

By: Director - Operations

To: School Organisation Advisory Board – 11 September 2008

Subject: THE PROPOSED RELOCATION OF GRANGE PARK SCHOOL,  
LEYBOURNE, WEST MALLING TO THE WROTHAM SCHOOL SITE.

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: This report presents the results of a public consultation on the proposal to relocate Grange Park School to a site within the grounds of Wrotham School.

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## **Introduction**

- (1) The School Organisation Advisory Board, at its meeting on 12 June 2008, supported a recommendation to consult on the proposal to relocate Grange Park School to a site within the grounds of Wrotham School. The report is attached as Appendix 1.
- (2) This report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place in June 2008 and July 2008.

## **Background and Accommodation Issues**

### **Grange Park School**

(1) As part of the review and reorganisation of special schools in Kent, Grange Park School was re-designated in 2004 from being a school for 55 pupils with 'Severe, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties' from the ages of 11-19 years, to become a provision for 'Severe Communication Needs associated with a combination of Autism and Severe Learning Difficulties' for boys and girls aged 11-16. The roll remained at 55. Additional places were added to meet the needs of post-16 provision, based at Holmesdale School in Snodland.

(2) There are currently 68 pupils on roll at Grange Park School (April 2008), of whom 53 attend the 11-16 provision and 15 attend the Post 16 provision at Holmesdale. The pupils who attend Grange Park come from West Kent and parts of Mid Kent. A dot map is attached in Appendix 2.

(3) The school is currently based in 1970s single-storey buildings of SEAC construction and is located in Leybourne, West Malling. The buildings are considered inadequate for their re-designated purpose. The site is too restricted to accommodate further mobile accommodation. The needs of these particular pupils require small class sizes and the availability of 'break-out' spaces, together with an outside learning environment and sports facilities.

(4) The site which the school currently occupies is too small to accommodate the facilities which the school requires. Recently, the school's utility services have been

seriously affected by the adjacent housing development. Grange Park provides education for a group of young people who require a highly specialised environment (both accommodation and trained staff) as well as access to a mainstream environment for social and learning opportunities. The links that Grange Park School has made with mainstream schools are very successful but the school's current premises are isolated from other schools. The cost to the Local Authority if this provision was not available would be considerable, with all pupils likely to need out-county provision, as there are no alternatives within the Kent maintained sector.

## **Wrotham School**

3. (1) Wrotham School is a Specialist Humanities Secondary School, which is situated between the villages of Borough Green and Wrotham. The school gained specialist status for humanities in September 2005. Wrotham is a Foundation School which holds its land and buildings in Trust. It has the capacity to admit 726 boys and girls. There were 715 pupils on roll (autumn 2007 PLASC), of which 623 pupils attended the 11-16 provision and 92 pupils were in the 6<sup>th</sup> form provision.

(2) The proposed relocation of Grange Park School onto the Wrotham School site would not affect the operation of Wrotham School, neither would it occupy too much of the school's site. Grange Park School would be a separate and self-contained school with its own headteacher, governing body and staff. Wrotham School's existing site area is approximately 82,511m<sup>2</sup>. The minimum requirement for a school of its size is 51,440m<sup>2</sup>. Grange Park School would require a site area of approximately 11,825m<sup>2</sup>. There is currently a surplus site area of 31,017m<sup>2</sup> on the Wrotham site, more than sufficient space to accommodate Grange Park School in a building with the capacity to accommodate a maximum of 55 pupils.

(3) At the last Ofsted inspection in September 2006, Wrotham School was judged to be 'Good'. More recently, in January 2008, Ofsted carried out a subject inspection of the School's 'Business Education' programme, which was also judged as 'Good'.

(4) Wrotham School is a successful non-selective school, which achieves high results as measured by all the normal indicators. Results have improved steadily over the past few years and that trend is expected to continue. In 2007, 78% of pupils achieved 5 A-C grades at GCSE and 37% including English and maths. Contextualised Value Added (CVA), which is a measure of pupil progress, was high at 1027. Students achieve well in the relatively small sixth form and have an opportunity to broaden their studies as part of a wider Malling Sixth Form Consortium. The achievement of pupils with SEN and AEN are particularly good and CVA for these pupils is slightly higher than for the school as a whole.

(5) The Local Authority has been in discussion with the headteacher and governors of Grange Park School during recent years about the school's location. Other site options have been considered during this period, but they have proved to be inappropriate.

(6) The governing body at Wrotham School agrees, in principle, with the proposal. Considerable thought is being given to the design and siting of new buildings because Wrotham School's grounds fall within the Green Belt.

## **The Proposal**

4. (1) The proposal is to relocate Grange Park School from its existing site in Leybourne, West Malling, into a new 2,000sqm school building on the Wrotham School site during the 2009/10 school year. The new school would be built to accommodate 55 boys and girls from the ages 11-16 and would be designed to meet the requirements of the curriculum now and in the future.

