

From: Rebecca Spore, Director of Infrastructure

To: Brian Collins, Deputy Leader

Subject: Disposal of the former Rowhill Primary School, Stock Lane, Wilmington, Dartford DA2 7BZ

Decision no: 25/00058

Key Decision: Yes, the decision involves expenditure or savings of over £1m

Classification: *Unrestricted report with exempt appendix A, not for publication under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).*

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Local Member Wilmington – Local Member, Alan Cecil

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary: This report considers the proposed disposal of former Rowhill Primary School, Stock Lane, Wilmington, Dartford DA2 7BZ

Recommendations:

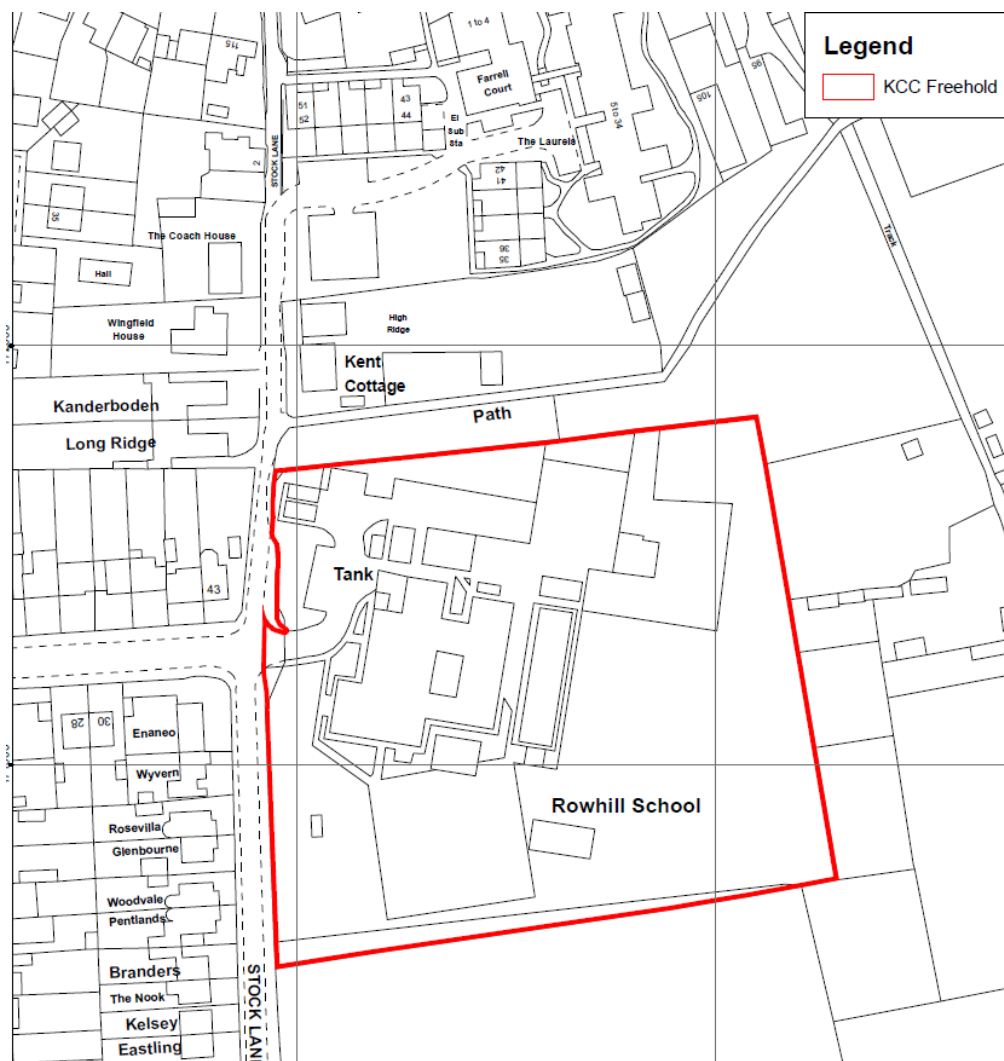
The Deputy Leader is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations on the proposed decision to agree to:

