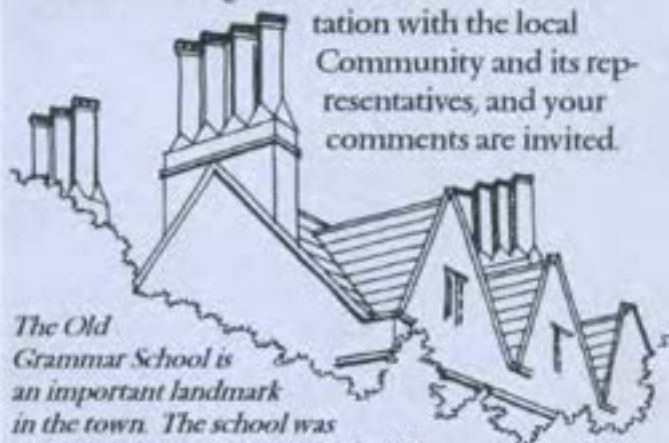




COWBRIDGE OLD GRAMMAR SCHOOL A Strategy For The Future

This leaflet summarises the findings of a study which considers a number of options for the repair and reuse of the Cowbridge Old Grammar School. The Study was commissioned in 1995, by the former Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council in association with the former South Glamorgan County Council and the Vale of Glamorgan Buildings Preservation Trust. The study was undertaken by Niall Phillips Architects Ltd, and was completed following discussions with many individuals and organisations in the town. The Vale of Glamorgan Council now seek consultation with the local

Community and its representatives, and your comments are invited.



The Old Grammar School is an important landmark in the town. The school was founded in 1608. The existing buildings were constructed between 1847 and 1852 to the design of the architect John Prichard.

The Background

Cowbridge Old Grammar School is an important landmark which lies at the core of the Mediaeval town. It is a Listed Building Grade 2* which means that the architectural quality of the building is outstanding. The study aims to fulfil the following objective:

“To identify a new use or uses for the Old Grammar School, its grounds and adjacent sites which secures its future as one of Cowbridge’s most important historic buildings, and which make a positive contribution to the cultural, educational, social, economic and environmental benefit of the town’s community.”

The Study Area

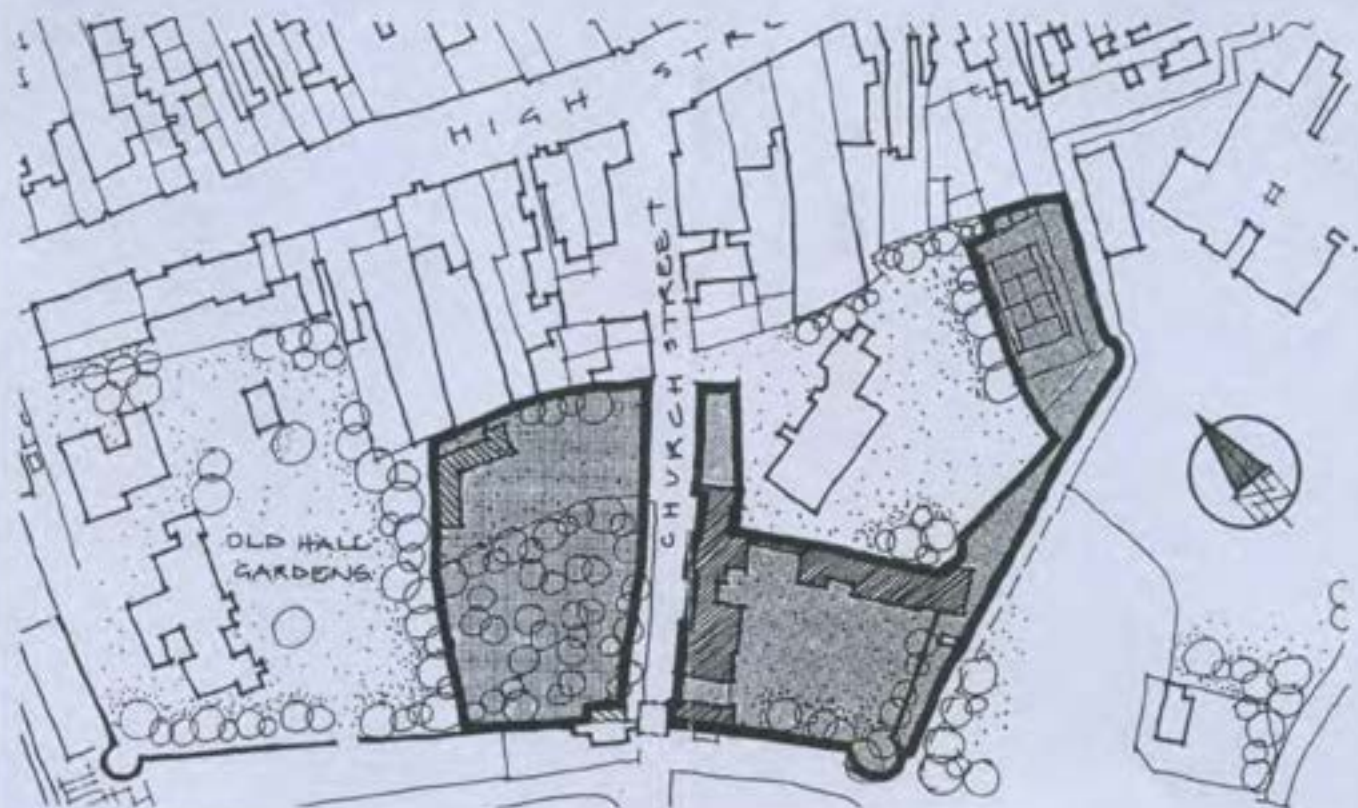
The main focus of the study is the Old Grammar School, its gardens and ball court, the adjacent tennis court, and two sites in Church Street known as the Depot and the Walled Garden. All have been transferred to the Vale of Glamorgan Council, and it is likely that each will have a contribution to make towards resolving the future of the Old Grammar School.

