parts and when it is needed. It also allows particular facilities within the expansion to be prioritised and delivered first according to specific need requirements, which are likely to change over time.
24. As Mascalls Academy is not overseen by KCC as Education Authority, it would allow the Leigh Academy Trust themselves to deliver the expansion which would be fully funded by the developers of the Strategic Sites. This would allow a proactive approach to delivery which could commence within a year of the delivery of housing units within the Strategic Sites.
25. The education option of a new secondary school is likely to fall under the administration of KCC as Education Authority, and as such, would be delivered by KCC themselves. This is the typical method of school delivery and again, would be funded by the Strategic Sites for the 3FE level of provision needed to mitigate their need. As outlined within the Council's response to Question 2 above, the remaining funding gap up to 4 FE (which is the point at which a new school would be operational) would be met by the Education Authority. It is feasible that further developer contributions for secondary provision are received by KCC Education from developments outside of TWBC Borough, but within the education area which could meet the 1FE gap.

26. This is the typical method of delivery whereby KCC collect contributions towards education provision and progress the design and delivery of the project at a time when the need is triggered by the commensurate increase in pupil numbers. KCC would be the determining authority with regard to this specific timing, although given the funding gap to 4FE, it is likely that the delivery would be later in the plan period than an expansion of the Mascalls Academy. Notwithstanding this, through the Council's discussions with KCC, there is confidence that this would be delivered within the plan period and at an appropriate timing to meet the demand increases.
27. In terms of the Strategic Sites Policy (STR/SS1), point h) within the Strategic Infrastructure section outlines the following: -
- "h) The delivery of secondary school provision equivalent to 3 Forms of Entry (3FE) within the North-Western development parcel, unless it is demonstrated that through feasibility studies that the provision can be delivered through other means".
28. The policy therefore aims to direct where the enhanced provision would be delivered, unless the ongoing discussions relating to the feasibility of the Mascalls Academy, demonstrate otherwise. The Council is therefore of the view that the policy is effective in stipulating how the education needs would be met.

Conclusion

29. In conclusion, the Council considers that sufficient measures are in place to ensure that the education need generated by the Strategic Sites growth can be met. The Strategic Sites Policy (STR/SS1) incorporates the safeguarding of sites and stipulates the principal delivery option (at this time) as outlined above. Having said this, both education options are considered reasonable and able to be delivered at the appropriate time. Further work has been undertaken regarding the feasibility for the Mascalls Academy to expand by the necessary 3FE and discussions are continuing on this matter between KCC, TWBC, the Leigh Academy Trust and developers with a view to agreeing a Statement of Common Ground, relating to education provision specifically, prior to the hearing sessions.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Atkins Realis Mascalls Academy Feasibility Review

Please see separate document TWLP_135_Appendix 1 - Atkins Realis Mascalls Academy Feasibility Review