(2) There are three potential locations for the new school on the Wrotham school site. Jacobs Babbie was commissioned to carry out the feasibility studies on all the three locations. At a meeting in May, both Headteachers and Chairs of Governors met with architects to consider the feasibility studies. They identified the site, which lies north of Wrotham school (option 1), as the preferred location as it could be self-contained and would have the ability to expand if necessary in the future. A site map showing the location of Grange Park School is attached in Appendix 3. A site map for the proposed new location of the school is also attached in Appendix 4.

(3) All Grange Park pupils and staff would transfer to the new building.

## **The Consultation**

5. (1) A consultation document, a copy of which is attached as Appendix 5 was circulated according to the County Procedures for Review. This circulation included Local Members, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, local libraries, the Member of Parliament, the Learning Skills Council, the Diocese of Rochester, Wrotham and Borough Green parish councils and head teachers within a radius of 3 miles. Grange Park School and Wrotham School were sent enough copies for all staff, governors, parents and carers to receive one. Attached to the consultation document was a reply form for respondents to express their views. Approximately 2,400 copies of the document were circulated and the document can be viewed on the KCC website.

(2) A public meeting was held at Wrotham School on 7 July 2008. Mrs Valerie Dagger, Chair of SOAB, chaired the meeting. In attendance were Dr Ian Craig, Director of Operations, Mr Chris Jones, Area Education Officer for Mid Kent and the headteachers and Chairs of Governors of Wrotham and Grange Park Schools. Approximately 41 people attended. A summary of the main issues raised is attached as Annex b.

## **Responses to the Public Consultation**

### *Written Responses*

6. (1) The consultation process began on 20 June 2008 and ended on the 1 August 2008. 75 responses were received, of which 72 were in favour, 1 was undecided and 2 were opposed to the proposal.

(2) A summary of written responses is attached as Annex a.

### *Public Meeting Responses*

(3) Summaries of the points, questions and comments made at the public consultation meeting are attached as Annex b.

## **Views of Local Members**

7. (1) The Local Member for Grange Park School, Sarah Hohler, fully supports the proposal. She has been most impressed with the education and support offered by Grange Park School to its students especially since it has been operating for some time on a challenging site. She is therefore delighted that these plans will provide facilities more suited to the quality of education the school provides. Wrotham School is in need of improvements to many of its buildings and facilities and she is pleased that this proposal goes some way to delivering these improvements as well as securing the future of this important and successful local secondary school

(2) The Local Member for Wrotham School, Valerie Dagger, fully supports the proposal and believes that it offers positive benefits for both schools.

## **Views of Local Member of Parliament**

8. (1) The Local Member of Parliament, Rt. Hon Sir John Stanley, endorses the concerns of Grange Park's Headteacher and Chair of Governors regarding the unsatisfactory and unsustainable nature of the school's present site. He considers an early move to a suitable site as imperative and believes that relocation to the site of Wrotham School constitutes the optimum solution to providing appropriate buildings and facilities for Grange Park pupils. He concludes;

"I warmly commend the Kent Local Education Authority for coming forward with this proposal for Grange Park School's relocation to new buildings at Wrotham School, and it has my wholehearted support."

(2) A copy of Sir John Stanley's letter is attached as Appendix 6.

## **Views of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council**

9. The Community Development Advisory Board of Tonbridge and Malling Council has confirmed, without prejudice to the consideration of any future planning matters, its support for the relocation of Grange Park School to the site of Wrotham Secondary School. It stated that Members wished to congratulate Kent County Council on the action taken to secure the relocation of Grange Park School and felt that the proposal would be of benefit to both of the schools involved.

## **View of Parish Councils**

10. (1) **Wrotham Parish Council** fully supports the proposal and commented as follows:

“There are clear education benefits to both parties including collaboration and resource sharing. We note that there are elements of the strategy which have not been dealt with in the consultation thus far and await detail regarding playing field provision and access arrangements for Wrotham School.

Wrotham Parish Council will ask its Planning Committee and advisors to work with the LPA to bring forward a holistic planning proposal for the site that enhances the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is legally robust, given the onerous constraints within the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) and national planning guidance in these highly protected areas.

The Parish Council accepts that part of this process would need to be staged due to financial limitations, but is of the opinion that this can be practically achieved provided there are firm plans, written undertakings and timescales in place. This forward planning will assist school staff members and educational officers to provide a smooth transition through the forthcoming period of change.”

(2) **Borough Green Parish Council** fully supports the proposed relocation of Grange Park School to Wrotham School. It welcomes the addition of Grange Park and its pupils to its local community and applauds the benefits which the relocation will bring to Wrotham School itself in protecting its future.

## **Views of the Governing Bodies**

11. (1) The governing body and staff of Grange Park School are fully supportive of the proposed move. Their comments are attached in Appendix 7.

