

3 May 2024

Dear Resident,

Re: High View Oast, Poultons Lane, Ash, CT3 2HN

Following our letter on 6 February 2024 we would like to provide you with a further update regarding High View Oast.

Communication

We have received a number of enquiries from residents and continue to respond to these as quickly and fully as possible. These enquiries and responses are informing our Frequently Asked Questions webpage: www.kent.gov.uk/receptioncentres, which you can access for information and we would like to encourage residents to continue to use our enquiries mailbox (reception.enquiries@kent.gov.uk) to make any further contact about High View Oast.

Stakeholders Meeting

On 21 March 2024 Kent County Council (KCC) held its first meeting with your local councillors where your questions regarding High View Oast were represented and responded to.

The meeting was attended by senior officers for the relevant service areas in KCC, KCC Councillor for Sandwich and senior representatives from: Kent Police, KCC Prevent, KCC Public Health and Dover District Council. Councillors for Dover District Council and representatives from St Faiths School and Cartwright and Kelsey Primary School were invited but were unable to attend.

This meeting provided opportunity for discussion regarding the legal context under which KCC is working and for information to be shared about the enabling works on site and the management of the centre once in operation. It provided opportunity for stakeholders to ask questions on behalf of the residents and services they represent. Minutes of the meeting are available at <https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/protecting-children/reception-centres-for-unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-children/resident-communication>.

Summary of the key points discussed during the meeting on 21 March:

- KCC must comply with the High Court ruling and take 'every possible step' to increase its capacity to accommodate and look after all UAS children arriving to Kent. KCC's existing accommodation is not sufficient to look after all children who arrive, even though the majority of children move on to the care of local authorities.
- It is regrettable KCC was not able to share plans in full for High View Oast ahead of time. The necessity to comply with the urgency of the Court ruling and accommodate all UAS children who continue to arrive to Kent, means it has not been possible for KCC to consult with residents in ways it might normally and would prefer to do.
- Generally, UAS children are extremely appreciative of the accommodation and support they receive from KCC and are eager to learn about, integrate and contribute positively to UK society. KCC's

experience of running existing reception centres for many years has shown UAS children present very minimal risk to local communities.

- High View Oast will be registered with Ofsted as a children's home for 22 UAS children, aged under 16.
- High View Oast will have dedicated KCC staff and security staff 24 hours a day, throughout the year, and there will be no time when the children are unsupervised at the home.
- High View Oast will be a temporary home for children, whilst they await transfer to the care of other local authorities under the National Transfer Scheme (NTS). The required timescale for this, set by Central Government, is 10 working days.
- Children will not be enrolled in local schools. Instead, education and activity will be delivered mostly at the home, with some supervised activity taking place in the community. This will include English language lessons and guidance on English law and society, giving children the best and earliest opportunity to contribute towards their community, wherever that may be in the UK.
- Children will be able to independently leave High View Oast for short periods of time, with the agreement of staff about where they will be and when they will return. This will also depend on the child's age and individual circumstances.
- If a child did not return at a time agreed, at any time of day, KCC staff will take all possible steps to locate them. There is no set time to wait before reporting a child missing to Police. A decision to do so is based on an assessment of risk by staff, who are trained and experienced in working with UAS children.
- Robust protocols, already successfully used at KCC's existing reception centres, will be in place at High View Oast. Skilled and experienced social workers meet with newly arrived children to assess their needs and risks, including trafficking and exploitation. These assessments inform plans that are made around children before, and wherever, they are placed. Social workers and dedicated staff at the reception centres are trained and experienced in working with vulnerable children and are responsible for implementing plans to keep children safe at the centre and in the local community.
- Children will be registered with local GPs so they can access primary health care in the event they require this during their short stay at the reception centre. KCC works successfully with Kent and Medway NHS to support registration with local GPs at existing reception centres. KCC staff use good professional judgement when responding to children's health needs e.g. accessing over the counter medication / pharmacy advice before GP consultation where possible. KCC's experience of running existing reception centres for many years has shown the majority of UAS children do not frequently require GP consultations.
- UAS children can be referred to KCC for accommodation at any time but traffic to and from High View Oast is not anticipated to be heavy during any particular hours.

Schedule of works

April 2024

- Commence Electrical installation.
- Install new internal Drainage.
- Continue mechanical and electrical installation.
- Continue with construction of new walls
- Ongoing works to windows and doors.

May 2024

- Continue mechanical and electrical installation.
- Continue internal works to ceilings and plastering.
- Commence paintwork throughout.
- Installation of internal doors

June 2024

- Commence external tidying works including renewal of existing fences.
- Commence finishing to mechanical and electrical installation.
- Installation of floor finishes.
- Installation of bathrooms.

July & August 2024

- Complete decorations.
- Installation of kitchen commercial & Domestic
- Installation of loose furniture within building.
- Continue external tidying work.
- Testing and commissioning.
- Complete internal works.
- Installation of new fencing.
- Removal of site welfare.
- Removal of site hoarding.
- Building Control Sign-off and building handover.

We hope this information provides you with further reassurance regarding High View Oast.

We will continue to keep you updated and will write to you again when we have more information to share with you.

In the meantime, if you do have questions please contact us at reception.enquiries@kent.gov.uk.

Kind regards,

UASC Reception Centre Enquiries Team