1. the disposal of former Rowhill Primary School, Stock Lane, Wilmington Dartford DA2 7BZ; and
2. to delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to finalise the terms of the disposal and execution of all necessary or desirable documentation required to implement the above.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report considers the Council's intention to sell the former Rowhill Primary School, Wilmington, Dartford DA2 7BZ.
- 1.2 The property is located in Wilmington, a village approximately 2.4km south of Dartford.
- 1.3 In terms of transport links, the site is 2.5km southwest from Dartford Train Station (Dartford station is well-served by trains to London terminals and major Kent towns), and approximately 500m from the A2, which links London and Canterbury. High Road, which lies north of the site and adjacent to Stock Lane provides bus services to Orpington and Dartford.

- 1.4 The property which extends to approximately 3.63 acres is currently vacant and comprises of several single storey structures that are in poor condition and need extensive renovation or demolition and rebuild prior to any future use. The school was closed in 2010, following the relocation of the special school and was declared surplus by the Council in July 2013, as it was no longer required for educational purposes at that time.
- 1.5 However, whilst the site was being progressed for disposal, activity at this site was held to enable investigations into whether there was any new education requirement for a new secondary, or special school, which was emerging in the west of the county. It was concluded that this site was not the preferred location for either of these emerging requirements with alternative sites identified. The Kent Commissioning plan sets out KCC's future educational commissioning requirements.
- 1.6 Site plan below shows the redline boundary for the proposed disposal, attached at Appendix B.



- 1.7 Exempt Appendix A includes a full analysis of options with financials included. This information is commercially sensitive.

2. Background

- 2.1 KCC are the freeholders of the property Title Number K408054. The property is currently vacant. The site has been subject to historic planning applications relating to the school on the site. Permission was initially granted in 1972 for use by children with special educational needs.
- 2.2 As set out above, whilst the site was originally declared surplus in 2013, it was held pending consideration as to whether the site was suitable in relation to other educational requirements that were identified at the time. Education confirmed in July 2023 that alternatives had been identified and implemented and therefore the site was not required. During this period, following the COVID-19 pandemic, KCC also received interest on a joint venture basis from a public sector partner, though this has not progressed as it did not meet KCC service requirements.
- 2.3 KCC currently has no requirement to accommodate any other KCC services in this location and in that regard, it is surplus to operational requirements. Given the condition of the site and current planning use, seeking a tenant for the site has been ruled out. The asset has been declared surplus. Continuing to hold the site carries certain safety risks, and security/maintenance cost liability.
- 2.4 Disposal of the asset on the open market is therefore recommended to mitigate further holding risk and cost given there is no other use for it. Given complexities with the site, it is further recommended that it be marketed on an 'all enquiries' basis and any bids assessed against KCC's policies and financial requirements.
- 2.5 The disposal value is in excess of £1m and therefore a Key Decision is required. To avoid delays in the disposal process, mitigating holding risk and cost, this is being sought in advance of marketing.
- 2.6 Pre-planning advice was sought in June 2024 to obtain advice on the principle of residential development comprising of 20 new dwellings from Dartford Borough Council, who are the local planning authority. The principle of development has been considered as acceptable subject to certain conditions being met.

3. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

- 3.1 **Reuse the site:** KCC has no operational requirement for the site.
- 3.2 **Continue to hold the site subject to the existing license in case of a future requirement:** there is currently ongoing costs of approximately £30,000 per annum and no income being received due to the poor condition of the buildings, it would require significant capital cost to reoccupy the buildings. The option for holding as an investment has been discounted as the buildings have minimal rental value in their current condition. KCC has no ongoing requirement to hold the property.
- 3.3 **Disposal of the asset:** A freehold disposal will allow a capital receipt to be generated for reinvestment back into the Council's stated capital priorities as set

out in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and support the delivery of the Council's statutory obligations.