(2) Wrotham governing body is delighted at the degree of public support for Grange Park moving to the Wrotham School site. They welcome the opportunity to help pupils learn in both schools by sharing good practice. The Governors see this move as one piece in the jigsaw of improving the buildings on the Wrotham School site and are grateful for the community support for this principle and welcome the backing of the Local Authority in bringing site development to fruition in creating our aim of a ‘learning village’.

## **Views of the Pupils**

12. Grange Park pupils were consulted about the move of Grange Park and were asked for suggestions. All pupils expressed interest at the idea of relocation.

## **Views of the Cluster Board**

13. The Malling Cluster Board notes the proposal to relocate Grange Park School on the site of Wrotham School. It is a move supported by the Headteachers and governing bodies of both schools. The Board welcomes the opportunity which this will present for Grange Park to establish itself in a settled base and welcomes the opportunity which will occur for the exchange of good inclusive practice between the co-located schools. This indication of the Local Authority's support for education in the Cluster will be welcomed by local schools.

## **Views of the Area Education Officer**

14. It is clear that there is overwhelming support for the proposal to relocate Grange Park School to the Wrotham School site. This reflects the geographical suitability of Wrotham and the strong educational case for co-locating the schools. In supporting the proposal, Wrotham governors and parents have emphasised their concern that priority must be given to improving and/or replacing the buildings of their school. It has, in the course of the consultation, been generally accepted that KCC does not have the financial resources to do this immediately. However, assurances have been given that every effort will be made to achieve improvements much earlier than currently appear possible through the Building Schools for the Future programme.

## **Transport and Environmental Impact including Community Implications**

15. (1) Pupils who attend Grange Park School currently come from West and Mid Kent. The largest number of pupils come from Maidstone and Sittingbourne. It will be necessary for the Local Authority to provide transport for these pupils.

(2) Traffic to Wrotham Village and the school site should not increase greatly as a result of Grange Park being relocated. The existing entrance to Wrotham School will be redesigned to include a drop-off zone for parents of pupils from both schools. This will reduce the impact of traffic congestion on the neighbouring residents. The times of the start and finish of the school day are different for the two schools and could be further staggered if a problem of traffic congestion emerged.

(3) The new school would be required to produce a school travel plan.

## **Resource Implications**

### *Capital*

16. (1) The capital costs of building the new school will be in the region of £5m. It is expected that the funding to facilitate the new build would come from the Special School Review budget. There will not be any costs involved in acquiring land from the Governing Body of Wrotham School. Discussions are taking place about future improvements to the Wrotham School buildings in recognition of the provision of land for Grange Park School.

### *Human*

(2) All Grange Park staff and pupils would transfer to the school at its new site and it is not anticipated that job contracts would be affected.

### *Revenue*

(3) There are no anticipated immediate increases in revenue costs.

## **Equality Issues**

17. (1) The new provision will ensure that appropriate educational opportunities are available for this group of disabled pupils who live in the west of Kent. Boys and girls are admitted to Grange Park (although the incidence of boys with this need is greater which is reflected in the gender balance within the school).

(2) The proposed new site at Wrotham School would provide students with access to their full educational entitlement in purpose-built facilities.

## **School Improvement Implications**

18. At the last Ofsted inspection in June 2007, Grange Park School was judged as being 'satisfactory'. More flexibility in class organisation would allow the school to demonstrate improved progress following a 'streaming' and 'stage not age' approach to grouping, where disruptions to learning could be minimised by use of break-out rooms. Ability grouping can raise expectations of the most able pupils.

## **Proposed Timetable**

19. If it is decided that a public notice should be issued in respect of this proposal, the following timetable is likely to apply:

Issue public notice	End October 2008
End of representation period	Late November 2008
Decision by Kent County Council	December 2008
Adjudication <i>if required</i>	Early 2009
Implementation (earliest date)	1 September 2009

**Recommendations**

20. The views of the School Organisation Advisory Board are sought on the issuing of a public notice to relocate Grange Park School from its existing location at Leybourne, West Malling to the site of Wrotham School.

