

SCHOOL FACES A BOMBSHELL ALTERNATIVE

WALLINGTON Independent Grammar School finds itself faced with two alternatives this week as the result of a council decision—move or close.

The school—only one of its type in the Borough of Sutton—is faced with these dire alternatives because Sutton Council want to build an old people's home on their Stanley Park-road site.

Only reference to this matter in the council minutes is by way of "numbers 10, 12 and 14 Stanley Park-road, Wallington". There is no mention of the school by

name. For that reason the council's decision has gone un-noticed by parents and Press until now.

Although the council say the school knows that the land is designated for local government purposes, news of the possible closure will come as a bombshell to most parents. With Sutton Council in the throes of going comprehensive, Wallington Independent is the only independent grammar school in the borough which teaches up to GCE A level standards.

Ideal

Sutton Council argue that the move is necessary because old people's homes are badly needed in the borough. This week Mr E. W. Trimmer, deputy director of planning, said that the Wallington Independent site was "ideal" for an old people's home because it was near a health clinic and also close to shops.

He said that the council had

already had informal talks with the school about their plans. The land had been zoned for local government purposes for many years so the move would not come as a complete surprise.

The Social Services department say that the home will have to be built by 1974 for it is to replace St Anne's Home, Redhill—due to close early that year. Work would take about 12 months so presumably the Wallington school will have to vacate their premises early in 1973—which could mean closure at the end of next term.

Coun Keith Martin, chairman of the Social Services committee, said on Tuesday that there was no question of the council forcing closure upon the school.

A shock

"It's an ideal site for an old people's home," he said. "As far as I know the school governors are willing to negotiate."

The council's proposals have, however, come as a shock to those few parents who have tumbled to the council minute. Two we spoke to said it was the first they had heard of any proposal to move or close for a home.

When we went to press the headmaster at Wallington Independent, Mr H. P. Hopkins, was away on holiday and could not be contacted.

Wallington Times 13.6.72

Head hits back at threat to school

AFTER THE BOMBSHELL announcement that his school could be faced with closure because of a council decision, the headmaster at Wallington Independent Grammar School this week criticised Sutton Council officials for failing to tell him of their plans.

He is now trying to get a meeting with them.

Last week we reported that the council wanted to build an old people's home on the grammar school site in Stanley Park Road, Wallington. On Friday headmaster Mr H. P. Hopkins said that our report was the first he had heard of the council's plans—which

means that the school may have to close or move within the next year.

"It puts me in a ridiculous position," Mr Hopkins said: "This year looked like being a boom year. Parents are getting fed up with the High Schools. Their children have been allocated to schools they don't like and they just won't have it. They're coming to us."

The school is unique to Sutton in that it is the only independent grammar school in the borough which teaches up to GCE A level standard. Its future is in doubt because of a council decision to site an old people's home there. The Social Services department have indicated that work on this will have to start in 1973.

Mr Hopkins is hoping that the council will offer the school an alternative site on which to build. He is critical of the fact that the council did not contact him with news of their proposals particularly as they will have to be implemented very quickly. He says that he was not contacted when the land was designated for local government purposes; and in fact only found out two years after the decision was taken and it was too late to do anything.

They said that an announcement appeared in the local press and that was all that was necessary. Personally I should have thought that as headmaster I should have been included in any decision that would affect the future of the school."

Closure of school

Wallington Independent Grammar School is to close on July 13—to make way for the old people's home that Sutton Council want to build on their Stanley Park-road site.

In a letter to parents, headmaster Mr H. P. Hopkins said it was with "great reluctance" that he had to announce closure. There was no logical alternative but to comply with the council's wishes.

There are about 120 pupils at the school.

Wallington Times
27.4.72

Head tells why school will close

by TIM WATKINS

THE district's only independent grammar school for boys is to close in July. The shock news was confirmed this week by the headmaster.

Parents are now faced with the difficult task of finding alternative places for the 120 boys at the school — Wallington Independent, in Stanley Park Road.

The headmaster, Mr H. P. Hopkins, emphatically denied reports that he is to fight the closure.

The school site was designated for local government purposes soon after the war. Now the borough council have announced they need it for an old people's home.

Mr Hopkins, after discussions with the council, has agreed to sell them the school.

In a letter to parents he says: "I had no logical alternative than to face up to the realities of the situation and to consent to the site of my school being acquired...."

"It is, therefore, with great reluctance that I am forced to cease my educational activities as from July 11."

Mr Hopkins, who founded the school 36 years ago, owns the freehold of the site. He has agreed on an undisclosed price with the council.

He told me: "It came as something of a surprise to hear that the council wanted the school site. But I have known that this was likely to happen for years and I have to face facts.

"I have absolutely no intention of fighting against the closure of the school — and reports that I would fight have caused considerable worry and concern to parents."

The seven masters at the school will have to find new jobs. But Mr Hopkins will retire.

Boys attend Wallington Independent from a wide area, including Sutton, Croydon, Merton and parts of Surrey.

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