- 3.4 **Recommended option:** A freehold disposal is the preferred option for the site, seeking offers on an 'all enquiries' basis to ensure all potential interest is explored in line with the Council's statutory duties and policies

4. Marketing

- 4.1 Subject to the necessary approvals being forthcoming, KCC will appoint a suitably qualified agent in accordance with KCC's procurement processes to openly market the site in Q4 2025 on an 'all enquiries' basis, to allow any interested parties to submit a bid for the site.
- 4.2 A marketing campaign to advertise the site through various media channels will be undertaken to ensure a wide audience is reached; appropriate due diligence will be undertaken on any bidders by KCC and its agent.
- 4.3 Bids will be appraised in line with the Council's statutory and fiduciary duties, and in compliance with KCC Freehold Asset Disposal Policy and any other relevant Council policies.
- 4.4 Following the formal submission of bids, these will be assessed considering:
- Ability for the purchaser to complete within the proposed timescales
 - Overall price, any pricing caveats or exclusions
 - Any conditionality on the proposals and the deliverability of these
 - Deliverability of the proposals submitted, if they are reliant on the planning process.
 - Funding security
 - Any benefit cost that may be relevant

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The sale of the property will result in a capital receipt which will be reinvested back into the Council's Capital Programme.
- 5.2 The disposal of the property will remove holding costs associated with the site, easing pressure on revenue budgets.
- 5.3 The current holding costs are £30,000 per annum, however, historically due to unauthorised access this has necessitated occasional enhanced security in excess of this.
- 5.4 Further financial information is set out in the exempt appendix A.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 The Council has an overarching duty under Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 to secure not less than best consideration in respect of property disposals. It also has a fiduciary duty to the residents of Kent.

6.2 External legal advisors will be appointed in consultation with General Counsel.

7. Equalities implications

7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken and identified no direct equalities implications arising from the disposal of the site.

8. Data Protection Implications

8.1 As part of this approval process and in the handling of marketing/conveyancing of the site Data Protection regulations will be observed. No data or records are stored on site.

8.2 A Data Protection Implication Assessment (DPIA) screener has confirmed that there are no DPIA implications and that a further DPIA assessment is not required in respect of this decision.

9. Other corporate implications

9.1 This decision will not have any impact on other areas of the Council's work.

10. Governance

10.1 A Key Decision is being sought in line with the constitution and the Council's governance processes.

10.2 In accordance with the property management protocol the views of the local Member have been sought and reported to the Cabinet Member taking the decision - no views or comments have been received.

10.3 Delegated authority is to be given to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to finalise the terms of the extension, new promotion agreement and disposal and execution of all necessary or desirable documentation required to implement the decision.

10.4 The Government has announced plans for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), aiming to abolish two-tier government by 2028. At present, KCC has not received specific guidance from Central Government about how LGR will be implemented in Kent and Medway; further details are expected between May and August 2026. Until directed otherwise, KCC remains responsible for making decisions in the best interests of Kent taxpayers and disposing of assets it no longer requires.

10.5 When the exchange of contracts is approaching, the Director of Infrastructure will consider all relevant factors including financial considerations, any pending LGR decisions, and applicable legislation before finalising any contract agreements.

11. Next Steps and Conclusions

11.1 An indicative timetable for the planned disposal is set out below:

Stage	Timescale
Marketing	Q4 2025
Bid Appraisal	Q1 2026
Exchange of contracts	Q2 2026
Completion of sale assuming unconditional sale	Q4 2026
Completion of sale assuming conditional sale	Q4 2028

11.2 The site has been declared surplus to the Council's operational requirements. In accordance with the Council's strategy of recycling assets to produce capital receipts for reinvestment into capital project priorities, it is recommended that this site is progressed for disposal.

12. Conclusions

12.1 KCC has no operational requirement to retain the site.

12.2 The sale of the property will result in a capital receipt which will be reinvested back into the Council's Capital Programme.

12.3 The disposal of the property will remove holding costs associated with the property easing pressure on revenue budgets.

Recommendations:

The Deputy Leader is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations on the proposed decision to agree to:

1. the disposal of former Rowhill School, Stock Lane, Wilmington, Dartford DA2 7BZ; and
 2. to delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to finalise the terms of the disposal and execution of all necessary or desirable documentation required to implement the above.
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13. Appendices / Background Documents

- 13.1 Appendix A – Exempt Appendix A
- 13.2 Appendix B – Site Plan
- 13.3 Appendix C – Proposed Record of Decision
- 13.4 Appendix D – Equalities Impact Assessment

14. Contact details

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