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Maidstone, Tonbridge & Malling  
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The Local Members are Mrs Sarah Hohler and Mrs Valerie Dagger

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*Background documents:*  
'Education & Inspection Act' 2006

**Annex a**

**PROPOSED RELOCATION OF GRANGE PARK SCHOOL TO THE  
WROTHAM SCHOOL SITE**

**Summary of Written Responses**

Consultation documents distributed 2,400

	<b>Support</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Total</b>
• Parents of children at Grange Park School	7			7
• Members of staff at Grange Park school	16			16
• Governors of Grange Park school	5			5
• Pupils of Grange Park school				
• Parents of children at Wrotham school	25	1	1	27
• Members of staff at Wrotham school	7			7
• Governors of Wrotham School	4	1		5
• Pupils of Wrotham school				
• Other interested party	8			8
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>75</b>

**In support of the proposal:**

Opportunities for developing social inclusion and awareness of pupils at both schools (11)

Opportunities for staff development for both schools (1)

Opportunities for collaboration between the two schools – general (7)

Opportunities for collaboration between the two schools – educational (4)

Excited by the design of the proposed (option 1) building / sensitively attuned to the local environment (6)

Support for option 1 (2)

Consideration should be given to option 3 (1)

Unsuitability of current Grange Park buildings (4)

Unsuitability of Grange Park's current location / pupils unable to engage with local community (2)

Opportunity to provide Grange Park with purpose built premises to meet the specific needs of its pupils (6)

Concern that the buildings of Wrotham School need to be improved / replaced as a matter of urgency (9)

Concern about possible traffic congestion (3)

Concern that the education of Wrotham pupils should not be disrupted during building work (1)

Importance of the two schools remaining independent and having their own facilities (1)

Importance of continuing high level of communication to parents and pupils throughout the development of the project (1)

Opportunity of enlarging Grange Park's intake to accommodate more children (1)

#### [Against the proposal:](#)

Concern that the buildings of Wrotham School need to be improved / replaced as a matter of urgency. Concern about traffic congestion. General sense that more incentives need to be offered to Wrotham School (1)

Nothing further should be ratified regarding this proposal until written commitment, with significant financial provision, has been given to Wrotham School and governing body for improvement and development of the Wrotham School buildings (1)

#### [Neither for nor against:](#)

Concern about possible traffic congestion (1)

**Annex b**

**PROPOSED RELOCATION OF GRANGE PARK SCHOOL TO THE  
WROTHAM SCHOOL SITE**

**Summary of points raised during the Public Meeting held on 7 July 2008 at Wrotham  
School**

<b>Issue or Comment</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>Redevelopment of the Wrotham site</b>	
<p>Grange Park is in desperate need for new facilities. The move would be fantastic for Grange Park. But what about Wrotham? Its buildings are appalling and a total rebuild is needed as soon as possible. KCC has spent money on rebuilding money the Malling School, but nothing on Wrotham. Is there anything that KCC can do about the redevelopment of the Wrotham School buildings?</p> <p>What planning is taking place to ensure that a project to improve the buildings of Wrotham School is able to be delivered at the earliest opportunity?</p>	<p>The Local Authority recognised that an ideal solution would be to inject money into Wrotham School, however, funds were currently limited for this kind of project. Government had taken back funding and control of buildings budgets, money was now allocated and released through the Building Schools for the Future programme (BSF). Wrotham School would be rebuilt officially in 2018 under BSF. However, the Local Authority offered assurance that Wrotham School would be high on the list for redevelopment, whether the school decided to agree to the Grange Park relocation or not.</p> <p>A process had already begun for Governors to start working closely with Robin Colyer, Area Planning &amp; Development Manager.</p>
<p>Wrotham School was considered some time ago as a possible location for Grange Park School - what has changed?</p>	<p>A change in political thinking had meant that the Local Authority was now fully committed to the project.</p> <p>An open invitation was given to anyone who would like to visit Grange Park School.</p>
<p>Who benefits from the sale of the Leybourne site? Where does the money go and how is it distributed?</p>	<p>The Grange Park site did not belong to KCC it used to be a hospital. The school site was currently leased and KCC would therefore, receive only negligible receipt/funds when the site was handed back.</p>

<b>Impact of traffic</b>	
<p>The Wrotham site is a highly protected site which sits within the Green Belt and a site of outstanding natural beauty. Concern was raised about the increase in traffic, speeding HGV lorries, the landsite at Borough Green and Celcon development. Proposals need to be seen regarding improvement in access, road calming and speed controls.</p>	<p>Regarding road conditions, when schools are built or extended, planners will always consider traffic volumes and flow, access to premises and road safety.</p>
<b>Social Inclusion / welfare of pupils</b>	
<p>Concern was raised that Wrotham School pupils were not displaced or their education disrupted.</p>	<p>The Local Authority had the needs of Wrotham school pupils at the forefront of their planning.</p>
<p>Pupils who attend special schools would benefit greatly from this type of collaboration as it would help improve their social interaction skills.</p> <p>It was emphasised that not all children on the Autistic spectrum have behaviour problems.</p>	
	<p>Tribute was paid to both Chairs of Governors for their drive, passion and commitment to the relocation.</p>

## **APPENDICES:**

Appendix 1	SOAB 1 paper
Appendix 2	Wrotham school dot map
Appendix 3	Grange Park site map
Appendix 4	Wrotham site map
Appendix 5	Public consultation document
Appendix 6	MP, Sir John Stanley's, letter
Appendix 7	Grange Park Governing Body letter