

St Bede's School

Options for Development 2010 - 2015

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Introduction

1 This document represents the first stage in a wider process to produce a comprehensive Masterplan for the school campus at Upper Dicker. The campus will be the subject of a spatial analysis and character study, the purpose of which will be to ensure that any new development will be proposed in a form which will lead to improvements in the campus and will protect its landscape setting.

As an interim document, this document largely explains what the school's requirements will be for the future. This will subsequently be dovetailed into an urban design framework, which takes into account an analysis of the campus, its strengths and weaknesses, the character of its best elements and its relationship with the village and the countryside.

This analysis is currently taking place and once available, will encompass these 'Options for Development 2010-2015' as they evolve for the future of the school.

The current version of the document has been written in response to requests from local people, echoed by the Inspector in the Public Inquiry in January 2009 (ref. paragraph 30 of his decision notice) and repeated more recently by the planning officers of Wealden District Council.

It has been produced in good faith by St Bede's School and gives details of the school's organisation and make-up, shows its current use of buildings and land and outlines its plans and aspirations for the future. Its purpose is to inform future planning applications by placing them within a broader context and to provide up to date supplementary information to support the existing land use Masterplan formalised within the S106 Agreement. Nothing in the document is firmly fixed and all possible developments shown in it are subject to planning approval.

It is important that it is understood that this document represents an honest appraisal of the school's current situation. Conditions and circumstances will, inevitably, change and new ideas will emerge; the new masterplan document will doubtless need to be reviewed and amended regularly to take these changes and new ideas into account.

What is the school?

Charitable trust

St Bede's School is a charitable trust whose purpose is "To promote and provide for the advancement of education of children and young persons."

2 History

St Bede's Senior School was founded in 1978 and moved away from the Preparatory School to Upper Dicker in 1979. The two schools remained separate until 1999 when they merged to form a single Trust which now operates on two sites, one in Eastbourne and one in Upper Dicker.

Parents pay fees; a significant number of pupils are subsidised to a greater or lesser extent.

In 1979 the school had 13 year old and 14 year old pupils only (now called years 9 and 10).

For the following three years additional year groups were added until the school had a full range of pupils from Year 9 to Year 13.

The school was predominately a boarding school at first (and remains so in spirit) but day pupil numbers increased steadily until, in 2001, they overtook the boarding numbers which have remained more constant.

3 **Ethos**

The individual child is at the centre: staff and the 'system' must always adapt to suit individuals; the individual must not be obliged to fit in with a system which is not appropriate - we do not force square pegs into round holes.

4 **Entry to the school is never by academic selection.** The school is helped in its effectiveness by the fact that it represents the real world as nearly as possible: there are boys and girls in almost equal proportion; there is a full academic range, from those who will go to Oxford or Cambridge to those who find academic work a real challenge; a proportion have special needs; a significant number come from other countries and have very varied backgrounds and beliefs.

5 **There must therefore be a very high ratio of teaching staff to pupils** - certainly no fewer teachers than 1:8 of the student body - this allows us to teach our wide range of abilities in sets which are effective.

6 **Boarding is central to the school's being;** it is, perhaps, the strongest element which combines with other elements to give the school its spirit; it makes the school a homely and comfortable place to be; the friendly, cooperative, non-confrontational nature of relationships between all people, adults and young people, spreads through the place from this boarding core; the school is alive all the time - at evenings and weekends too, not just during the working day; better and more dedicated staff are attracted to work in a school which lives for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

7 **The school's international dimension is vital to its richness and diversity.** It is crucial that both students and staff continue to be recruited from around the world and that all cultures are valued and celebrated.

8 **The spiritual side of life is very important** - all religions are supported and encouraged, those students who are not from a religious background or who are not interested in religion are provided with a varied diet of spiritual thought and ideas.

