

Thank you for allowing the Wadhurst Parish Council (WPC) an additional two working days to respond to the consultation.

The WPC does not feel it is qualified to comment on the educational merits of the proposal and trusts that these are valid. However, members are surprised that the Beacon will not share the secrets of their success with Uplands unless they form a formal partnership under their Academy Trust (or that other successful schools in the local education authority with Uplands are not already sharing best practice.)

Costs; the WPC understand that a key driver for the plan is the forecast additional income from increasing pupil numbers at Uplands but they would like to understand how this compares with the additional costs of joining the Academy.

Although it has been explained that the consultation has been extended from four to six weeks and the WPC has been allowed an additional two working days to respond, Councillors are concerned at the short time frame of the consultation; with some members declining to comment due to the lack of time (note that receipt of the consultation notice was after the last monthly parish council meeting). The WPC are concerned that the residents of Wadhurst have not been made aware of the consultation and the consultation period should have been longer to allow for the additional difficulty of engaging people during COVID lockdown.

The Wadhurst Parish Council is concerned about and would like to seek assurances on the following key areas on behalf of Wadhurst parishioners and businesses.

- Uplands Sixth Form
 - that Uplands will continue to have a sixth form under the proposals
- Sticky Fingers and Uplands Gym
 - The WPC are concerned that these might not be core to the educational aims of the Academy but they are very important to parishioners and the WPC would like confirmation that their future is secured under the plans. Of particular concern is how these would be funded, should they need additional investment.
- Organisational structure
 - As Uplands would appear to be the junior partner in the proposed partnership, the WPC would like to understand how the voices of Wadhurst parents and residents would be heard going forward. The concern being that a leadership structure based in Crowborough might not understand or hold in high priority the concerns of Wadhurst residents.
- Traffic, congestion and parking
 - The expected increase in pupil numbers and journeys (between the Wadhurst and Crowborough sites) will increase the problems of traffic, congestion, and parking. These issues are of very great concern to Wadhurst residents and High Street businesses.
 - As previously discussed with the school, the parking allocation at Uplands falls below the ESCC guidelines. We would like to discuss this and, as we also understand that an off-road parking solution is anticipated within 12-18 months, we would like more information about this and assurances that a solution to the current and anticipated issues will form part of the proposed plans.