Gillotts

A Gillotts School Communication—1st May 2014

The Gillotts Renewal Project: A Vision
'Great facilities for a great school'

As described in the covering letter for this consultation, the Gillotts governing body is considering selling a part of the school's land to raise money to invest in improving the school's buildings, grounds and sports facilities. Here we explain what we are considering and why.

Gillotts is a great school. We provide excellent teaching and learning, as shown by last summer's exam results. They were our best ever and put us in the top 26% of schools in the country in terms of progress students make.

But these excellent results are not matched by the quality of the school's buildings. The school was built in the 1960s and the buildings are not in the greatest shape. As the governing body, we want to ensure that Henley's community secondary school has the facilities it needs and deserves. We have many exciting ideas for what we would like to achieve. Some of them are set out below.

A new, larger hall

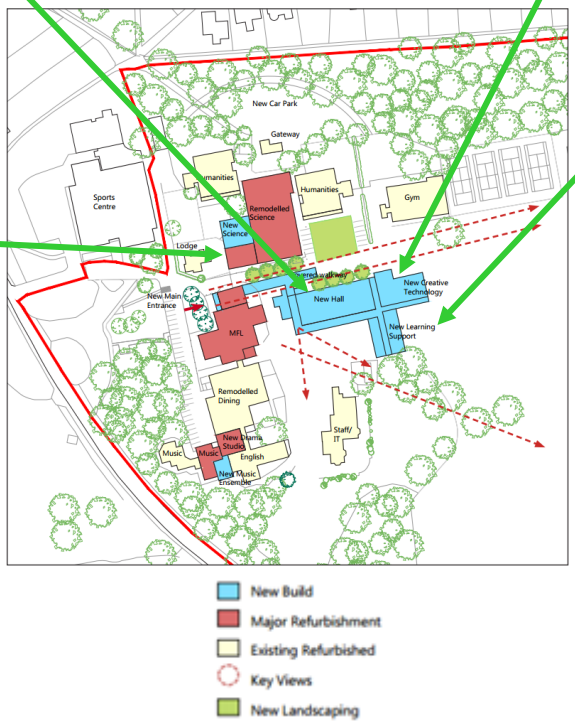
A new hall would have flexible, retractable seating. It would accommodate a full year group, even if the school gets a bit bigger. It would provide an exciting space for performance art, as well as giving us a much needed practical space for assemblies, parents evenings, exams. etc.

A new, Creative Technologies Centre

Today, IT and Computing are important for every subject. In a new Creative Technologies Centre, we would look to integrate teaching facilities for Computing with Food Technology, Textiles, Art and Design and Resistant Materials to give students the skills they will need in tomorrow's competitive world.

Refurbished buildings

We would like to extend and completely refurbish the science block, including adding two classrooms. We could then re-organise the school to co-locate teams of teachers, improving collaboration and developing professional expertise. We would also like to centralise the music department, add practise rooms and enhance the facilities for dance and drama.



A new Learning Support Centre

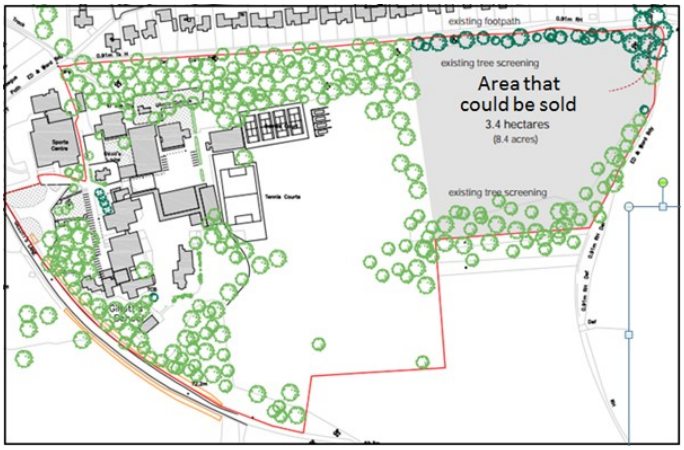
We would like to create a settled and settling environment which will enable the school's more vulnerable and disadvantaged students to achieve their full potential.