9 **Activities:** the school aims to help individual students to fulfil their potential in as many ways as possible so that they will become well-rounded, confident and balanced members of society. Students must therefore be encouraged and further developed in any area of interest which they may have: extra curricular activities of all kinds are a vital element in the development of a well-rounded individual. These are so

important that a significant part of each school day is devoted to them; all students must take part each day, and may choose from a wide range of sporting and non-sporting activities which are encouraged and valued equally: dance and drama rank alongside soccer and rugby; knitting is just as important as badminton. Excellence is encouraged for high achievers in all activities but support and encouragement for recreational participants is equally important.

- 10 **Flexibility:** one of the key reasons for the school's success is its ability to be flexible in the application of resources. If there is a need, it is able to switch resources from one area to another rapidly. This means that it can cater well for the needs of the students in the school at any particular time - the school adapts itself to suit its students; it does not require students to select subjects or activities which might not be suitable for them.

The ability to remain flexible will continue to be vital to the school's success and hence means that it cannot commit itself to a rigid development programme. Any development plan will have to have flexibility built in.

Student numbers

- 11 The school consists presently of 904 students, 344 boarders and 560 day students. The school has no plans to expand student numbers further. The new Headmaster has set target figures for recruitment which will keep the School's roll at around 900. Minor variations might occur due to fluctuations in demand, parents seeking alternative schools mid-year or other schools closing.

Staff

- 12 The school employs 154 full-time and part-time teaching staff and approximately 209 ancillary staff. Further people are employed on short-term contracts.

Boarding policy

- 13 The school has had 5 boarding houses since 1983. There is no wish to alter this: the school works well with boarding houses of approximately 70 pupils in each. There are currently 344 spaces for boarders.

The school's aim is to provide accommodation of the best quality so that it complies with government requirements and is attractive to pupils and their parents. Boarders should not be concentrated in one place on the site, but spread around so that the whole site is 'lived in'; boys and girls, though in separate houses, should be distributed too, so that there is a natural mixture of people over the whole site.

- 14 The proposal for two new Stud boarding houses would replace 132 old and inadequate boarding spaces with up to 136 modern new spaces and would result in an overall total of 348 student beds split between 5 houses, 3 for boys and 2 for girls.

The application to build two new Stud boarding houses represents the second phase of a scheme to build four new houses to modern standards. The first phase (for two new houses situated at the bottom of the main school campus, beyond the lake) was

completed in 2007. Dorms House (formerly Stud Cottages) will be retained as the fifth boarding house for the school.

- 15 When the new accommodation is complete: the pupils from Camberlot Hall will be accommodated on the main school site and it is intended that Camberlot Hall will be sold; the pupils currently accommodated in Old Dorter House will be moved to new accommodation and the temporary buildings will be demolished.

The pupils will then be accommodated as follows: in the phase 1 boarding houses, 1 girls' house and 1 boys' house; in the New Stud Boarding Houses (phase 2), 1 girls' house and 1 boys' house; in 'Dorms House', 1 boys' house.

Day student policy

- 16 The school looks after its day students in 'houses' which are, in many ways, similar to boarding houses. There are, of course, no beds, but these houses provide a secure base, lockers, study facilities and common rooms; they are overseen by house staff who look after the pastoral needs of the students in the house.

- 17 There are five day houses, three for boys and two for girls. As with the boarders, the day houses are distributed around the school and girls and boys are placed adjacent to each other, where possible. Four of these houses are housed in permanent buildings (Old Stud House, Stud Yard and two are above the classroom block to the right of the main school entrance). The fifth house is currently housed in the temporary buildings adjacent to Old Dorter House. This house will need to be relocated when the temporary buildings are demolished. A possible site for this is shown on "A Vision of St Bede's in 2015" (Appendix 1).

Teaching and teaching facilities

- 18 The wide range of ability among students demands a broad subject choice. Accordingly the school offers over 30 subjects at GCSE and in excess of 50 subjects in the Sixth Form. A level and GCSE examinations are taken by most students, but BTec, City and Guilds, NVQ, Entry Level, Cambridge Certificate, Pre-U, IGCSE, IELTS qualifications are also offered. A great deal of teaching takes place in general purpose classrooms but there are specialist areas for particular subjects, including: Science; Agricultural and Land Based Science; IT; Design Technology; Home Economics; Art; Ceramics; Photography; Media and Film; Music; Dance; Drama; Sport and PE; Car Maintenance; Stable Management.