Problems and Constraints in Finding a Strategy

The main fabric of the building remains in good repair, but water incursion has caused local damage inside. Temporary measures to provide cover to open areas has been provided.

The consultant has sought to identify the constraints and problems which may be associated with any proposed re-use. These are:

- ***Historic Buildings Legislation:***
This is applied to ensure that the important historic features of a building are retained.
- ***Physical Constraints:***
The form and layout of the building is complex.
- ***The Charity Scheme:***
There are two restrictions placed on the buildings which currently limit the uses to which they can be put.



THE STUDY AREA:

The consultant was asked to consider the opportunities for the enhancement of the area around the Old Grammar School.

- **Vehicle access:**
This is restricted and limited to that which can be gained from Church Street.
- **Costs and Funding:**
The new Council has very limited finance to develop a full programme of repair and restoration.
- **Existing Users:**
The Depot requires relocation.

galleries, studios and meetings. However, there is limited parking and though internal space is generous, none is suitable as a performance area.

- **A Museum or Heritage Centre:**
The buildings are well placed to house a local collection in association with other uses.
- **Community use:**

Strong demand for more communal facilities in the town has been expressed. In addition, Holy Cross Parish Church has no church rooms or facilities for social and community activities. In providing space for the associated activities of the Church, there is an opportunity to enhance its setting too, providing restricted access for wedding and funeral cars.

- **Office Use:**
Small office suites may be viable.

