



# Herne Bay High School

## Specialist Sports College

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28<sup>th</sup> March 2019

Dear Sirs

In response to the consultation by Queen Elizabeth's Grammar school and The Barton Court Academy Trust on the development of a 5 form entry Grammar school on the north Kent coast between Whitstable and Herne Bay, I would like to formally object to the proposal. This objection is based on the following,

- Spending nearly 50% of the country selective school expansion budget on the creation of a new Grammar is against the current legislation
  - The lack of a clear and transparent strategy to ensure that there is equality for students from disadvantaged backgrounds within the development
  - The local area of the proposed site does not have the supporting infrastructure to facilitate a school being built
  - The Kent commissioning plan is inaccurate in its projection for need and there will not be enough children to fill the schools resulting in adequate capacity in the Grammar schools in the Thanet and Canterbury area to meet all projected need.
  - The plans, should they go ahead, would lead to the closure of at least one existing school
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- **Spending nearly 50% of the country selective school expansion budget on the creation of a new Grammar is against the current legislation**

I would call into question the legality of opening a brand new 5 form entry Grammar school more than 5½ miles from Canterbury (Barton Court) and 8 miles from Faversham (Queen Elizabeth's). This is not selective school expansion by 1 or 2 new forms of entry that would easily meet any need for the next 10 years, but clearly the creation of a new Grammar School. This would set a precedent for the country and be politically significant for any government moving forward.

- **The lack of a clear and transparent strategy to ensure that there is equality for students from disadvantaged backgrounds within the development**

The government strategy on selective school expansion is underpinned by their belief that it should create greater social mobility and develop equality of opportunity for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Currently the three high schools within the locality have between 30% and 45% of their cohort of such students. Bearing in mind that the current Grammar schools that are bidding have between 6% and 9.7% of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, then unless the government insists that the "expansion" school can demonstrate equality at the new provision in line with the three secondary schools in the locality, it is misaligned with its strategy and should not be funded.

- **The local area of the proposed site does not have the supporting infrastructure to facilitate a school being built**

The likely location of the “new Grammar” should it be successful, is between the towns of Herne Bay and Whitstable, it is nowhere near a rail link, has poor access and will create serious transportation issues with the likelihood of considerable congestion on the roads and have a detrimental environmental impact. The very fact that there is no identified site really does indicate the lack of forethought and planning in both applications and an additional unknown cost to KCC and the government.

- **The Kent commissioning plan is inaccurate in its projection for need and there will not be enough children to fill the schools resulting in adequate capacity in the Grammar schools in the Thanet and Canterbury area to meet all projected need.**

The KCC commissioning plan, published in January 2019, has for the first time split the requirements for Grammar and Non Selective provision. It has loosely projected that there **MAY** be a need for some additional selective places in the Canterbury and Coastal district by 2024, **IF** all the building work and the birth rate projections roll out to their fullest. Currently, the data in the plan identifies that there is capacity within the existing Grammar system for 33% of the September 2019 year 7 population, if all Grammar schools take their Published Admission Number (PAN). The Kent test pass rate is set to nominally select 21% of students as “Grammar ready” with some additional space filled by Headteacher appeals. These figures already indicates that there is approximately 10% capacity that is filled with students who have not reached the Grammar entrance requirements. Additional capacity is already being created via the back door with a number of East Kent and Canterbury Grammar schools taking significantly more than their PAN through the appeals process, or via taking another full form of entry. Kent runs a selective system, and that is almost certainly here to stay, however, to ensure we retain an effective education system, selective schools should only admit the “Grammar” assessed students, rather than keep filling their ever expanding rolls with students regardless of their Kent test scores. The outcome of this continued back door expansion will be a two tier system that further widens the disadvantaged gap. Within the Thanet, Canterbury & Faversham area there is no capacity issue for grammar provision if grammar schools are already taking children who have not passed the 11+ exam, therefore, the funding really should be reserved for areas of the country where there is a true shortage of places

Additionally, the Kent County Council commissioning plan published in January 2019 identifying the need for 5FE Grammar on the coast by 2024 already appears inaccurate. For example, it identifies that there is a 37 place shortfall for September 2019. This is not the case, not all grammar schools are oversubscribed with students meeting the Kent test threshold. In fact, as already stated, there is capacity to take up to 33% of the student population, significantly above the grammar selection benchmark. This immediately calls into question the validity of the data projected for the current year. As you project this forward, it is certain that there is simply not the need for the additional places. I would expect it to be a priority from the DfE to undertake full due diligence around the KCC data and projected need, current selective capacity in relation to those that pass the Kent test and ensure full transparency in the rationale behind spending public money unnecessarily.

It would appear that there is a lack of clarity and accuracy in the strategy, currently 21% of non-selective students have to travel out of Herne Bay to attend a high school as there a lack of space at the existing Good school. It has been decided that this long term shortfall is being made up by the addition of 150 places at a new school on the site of the old Chaucer school in Canterbury, opening under the Barton Court Academy trust in 2022. This will increase the transportation issues with increasing migration of “coastal students” into the city centre. With reference to the Barton Court Academy Trust, I would have serious concerns in the capacity of a small two school trust with one outstanding school and one in special measure, having the leadership capacity to drive and maintain high quality education at two completely new schools almost simultaneously.

I also have grave reservations about the need for extra grammar places. The published pupil data for Herne Bay and Whitstable indicates a reduced population. In September 2018 there was significant excess capacity in year R with projected stability for 2018 to 2019, the latest data, March 2019, indicates we are now in the position of nearly 100 fewer students in Year R for September 2019. The projections for the next few years show no dramatic increase at all. Whilst this is an immediate problem for the coastal Primary and Infant sector, the long term impact on pupil numbers for September 2024 and beyond is significant. From 2019 a collective approach from all the Whitstable and Herne Bay Primary and Infant schools has been required to sustain themselves in the face of reducing numbers. It calls into question the need for additional places, let alone 150 extra per year.

- **The plans, should they go ahead, would lead to the closure of at least one existing school**

The proposal identifies a high likelihood that two new schools will be opening at the same time, a High School in Canterbury and a Grammar in Herne Bay/Whitstable. This will add 300 new year 7 places into a system that currently has spare capacity. This will result in the closure of an existing school within Canterbury / Coastal area. The consequence of such a proposal would not only be hugely detrimental to the exiting provisions but a fundamental misuse of taxpayers money. A much better solution would be greater investment in the continuing development the three Good secondary schools on the coast to support the deprivation agenda in a more cost effective way by supporting their drive to a fully comprehensive intake.

I therefore urge you to reject the proposals and fully support the continuing development of the three good secondary schools on the coast.

Yours sincerely

**Jon Boyes**  
**Principal**