The school constantly appraises and adapts teaching spaces as needs change. There are many reasons for this: subjects vary in popularity from year to year; year groups vary in size; syllabuses and examinations change; new subjects are introduced, or the school decides to offer additional subjects; government regulations require premises to be upgraded.

Further permanent teaching accommodation will eventually be provided in the area of Old Dorter House. This accommodation will replace the temporary classrooms in the

school and will provide extra capacity for those subject areas with particular needs.

It is intended that the wooden classrooms which lie on the northern side of the road which runs past the science building will be upgraded in due course; they have the potential to be rebuilt as two storey buildings in the Sussex style.

Activities

- 19 Activities take up a significant part of the school day. Lessons run from 8:30 am until 2:45 pm. Activities take up the rest of the afternoon until the day students go home at 5:30 pm (5:00 pm on Monday and Friday). All students take part in an activity of their choice at least until 4:20 pm every day. A very wide range of sporting and non-sporting activities is offered each day (in excess of 100 different options each week). All the school's sporting facilities are very fully used during the activities programme each day. The outdoor facilities in particular are under extreme pressure which leads to pitches becoming unplayable, excessive transport requirements to off-site facilities and the frequent cancellation of outdoor games sessions. Classrooms and other indoor specialist areas continue to be used by the activities programme throughout the afternoons.

Catering and dining

- 20 The kitchen and dining facilities have evolved over time and are not ideally laid out. Consultants have been commissioned to propose a more efficient lay-out using the space available. There is possible scope for an extension at the northern end of the dining hall which would be within the area coloured pink on the Section 106 Agreement (see Appendix 2 below). This would, potentially, provide valuable extra dining space and allow more flexibility in the lay-out of the kitchens and wash-up area. At first floor level this extension would provide a valuable practice and recital room for the Music Department.

The school would like to be able to design and construct a purpose-build dining hall at some time in the future. This is very much an aspiration for the long-term rather than a firm plan - a site for this possible project has not yet been identified.

Sporting facilities

21 Indoor facilities

The completion in 2008 of the new Multi-Purpose Hall has given the school top quality indoor sporting facilities.

22 Outdoor courts

The school has 6 tennis courts currently. These are not sufficient for the amount of tennis played in the school and there is also a demand for some outdoor space to be available for netball. The provision of 4 further tennis courts would serve these needs and a possible site is shown in Appendix 1. (See also paragraph 36 below.)

23 Outdoor pitches

There is a floodlit Astroturf pitch south of the swimming pool which is used primarily for hockey but also for training in other sports.

There are three grass pitches which are wholly inadequate for the school's needs. Following a failed appeal at Public Inquiry (notice issued 24th January 2009) against a decision by Wealden District Council to refuse permission for four new multi-purpose sports pitches on land outside the village behind Park Mead School the school has been obliged to reconsider its strategy. The Planning Inspector recognised that there is a demand for pitches and practice areas (paragraph 28 of the decision notice) and the school certainly remains of the strong view that further outdoor pitches are needed but was reluctant to site pitches in the only other suitable area which it owned: the area at the back of the village behind the village shop. Alternatives were therefore sought and new land has been acquired at the eastern end of the school site, north of Michelham Priory Road.

- 24 The school has considered carefully how it could better site more pitches and practice areas on the land available. These considerations have also been informed by the Section 106 agreement dated 13th April 2006 (see Appendix 2 below). A possible layout of pitches is shown in Appendix 1. The cricket nets are shown near to the two proposed cricket squares next to the Astroturf pitch, leaving room for a small practice pitch above and adjacent to the two existing pitches on Stud Field, which the Inspector considered to be "developed but open and tends to act as a buffer between true countryside and village" (paragraph 11). As for traffic, the Inspector did "not consider it unreasonable that home games should take place and that would be likely to attract additional incoming traffic, to be set against the present outgoing traffic which would reduce." (paragraph 21)
- 25 The school would like to erect a cricket pavilion in a suitable position close to the cricket fields; the ideal site has not yet been identified.