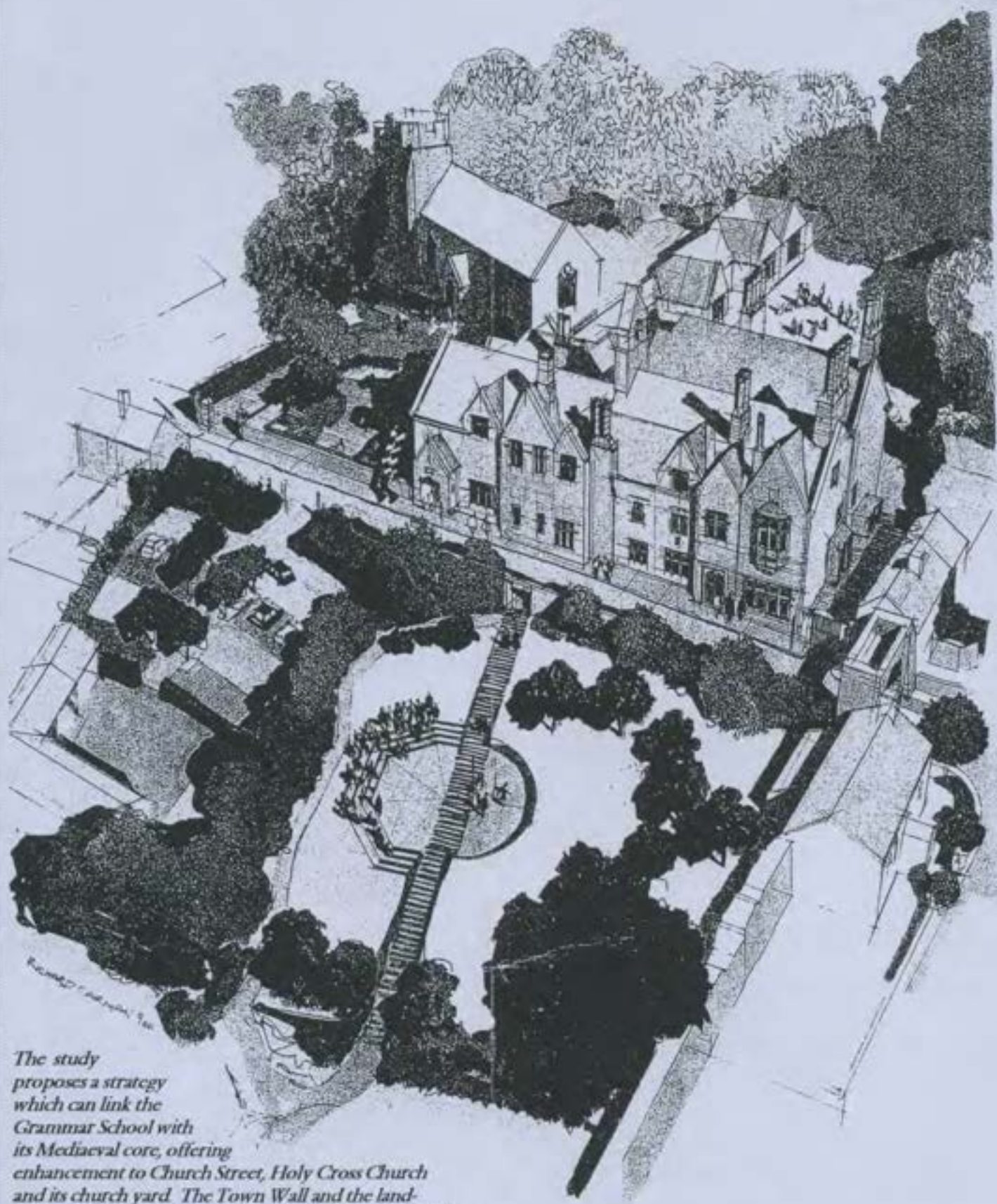
- **Educational Use:**
The buildings were originally built for this use, however they are not considered suitable for modern day educational needs.

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Potential Uses and Users

In seeking uses for the buildings and land, the study has sought those which may have community benefit and local involvement. A number of uses have been assessed. These are:

- **A Residential Use:**
1 or 2 bedroom flats which can accept limited off site parking and shared garden areas could be accommodated
- **An Arts or Crafts Centre Use:**
The site is well located in the town and Vale and can offer a variety of internal spaces for



The study proposes a strategy which can link the Grammar School with its Mediaeval core, offering enhancement to Church Street, Holy Cross Church and its church yard. The Town Wall and the landscaped setting provided by the Twt Park and Old Hall Gardens are all enhanced. The Walled Garden is restored and retained for use as an outdoor performance area for the local community.

The options explored fall into two basic strategies: a multiple use strategy, and a single use strategy. Each strategy seeks to enhance the wider environment around the Old Grammar School. This includes the town wall, the walled garden, the church and church yard, and beyond, the Old Hall Gardens and the landscaped areas around the river and the Twt Park.

.....

The Proposals

The Multiple Use Strategy promotes the conversion and subdivision of the Old Grammar School into two or three compatible new uses with a predominantly local orientation and community benefit.

