



[REDACTED]  
Director of Education and SEND  
Kent County Council  
County Hall, Maidstone

2 July 2024

Dear [REDACTED]

Re: Land South of Four Elms- Secondary School Proposal

Residents of Edenbridge have asked the New Edenbridge District Residents Association (NEDRA) to contact you for clarification on the certainty of Edenbridge having a Secondary School, either a 4FE or 6FE, and to understand what time frame would be envisaged for delivery of this school.

Pro-Vision, representatives for the developers, told residents and NEDRA members on Monday 24 June 2024 that Kent County Council (KCC) has planning approval for building a 4FE Secondary School on the plot of land off Four Elms Road. KCC would now be seeking funding for building the school.

We have also been told by the CEO of TKAT that the prospects of the proposed school being realised would be a lengthy process, and the appetite to fund such a project by a Local Education Authority not great. Does KCC take this view? Would your preference be to approach an Academy Trust to run the school?

She also pointed out that a 4FE school is small and may struggle to be commercially viable. Schools are typically larger. (Note the site can be expanded to 6FE.) The size of school could leave it vulnerable to lack of funding and closer in the future.

Does the proposed school meet the Department of Education's criteria for a new secondary school, such that there is high certainty that KCC will receive the funding for the school and what is the timeframe for this to happen? Figures from the 2021 census would indicate that we do have enough secondary pupils now for a 4FE school without further planning approvals.

Please can KCC outline how the new school will impact upon the education of Secondary School pupils in Edenbridge. In particular:

- What is expected to be the catchment area for the new school? Please provide projected number for the children attending the school for the first five years.
- Will Edenbridge children still be able to take the 11 plus examination and if they achieve the desired grades will they be able to go to a Grammar School in Kent? Will this opportunity remain the same as now in terms of choice of Grammar Schools, required grades, travel allowances?
- Will the school have a sixth form? If not, will the arrangements be at least as good as they are now?
- Would KCC consider a funding arrangement with an Academy Trust

By email: [REDACTED]

As this is a burning issue in the present public consultation, we are seeking urgent clarification. I would be grateful if you could give me a detailed response to all the questions at your earliest convenience. We are holding our next public meeting on 17 July 7.00-9.00pm at the Edenbridge WI Village Hall and it would be useful to be able to update residents with the facts. You are cordially invited to come to this meeting, and we look forward to meeting you.

We thank you in anticipation of your response

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]  
Chair

New Edenbridge Residents' Association (NEDRA)

Email: [info@NEDRA.org.uk](mailto:info@NEDRA.org.uk)



To [REDACTED]  
Chair of NEDRA (New Edenbridge  
District Residents' Association)  
By Email:  
[info@nedra.org.uk](mailto:info@nedra.org.uk)

Children, Young People and  
Education  
County Hall  
Sessions House  
Maidstone  
ME14 1XQ

Ask for: [REDACTED]  
Phone: [REDACTED]  
Email: [REDACTED]  
Date: 5<sup>th</sup> July 2024

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your letter of 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2024 concerning a Secondary School Proposal on the land South of Four Elms Road, in Edenbridge.

Whilst there is indeed the availability of land to provide a new Secondary School in the town, I do need to advise you that nothing has been decided at this time in respect of whether a school will definitely be delivered on that site and if one is, what the size of any such school would be and possible timelines for delivery.

The planning approval for the planned housing development did include outline planning permission for a possible secondary school, but if KCC or the DfE were to look to introduce that school, a detailed planning application would still need to be submitted. As it stands, current pupil projections do not demonstrate enough demand in the area to necessitate a new Secondary School. Therefore, much is dependent on what happens in the future with regard to the upcoming Sevenoaks Local Plan and future housing delivery. Any new school would be a **minimum** of 4FE, but it is acknowledged by Local Authorities and the DfE alike, that a school of that size is difficult to operate financially. However, in the future it may be a case of "needs must" as a significant number of new dwellings would need to be introduced in the locality, to result in the need for a much larger school. It would be equally problematic to try to introduce a much larger school without the pupils to actually fill it.

I understand your wish for more information, but I would urge you to be mindful of not seeking information from parties who are not directly involved in the planning or production of such a school. It is fair to say that everyone will have an opinion but that may not always be the most informed view.