Improved sports facilities

We would like to re-arrange the school's sports facilities to make better use of our playing fields. We would like to increase the flexibility of our sports provision by adding a flood-lit all-weather multi-use games area (MUGA) .

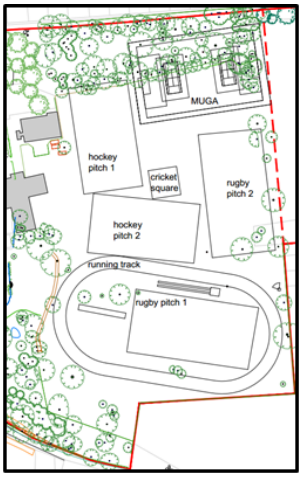
These are some of the 'big, new things' we would like to do but there would be other less obvious changes that would also make a difference. For example, all the buildings would be re-furbished to bring them up to modern standards. And we would want to make the most of Gillotts' really inspirational site. Opening up the views across the valley and moving the Reception would improve the 'Gillotts experience' for staff, students and visitors.

This sounds expensive—how will you find the money?
As you may know, the South Oxfordshire District Council core strategy calls for a total of 400 to 450 houses to be built in Henley and Harpsden. We have offered a part of our site, shown on the right, to the plan. It has an area of about 3.4 hectares (8.4 acres) which is about 25% of the school grounds. With a low density of 25 houses per hectare, it could accommodate 80 to 85 homes. We believe that selling this land would raise enough money to let us implement many of our ideas.





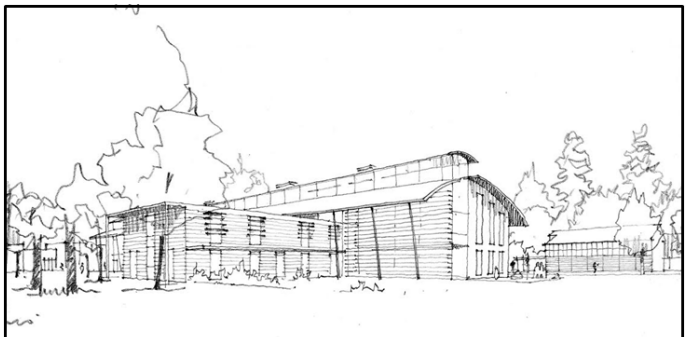
Summer pitches



Winter pitches

How will selling land affect sport at the school?
This was our first concern. Gillotts is rightly proud of its sporting heritage. We agreed that we would only sell land if doing so would not reduce the school's sports facilities. We have found that, because we do different sports in summer and winter, we can provide the same sporting facilities as we have at present on less land. In addition, we would plan to have one of the pitches as a flood-lit, all-weather, multi-use games area (MUGA). We would continue to have access to the leisure centre, giving us better overall sports facilities than we have now.

The school's land is very precious and you can only sell it once. Is there really no other way to raise the money?
Over the years, we have continually looked for money to improve the school buildings. Since becoming an academy, we have had more than £600,000 from the Academies Capital Maintenance Fund. But this is mostly money to keep the school going. To make a real difference, the school needs millions of pounds, not hundreds of thousands...and we are convinced there really is no other way to get it.



Conceptual drawing of a new hall and learning support centre



What about the students who will be at the school while all this work is going on?
We agreed that we would only consider a renewal plan if it could be carried out without affecting the education of the students at the school while it was going on. By planning the work over three years, and doing the critical projects during the summer holidays, we could ensure it has minimal impact on students in the school. And by phasing the work carefully, we think we could deliver some benefits very quickly e.g. the MUGA could be available within a few months of starting.

So this is our vision for the future of Gillotts as Henley's community secondary school. Please let us know what you think by participating in the consultation.