A Single Use strategy requires a new use, e.g. an arts or crafts centre of sufficient substance to justify the conversion of the building to provide a single new facility. The size of the building group suggests that this is likely to be of regional or national significance.

.....

The Consultant's Recommended Option

The Study recommends a Multiple Use Strategy and sets out an overall framework for the Old Grammar School and its setting in the town. This includes enhancements to the church and its approach from Church Street, the landscaping of the Walled Garden and its use as an outdoor performance space. It identifies the links that can be established through to the Old Hall Gardens and the footpath to the east of the town wall which runs through to High Street.

.....

Summary and Recommendations

The Old Grammar School provides Cowbridge with a unique opportunity to create a new focus for the town and local community. The Study recommends the transfer of the buildings to a Buildings Preservation Trust who may seek the grant aid and funding necessary to achieve the repair of the building. The Trust could then pass

on its interest to a number of end users, including the Church, Housing Association or residential users, and others such as the local museum, who can complete the conversion.

The Study recommends that the Walled Garden is retained by the Vale of Glamorgan Council and is landscaped and incorporated into the Old Hall Gardens.

Steps must be taken to protect and secure the future of the Old Grammar School. The findings of the feasibility study present a number of options which can be examined further once detailed proposals are known and agreed.

The Council now seek your views on the proposals put forward.

Further Information

If you would like more information on the proposals put forward, please speak to the officer in attendance or contact the Principal Planning Officer (Conservation) at the address below, or on telephone No. (01446) 704628 or 704626

Your Elected Representatives for Cowbridge are:

Cllr John Baty
Cllr Ray Davies
Cllr Hilton Hughes

A copy of the Report is available to read at the Dock Office in Barry, and at the Cowbridge Branch Office at 79 Eastgate, Cowbridge. Both are open during normal office hours.

Your comments on the proposals are invited, and should be addressed to:

*The Director of Economic Development,
Planning, Transportation and Highways,
Vale of Glamorgan Council, Dock Office,
Barry Docks, Barry CF63 4RT.*

For receipt by the 17th of June 1996.





Cowbridge Grammar School

PUBLIC MEETING

Monday 1st April 1996 at 7.30 p.m.
Cowbridge Leisure Centre

Concerned citizens of Cowbridge and the Vale are urged to attend the above Public Meeting called by the Cowbridge Action Group to discuss:-

This meeting is arranged for you to express your views, ideas and solutions

- Saving the old **Grammar School** building, which is rapidly decaying, so it can be returned to viable public uses;
- Securing a **conservation plan** to protect Cowbridge and Llanblethian from future major developments i.e. a supermarket;
- Obtaining **proper** school buildings so that 400 children can be educated in decent conditions instead of 50-year old "temporary" classrooms.

**If you care -
come and make it known!**

If you know someone without transport who wishes to come along, please help them with a lift!



IMPORTANT - please bring this leaflet to the meeting

Grammar School could become international arts centre - Trust

COWBRIDGE could become a major international centre for the arts - if one of the proposals outlined in the feasibility study commissioned by the Vale Council into the possible uses of the old Grammar School come to fruition.

The study, which was undertaken by leading architect, Niall Phillips, also outlines a number of other possibilities, such as a mix of residential accommodation and community use.

But for such a major project to take place the Grammar School would first have to pass from the Vale Council to the Vale of Glamorgan Buildings Preservation Trust, an independent body set up in January 1994 to deal with the kind of problems currently facing the Grammar School.

Feasibility study

As a charitable trust and a private limited company, the VGBPT is ideally situated to attract the funding from local and central government and the Lottery needed to save the derelict building and give it a new community role.

Both the Chairman of the Trust, retired architect John Clemits and Trust Secretary, engineer Andrew Tomlinson, have seen the feasibility study and are excited by the conclusions arrived at by the architect.

"Outside of the Millennium funding for a new National Stadium in Cardiff, Cowbridge Grammar school could attract the largest amount of Lottery funding for any project in South Wales," said Andrew Tomlinson.

The Trust have formally written to the new Vale County Borough Council to arrange a meeting to discuss the transfer of the Grammar School to the Trust. Any agreement reached between the Vale Council and the Trust would be temporary, with

the Grammar School reverting back to Council ownership at a later date.