Staff Accommodation

- 26 Apart from boarding staff who are accommodated in the boarding houses, the school provides accommodation for some staff both within the school grounds and in the village. The buildings in the village used for staff accommodation are: 'Old Waye', 'Crossways Cottage', 'Shalome', 'Fairfield', 'Amarylis', 'The Oak' and 'Providence House'. Malvern House which was, until recently, used to accommodate staff has been sold.
- 27 The school would like to replace the accommodation lost at Malvern House and, possibly, provide additional housing. The 'Wise Site' has been identified as a suitable area to build further housing. There are ongoing discussions with local people about the form that this housing might take, but there is a broad agreement that some accommodation on the site will be available to local people at affordable rent. Some of the accommodation will be used by staff at the school.

Pedestrians, traffic and car parking

28

Strategy

The overriding consideration is safety. Nearly all movement around the site is on foot. Pedestrians therefore need to be considered first and must always have priority. The aim is to keep traffic to a minimum - this enhances safety and keeps car parking requirements as low as possible. In order to minimise the overall use of cars, day students are brought to and from the school in a fleet of coaches and minibuses which pick up students at agreed collection points close to their homes.

29

The construction of the pedestrian crossing in the middle of the village was an extremely welcome measure and has greatly improved the safety for pedestrians moving around the school and the village. The recently introduced 30 mph speed limit should help further, provided that it is observed by motorists.

30

Policy

The school's policy is to separate pedestrians from vehicles wherever possible. Given the nature of the site this is not always achievable and some entrances are shared between traffic and pedestrians, but measures to mitigate the dangers have been taken and further measures are planned.

The main school entrance has been widened, the wall lowered to improve sight lines, a new pedestrian opening created and a segregated walk-way created to protect pedestrians from vehicles. The installation of a bollard at the top of the school site has severely restricted access by traffic. The whole site is much safer as a result and the relatively few vehicles that use the entrance or the visitors' car park nearby (visitors, deliveries to the kitchens and some staff) represent a much reduced risk to pedestrians than was the case previously.

31

The installation of a barrier on the approach to the Main Hall has made the area from which the buses depart much safer: traffic is not allowed access to this area during the times when buses arrive and depart. The system will be improved further when a second barrier is installed as part of the previously approved car-parking scheme.

32

There are plans to reduce further the areas which are shared by vehicles and pedestrians. When the temporary buildings which constitute Old Dorter and Dicker House are removed, the road will be diverted to create a pedestrian free zone at the northern corner of the site. Dorms car park is also currently shared by vehicles and pedestrians and the school is considering options for improving the situation: one option would be to divert pedestrians to the south of the Dorms building and close off pedestrian access to the rear of the car park (this option is opposed by the residents of the White House); an alternative might be to close Dorms car park to all but essential traffic.

33

Car parking

The boarding houses each have a small area of car park to serve them; this space is

used by the staff who work in the house and by parents when dropping off or picking up their children and luggage. The 16 spaces behind Dorms House serve a few other staff in addition.

Visitors use the small car park by the main entrance to the school site. This area is shared with the minibus which serves Camberlot Hall and the vehicles making deliveries to the school kitchens.

34 Since the introduction of the bollard on the main site in 2005, staff car parking has moved almost entirely away from the main site. The staff have used:

1. The Wise Site (approximately 45 informal spaces)
2. The area to the left of the access road behind Stud House (approximately 47 spaces)
3. (More recently) the area at the side of the spoil heap by the Main Hall (approximately 43 informal spaces).

These 135 spaces have proved to be sufficient to satisfy the day to day needs of the school and some of these spaces, particularly on the 'Wise Site', have additionally been used by villagers, visiting walkers and by people using the Church. Some parents from Park Mead School use the car park to the north of Michelham Priory Road when collecting and dropping off their children at Park Mead.