For instance, the 'appetite' to fund such a scheme is not the issue. If there was an evidenced need for new provision in the area, KCC would do all it can to ensure the requisite school places are delivered. Funding can come from a range of sources and like all local authorities, KCC works closely with partners such as the District Council, Developers and the Department for Education to identify the most appropriate routes to delivery.

Any new school has to be an academy or free school, so even if KCC were to deliver the school, a competition would then need to be held to identify an appropriate Academy Trust to operate the provision.

I should stress that there are absolutely no guarantees that the requisite funding can be obtained. In recent years the DfE have held waves of free school applications, where trusts and LAs can bid for approval to open a DfE funded school. There are currently no such waves pending and there is obviously now further uncertainty as to how new provision will be funded in the future, following the recent general election.

In respect of the census data, it is true that there is currently the equivalent of 4FE or more of young people of Secondary School age who reside in the locality. However, any new school can only be all ability (comprehensive) and there is a considerable percentage of young people who would look for other provision, whether that be in selective schools, private/independent schools or faith schools. Hence, my earlier comment, concerning current pupil projections.

My responses to your specific bullet points are as follows:

- What is expected to be the catchment area for the new school? Please provide projected number for the children attending the school for the first five years.  
No school has a specific catchment area. However, for Secondary aged pupils, travel to school areas are generally a significant size, normally the equivalent of a single district or borough. Given my previous comments re: the timelines for opening and current pupil forecasts, I cannot confirm what the opening model for any new school would be.
- Will Edenbridge children still be able to take the 11 plus examination and if they achieve the desired grades will they be able to go to a Grammar School in Kent? Will this opportunity remain the same as now in terms of choice of Grammar Schools, required grades, travel allowances?  
Kent is a local authority that has selective education as an option for children. The opening of any new school would not have any bearing on young peoples' ability to sit the Kent Test and apply for a place in a selective school. However, this does support the explanation I provided earlier in this response, concerning the numbers of young people who may wish to attend a new all ability school in Edenbridge.
- Will the school have a sixth form? If not, will the arrangements be at least as good as they are now?  
As numbers increase, at the time it is felt that new provision is required, KCC would work with its stakeholders to determine whether 6<sup>th</sup> form provision was required. However, it may well be the case that 6<sup>th</sup> form education could be provided by other means, i.e. existing 6<sup>th</sup> forms in other schools, colleges and third party providers.

- Would KCC consider a funding arrangement with an Academy Trust?  
I refer you to my previous comment re: all new schools needing to be Academies. However, I am unclear what you mean by a funding arrangement. The capital funding that can be used for the provision of new schools, including developer contributions, Basic Need funding via the LA or DfE funding, would be the same regardless of who the provider is.

I hope that clarifies the situation. In summary, there is currently not sufficient forecasted demand to warrant the building of a new school in Edenbridge. However, as the Sevenoaks Local Plan is introduced and housebuilding increases, KCC will continue to monitor the situation and, if/when forecasts start to highlight the need for new provision, plans will be developed to ensure every young person who needs a school place can access one.

Yours sincerely



**Director of Education**



info@nedra.org.uk

Secondary School Proposal - Land South of Four Elms Road,  
Edenbridge

4/9/2024 22:18



To [REDACTED] Copy

Dear [REDACTED]

Sincere apologies we have just discovered that the response to our initial email, which was sent by your executive assistant, was filtered into our spam folder.

We had whitelisted your email address, but since the reply came from a different address, it wasn't immediately visible to us. Fortunately the prompt communication from the KCC executive team has uncovered this and we have now updated our system to include your executive assistant's email address.

The draft letter you sent was very thorough and we thank you for the time taken to respond to our questions.

We do appreciate that the approval for such a school will be dependent to a large extent on the outcome of the Sevenoaks Local Plan, however, there must be a population figure in the minds of KCC which would provide the evidence needed for the provision of a new secondary school. Is this a correct assumption?

As you mentioned in your letter, there are many different stakeholders in Edenbridge who are not in planning or the production of education but who passionately want the school and have strong opinions as to whether this is going to be a reality or not. We are coming to you because we do want the informed view and we would like to share this with residents so we can separate fact from fiction. When making predictions for new school provision is there a formula you apply and are you able to give us any guidance on this?

