

By ANNA PRICE

Residents lobbying for a new high school in Christchurch's fast-growing north-east are upbeat after their petition and proposal was presented to a parliamentary select committee last Wednesday.

If the proposal succeeds, the push would be on for what would be a high-decile school to be opened as early as February 2012.

The case was presented to the Education and Science Select Committee chaired by Labour's education spokesman Trevor Mallard by Christchurch east-based National MP Aaron Gilmore.

Parklands Residents' Association's North East Secondary Education (NESE) committee member Amanda Williams said the group was well-received.

"Mr Mallard took a keen interest in the issue, being familiar with the area's historic struggle to achieve a local high school," she said.

During the presentation, MPs were receptive to the social benefits of a local high school for the local community as well as adjacent communities.

"The select committee took a strong interest in the large number of children attending local primary schools," Mrs Williams said.

The case for a local high school is focused around pupil numbers, community social needs and environmental sustainability.

The 33-page proposal drawn up by the residents' group used current figures showing around 2500 children across six primary schools were waiting in the wings for a high school in the zone identified by the 8083 post code.

A housing explosion and a soaring birth rate had pushed local primary schools to near-capacity with 2800 pupils expected within the next six years, spiralling to more than 4000 by 2025. A further 3500 houses were planned.

The parliamentary committee was impressed with the NESE's "preparation, presentation and knowledge" – and acknowledged that the need for a new high school was becoming evident, Mrs Williams said.

Local Ministry of Education representatives were present to answer the select committee's questions. More detailed information was sought on some points. The select committee will make its recommendations to Education minister Anne Tolley.



Group puts forward new school proposal

Beehive buzz: Parklands Residents' Group North East Secondary Education sub-committee members, from left, Elissa Smith, Angela Wilson, Bridget Hanrahan, Kerri Rowlands, Greg Morehouse, Steve Hill, Amanda Williams on the steps of parliament last week.

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