35 Following the construction of the new Stud Boarding Houses and the development of the car park (including the area until recently occupied by the pile of spoil) the total number of car parking spaces to the north of Michelham Priory Road will rise from 90 to 106.

36 However, permission for the use of the 'Wise Site' as a car park expires in March 2010. This, taking into account the extra 16 spaces described in paragraph 35 above, will leave an overall shortfall of some 30 spaces which will have to be sought elsewhere. Appendix 1 shows a possible solution for this by using two of the current tennis courts for car parking. (The six new tennis courts also shown on the plan would replace the two courts lost and provide an additional four courts [see also paragraph 22 above])

Maintenance and Grounds Departments

37 The Maintenance Department is on the 'Wise Site'. The Grounds Department is housed in a building between the swimming pool and the Astroturf pitch. When the 'Wise Site' is redeveloped to provide housing, the Maintenance Department will have to be moved. One possibility is for the Maintenance Department to take over the accommodation currently used by the stables. New stables could be constructed on land to the south west of Park Mead School (see Appendix 1). However, other suitable solutions may arise in due course.

St Bede's School in the Community

38 The school is firmly embedded in Upper Dicker. Approximately 340 boarders and over

30 members of staff, some with their families, live in the village for the majority of the year. It is the school's aim to play as full a part as possible in the life of the community whilst remaining sensitive to the wishes of most local people who wish to live quietly. Accordingly most of the activities of the school take place within the school's premises and on the school's land. However, the school is grateful to share some of the facilities of the village, is happy to contribute to the maintenance of village facilities where it can and is pleased to welcome local residents and the children from Park Mead School to share the facilities of the school.

39. The Inspector (in his report issued 24th January 2009) confirmed that "the school should be considered as part of the local community having in mind its size, use of and support for local facilities and the presence of boarders, together with the use of sports facilities by non-school people." (Paragraph 7)

40. The village facilities used by the school are:

- the cricket field;
- the village hall football pitch;
- the Church.

41. The school maintains, or helps to maintain:

- the cricket field;
- the village hall football pitch;
- the Church (which it cleans and for which it supplies fuel; for a number of years the Vicar was employed by the school and his time spent as a minister was donated to the parish).

The school also owns and supports the use of the village shop as an important facility for the community.

The school helped to facilitate the preparation and printing of the recently published Parish Plan.

42. The following school facilities are available free of charge to local residents:

- the sports hall, including the gym, squash courts and swimming pool;
- the tennis courts;
- the library
- the cricket nets

In addition Park Mead School uses the swimming pool each week and some of their pupils receive soccer coaching from St Bede's coaching staff.

43. **Scholarships and bursaries:** a significant number of students in the school are subsidised by the school to a greater or lesser extent. A considerable proportion of these students live in Wealden and Eastbourne.

44. **Support for local businesses:** in 2008/9 the school paid approximately £10.2 million into the local economy. The breakdown was as follows:

Salaries	£8,818,000
Recruitment	£15,000

Information Technology, etc	£75,000
Activities	£35,000
Catering	£230,000
Cleaning	£35,000
Transport	£425,000
Local Advertising	£20,000
Administration	£28,000
Rates and Local Services	£135,000
Equestrian	£41,000
Repairs, Renewals and Grounds	£345,000
Total	£10,202,000

Development costs are not included in the above figures. Between May 2006 and May 2008 the school built two new boarding houses and a new multi-purpose hall. Both projects used mainly local contractors, sub-contractors and suppliers. The combined cost of the two projects exceeded £7 million.

- 45 **Employment:** the school currently employs 363 people in Upper Dicker (and an additional 163 people at the Prep School in Eastbourne). Of the 363 employees in Upper Dicker, 9 live further than 20 miles away. Nearly all the rest live within 15 miles of the school. 37 live within Arlington Parish.