Many thanks

Kind regards  
[REDACTED]



To

[REDACTED]  
Chair of NEDRA (New Edenbridge  
District Residents' Association)

By Email: [info@nedra.org.uk](mailto:info@nedra.org.uk)

Children, Young People and  
Education  
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Maidstone  
ME14 1XQ

Ask for:  
Phone:  
Email:  
Date:  
Ref No:

[REDACTED]  
17<sup>th</sup> September 2024  
001/NEDRA

Dear [REDACTED]

Reference: 001/NEDRA

Thank you for your email of 4<sup>th</sup> September 2024. I appreciate you seeking the County Council's view, as the definitive position.

I must reiterate much of what I said in my previous letter, but recognise the specific issue you raise, and why it is of interest to you and your group.

The answer is certainly tied to the publication of the Sevenoaks District Local Plan, insofar that as previously stated, a school must be viable before it will be considered by KCC or the Department for Education. Viability is determined by one issue. That of there being sufficient students to fill or nearly fill the school, and that the expectation is that the school will see viable numbers in the future. You may or may not know that the old Eden Valley School in Edenbridge was closed, largely because there were insufficient students to populate the school. Naturally, this adds an aspect of concern for KCC to ensure that if a new school is established, it doesn't suffer the same fate.

Demand for secondary school places does not depend on a population figure, per se. KCC has very accurate data that can show where every secondary school pupil attends school (except for the dozen or so who attends schools outside of Kent).

Analysing this data gives us accurate figures of students that live in the Edenbridge and surrounding areas, that attend all-ability, Grammar and faith schools. Assuming that the levels of students who attend (or will attend) Grammar or faith schools remain unchanged, we are left with the proportion of students that attend all-ability, and might therefore be expected to go to a new all-ability secondary school in Edenbridge, if it existed. That figure varies, but is in the region of 75 Year 7 students every new school year.

Obviously, that isn't enough to make a new secondary school viable, so we come back to your question. Rather than look at a population number, we look at the number, type and location of new housing. The Sevenoaks Local Plan has already indicated a number of new homes on Four

Elms Road, around the area that has been suggested for a new secondary school. Our understanding is that the number of new dwellings originally was 340, but in June the number being proposed increased to 443.

Assuming that 443 (or thereabouts) is the number being delivered, your question therefore, is how many more new dwellings would be needed to be proposed in the Edenbridge, surrounding villages and environs, to suggest that a new school is required?

Given that the type of new home has a bearing on the number of children it generates, providing a simple number is challenging, although I will give you an approximate idea below. KCC use a formulaic system called the Pupil Product Ratio (PPR) which, in its simplest form, forecasts a specific number of school age children that will emerge from a specific number of new houses. The PPR is expressed as 0.2 for secondary, which means that for every five houses, we would expect see one secondary aged student. So, every hundred homes would be expected to generate twenty secondary school age children.

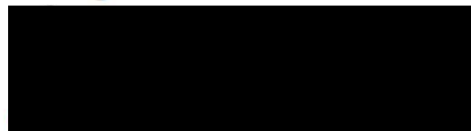
Using a PPR of 0.2, if 443 additional new 3 or 4 bed family homes were proposed, that would likely generate about 88 secondary students, every year, across all year groups. This is 18 new Year 7 students, every year. If those new dwellings were 1 or 2 bedroom flats or apartments, then the number of students falls significantly, providing only about 10 new Year 7 students.

I have to stress that the following numbers are based on forecast, and based on assumptions of dwelling size, and of the numbers of Edenbridge resident students who would wish to attend the new secondary school.

	Year 7 Students	Total Forms of Entry
Existing Edenbridge Residents attending an all-ability school	75	2.5
Numbers of students generated from 443 new family homes on Four Elms Rd	16	0.5
Numbers needed for a 5 FE school	150	5
Numbers needed for a 6 FE school	180	6

It must be borne in mind, that a proportion of any new secondary demand will seek Grammar or faith-based schooling. Therefore, the answer to the question is that Edenbridge (and surrounding areas) would need at the very least, 1475 new family homes (over that already proposed on Four Elms Road) to make a new 5FE school viable and at least 2225 new family homes to make a 6FE school viable.

Kind regards



Director of Education and SEN

Cc



Assistant Director Education (North Kent)