Mr John Clemits added: "It has to be said, speaking from the Trust's experience, that the responsible councillors and officers of the Vale Council did as much as they possibly could, bearing in mind the apathy they were experiencing from South Glamorgan County Council and the fact the school was not legally in their ownership.

Firm intention

"Measures taken by the old Vale Council included the authorisation of remedial and repair works, and the installation of a security guard in an attempt to prevent further vandalism and damage to the fabric of the building.

"The feasibility study, paid for by the Vale Council and in which the Trust was involved, has now been completed and it is the firm intention that when the study has been considered by the newly elected councillors of the Vale that it should be put on exhibition and public comments invited."

Both Mr Clemits and Mr Tomlinson believe that if the covenant restricting the school to educational use only is not lifted, it would make saving the Old School almost impossible and prevent the kind of proposals made in the feasibility study from being implemented if funding from the local authorities' education budget are not forth coming.

'The Revue'
April 1996

Fight to save Grammar School continues

MOMENTUM continues to grow in the effort to save Cowbridge Grammar school with the local Action Group attracting support from the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and Save Britain's Heritage.

The campaign has also attracted the attention of prominent people with an interest in architecture. A meeting with the Charity Commission has also been organised and is due to take place early next week.

The Action Group is still unhappy with the response from the local council, said Mr George Haynes, a leading member of the Cowbridge Action Group: "The response from the new Vale authority is at least disappointing. The people of Cowbridge know what needs to be done and have made it plain to the Council. They do not need further prevarication. They want to see immediate steps taken to put some tarpaulins in place to protect the inside of the Grammar School from further damage."

Anyone wishing to contribute financially to helping save Cowbridge Grammar School can do so at any of the following shops, making cheques payable to Cowbridge Fighting Fund: Keith Brown Printers, Fine & Evans, Treharne Dry Cleaners, Chamberlains, Davies's Newsagents and Roddam Travel.

As the GEM went to press the Vale Council confirmed that action to cover the holes in the roof of the Old School would be taken as soon as possible.

Survivor from another era

John Carr takes a look at Cowbridge Old Grammar School, a landmark in the town

UNWILLINGLY, with shining morning faces, and creeping like snails, we have all as whining schoolchildren gone to school.

Few, however – save those of a particular political bent – would admit to having been “traitorously corrupted by the erection of a grammar school”.

Even fewer, despite painful memories of bamboo discipline, would willingly applaud the decline of the inky buildings in which they suffered the agonies of comprehension.

While some such venerable institutions survive in their originally planned use, the majority have been comprehensively replaced.

Survivors tend to imprison the scions of the wealthy or traditional, whose concern for human well-being or the happiness of their offspring takes second place to the presumed value of comfort-deprivation in the instilling of learning in young heads.

One neglected survivor is Cowbridge Old Grammar School, a handsome, secluded and inward-looking establishment whose Tudor style by John Prichard (also designer of the first renaissance of Llandaff Cathedral) belies the present Victorian buildings of 1849-1852, but is presumably reflective of its foundation in 1608.

It is a landmark in the town, adjacent to Holy Cross Church, Gilbert de Clare's 13th Century Town Walls and the Old Hall Gardens.

So far, it has not suffered from inappropriate encroachment, save for the inevitable municipal works yard, but its condition is declining at an ever-worrying rate.

Now the Vale of Glamorgan Buildings Preservation Trust (BPT) has emerged, in conjunction with previous and successor local authorities, as a potential saviour of the fine but landlocked collection of buildings.



LANDMARK: Cowbridge Old Grammar School has found a potential saviour for its 'fine but landlocked collection of buildings'

The obligatory feasibility study has been produced, and a distinguished piece of work it is. Barely a brick or a prospective end-user has escaped the consultants' meticulous and thorough attention.

Yet to define a use for such a large complex is a daunting task, despite interest shown by a housing association, arts societies and the church incumbent.

Money is essential, as the costs of the various options range from £1.8m to £2.3m for conservation and adaptation of the structures alone, before the costs of acquisition, furnishings and such possibilities as exhibitions, as well as that scourge of listed buildings, VAT.