St Bede's School: development strategy for the future

- 46 The aim is to consolidate the school around its core in the middle of Upper Dicker. Malvern House has recently been sold and Camberlot Hall will be disposed of when the boarders from there move into their new accommodation on the main school site. 'The Oak', which borders on the 'Wise site', has been acquired recently and is likely to house a residential caretaker.

The school will always aim to improve and upgrade its buildings at every opportunity and it is not possible exactly to predict how needs and priorities will change over time: courses wax and wane in popularity; examination syllabuses are modified; new subjects are introduced from time to time; alterations in government regulations require changes and adaptations to be made to facilities and buildings.

Summary of possible development

- 47 The ability to remain flexible has been key to the success of the school and is likely to remain so. Though plans will have to be reappraised in the light of prevailing circumstances, the following developments are currently being considered by the school and would be subject to planning approval:

- 2 new Stud Boarding Houses (now with full planning approval);
- a new classroom block;
- The renovation of existing classrooms (the 'O' Rooms)
- extension to dining room or, possibly, in the long-term, a new dining hall;
- 6 tennis courts;

- additional sports / practice pitches;
- Wise site housing development;
- replacement car parking;
- new facilities for grounds department;
- new stables;
- pedestrian area and new road*;
- performing arts facilities;
- new day house

Sequencing of development

- 48 Land for built development on the school site is at a premium. This means that inadequate buildings must usually be demolished before new buildings can be built. In order for the work of the school to continue during construction works, it is vital that development should take place in carefully planned sequences, which could possibly take place in parallel. Some projects (e.g. the possible dining hall extension) are not part of a larger sequence and could stand alone. Two sequences are shown below:
- 49 **A Boarding / classroom sequence**
1. Complete new boarding accommodation and move the boarders out of 'Old Dorter' chalets to the new accommodation.
 2. Provide alternative temporary classrooms on the site of 'Old Dorter'.
 3. Remove the temporary 'Charleston' classrooms.
 4. Build a new permanent day house (for Dicker House) on the site of the 'Charleston' classrooms.
 5. Move Dicker House students from their old accommodation to the new day house.
 6. Demolish the old Dicker House accommodation and take down the aviary building (possibly to re-erect elsewhere as a cricket pavilion).
 7. Redevelop the old Dicker House site to include a new teaching block to provide permanent new teaching accommodation in this area.
 8. Remove the temporary classrooms from the site of 'Old Dorter'.
 9. Redevelop the site of 'Old Dorter'
- 50 **B Wise site / car parking / maintenance /stables sequence**
1. Construct 6 new tennis courts.
 2. Convert 2 old tennis courts to car parking.
 3. Construct new stables.
 4. Move the Facilities Department to the site of the old stables.
 5. Develop the 'Wise site'.

Appendix 1: A Vision of the St Bede's in 2015

The drawing overleaf shows a view of the school as it could look in 2015 if the current development options are confirmed and approved.

Buildings currently owned by the school are coloured beige on the plan.

Areas for possible future built development are coloured yellow.

Appendix 2: The Section 106 Agreement dated 13th April 2006

Overleaf is a copy of the map which is part of the above agreement. The key to the map is reproduced below:-

'It is HEREBY agreed...

- (a) Not to erect any buildings or structures on the land shown cross-hatched green on the Agreement Plan. *[ie may be used for sport]*
- (a) Not to erect any buildings or structures on the land shown hatched green and edged green on the Agreement Plan OTHER THAN sports-related development which shall be the subject of a specific application PROVIDED THAT this shall not prohibit the use of the land hatched green for car-parking. *[ie may be used for sport, sports related development or car parking]*
- (b) Not to install any external lighting on the land shown hatched green and edged green on the Agreement Plan without the express consent of the Council.
- (c) Not to use the land shown coloured brown on the Agreement Plan other than for recreational purposes.
- (d) Not to use the land shown coloured pink, coloured brown, edged green, hatched green or cross-hatched green on the Agreement Plan other than for purposes for the benefit of the St. Bede's School Trust (which is a charity wholly dedicated to the advancement and education of children) or any successor in title.' *[ie the land shown coloured pink may be used for built development and ancillary purposes]*