Here is an obvious candidate for the exercise of imagination by those

who distribute the gains – ill-gotten or otherwise, depending on your viewpoint – from the lottery, and a willingness by them to support the social, artistic, sporting or charitable uses to which such an important heritage asset may be put.

A well-polished technique by the early enterprise and development agencies that sprouted following the decline of primary industry in the 1970s and '80s was to identify two principal aspects of a project: the total estimated cost of doing what was envisioned, and the sources of potential grant aid.

Armed with such information, the imaginative analysed the benefits or otherwise of aggregating elements into one scheme or deliberately disaggregating them in order to make

or take maximum advantage of what grant schemes were available.

That legitimate approach is conceivably applicable to ensuring the future use of the Old Grammar School, without the Buildings Preservation Trust's having to scrape around for so-called partnership or matching funding, save if the option of involving the private sector is pursued.

Fortunately, the more enlightened lottery distributors no longer look askance at 90 per cent – or in some cases 100 per cent – funding, though the case must be strong and as defensible as de Clare intended his township of 13th Century Cow-

bridge to be.

Whether the townspeople of Cowbridge recognise it or not, the school is an inescapable landmark of such importance that to pass by on the other side while it declined into rubble would be to deny its value to each of them as residents of a distinctive community.

It would cause them to regret its passing, and their willing co-operation with and acceptance of the Vale BPT's courageous vision would avoid such sorrows.

Perhaps more importantly, survival of the school's buildings represents an opportunity to provide for today's community needs, which would be “traitorously corrupted” if this piece of heritage were not saved for a new and useful reincarnation.



Partnerships

The OGS will work with others in partnership. It is important that others see the OGS activities as complimentary and in fact beneficial to their own. These would include the local hotels and restaurants who will benefit from the additional visitors.

The intention is to work alongside the existing activities at Old Hall for training and education.

Specialist partnerships will be sought such as the Jane Hodge/John Groom organisation for the handicapped, the St Donat's Art Centre and the Glamorgan Festival for artistic activities.

Support

The plans for the Old Grammar School have already attracted the support and/or patronage of a number of people and organisations. These include His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, His Grace the Archbishop of Cardiff, both the local Westminster MP and the European Member of Parliament, the Save Britain's Heritage organisation, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Prince of Wales' Trust, the Victorian Society.

Most importantly of all, at a Public meeting attended by nearly four hundred Cowbridge people, carrying proxies for another six hundred, an overwhelming endorsement was given for a local solution to save the Old Grammar School.

"...supported by the Prince of Wales"

Ambitions

- ❖ To save the Old Grammar School building and enable its viable and lasting use for the local community.
- ❖ To provide a centre for training, education and entertainment.
- ❖ To bring the Old Grammar School building alive again.
- ❖ To preserve the tradition of four centuries of learning and respect the wishes of the original benefactors.
- ❖ To create a 'Centre of Excellence' for the Vale of Glamorgan.
- ❖ To create a number of new jobs and bring additional visitors to the town.
- ❖ To guarantee the physical future security and well being of the building for all time.



OLD GRAMMAR SCHOOL, COWBRIDGE

Further Information

The Cowbridge Old Grammar School Building Trust,
P.O. Box 34
Cowbridge,
Vale of Glamorgan,
CF71 7UZ

Tel : (01446) 772415 & 772325
Fax : (01446) 773095

"Centre of Excellence"

COWBRIDGE OLD GRAMMAR SCHOOL



BUILDING PRESERVATION TRUST

History

In 1607, Sir John and Sir Edward Stradling of St Donat's castle, founded the Cowbridge Free School. It was a revolution in education, bringing to the local children the opportunity to learn at a time when the acquisition of knowledge for ordinary people was actively discouraged.

Later it was to become the celebrated **Cowbridge Grammar School** and designated a "Beacon of Learning". The powerful statesman, Sir Leoline Jenkins, took charge of the school in 1684 and, in conjunction with Jesus College in Oxford, education continued there for nearly four centuries.

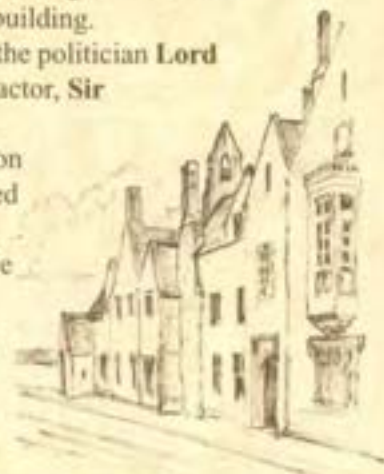
In 1847 the original building was replaced by the current one. Designed by John Pritchard, it is described as 'Victorian Tudor' and is a place of great charm, situated in Church Street in which are a 13th/15th century church, a 16th century inn, two 16th century cottages and the South gate of the Norman town walls.

The **Old Grammar School** richly deserves its Grade 2* classification, making it the town's most valuable historical building.

Former pupils include the politician **Lord Geoffrey Howe** and the actor, **Sir Anthony Hopkins**.

As the town's population grew and educational need evolved, the building became no longer suitable for its original purpose.

Today it stands empty, badly in need of both attention and a new life.



"...the town's most valuable historical building"

There is now the opportunity to preserve the building and to restore its use as a place of learning.

Cowbridge people have set up the **Cowbridge Old Grammar School Building Trust** (or **COGS-BT** for short).

A plan has been produced for the building to be repaired and refurbished as a Centre for **Education, Training and Entertainment**.

The main thrust of the plan is that the operation of the Centre will be self-financing in providing a range of activities involving both the local community and visitors to the town.

∞ The Restoration ∞

To guarantee the highest standard of restoration work, **COGS-BT** has secured a Joint Venture partnership with the **Buildings at Risk Trust (BART)**.

BART is the most experienced organisation of this kind in the country with nearly four hundred similar projects successfully completed.

Its Board of Trustees include:

Tom Lloyd, Chairman of Historical Buildings Council for Wales; the **Duke of Grafton**, President of the Architectural Fund and President of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings; **Lord Montagu**, past Chairman of English Heritage; **Sir Patrick Cormak MP**, Chairman of the all-party Parliamentary Arts & Heritage Group; **Jeremy Benson** and **Dr R.W. Brunskill**, both former Commissioners for English Heritage.

∞ The Plan ∞

The Old Grammar School (OGS) building will contain :

- ◆ A **theatre** for lectures, conferences, drama and concerts, to seat eighty people
- ◆ A **cinema** to seat eighty people
- ◆ Four small **meeting rooms**
- ◆ A **language laboratory**
- ◆ A **restaurant and bar**
- ◆ Twenty **twin bedded rooms**

The use of the building will be maximised so as to make it self funding as soon as possible. Various activities have been planned. These will include:

Training & Education

- ◆ Firms and other organisations using the facilities for in-house seminars.
- ◆ Training in modern languages for career development or simply enjoying a foreign holiday.
- ◆ Vocational and Adult training.

Recreational

- ◆ Theme breaks and mini-holidays to cover a variety of subjects, including art, antiques, literature, music, astrology, garden design, wine appreciation, etc.
- ◆ Courses in computer sciences, writing, patchwork and quilting, etc.

Entertainment

- ◆ Cinema programmes for the young (Saturday morning cinema) and for grown-ups.
- ◆ Concerts of classical and modern music.
- ◆ Group and one-man shows.

Home Grown Entertainment

- ◆ The **OGS** will also be used for entertainment organised by the local community, such as the choral, drama and operatic societies.
- ◆ Other local meeting groups and societies will be able to hire the facilities, thus resolving the problem of the shortage of such venues in the Town.

There will be residential, weekend and summer school events as well as those lasting a day or a few hours.

Residential courses will also have places for those members of the local community wishing to attend on a daily basis.

The aim will be for the revenue-producing events to help subsidise the local activities, so that economic hire rates can be achieved for the less well-funded local organisations.

Secondary Education

Cowbridge Comprehensive School has neither a lecture hall, nor a language laboratory, nor sound-proof rooms for music practice.

To allow the **OGS** building to continue the four century-old tradition of teaching children, it is proposed that the school make use of these resources.

Special Needs

Cowbridge has neither a purpose built Youth Centre nor a Day Centre but it has both young and elderly citizens.

The **OGS** will organise activities to interest specifically both of these groups.

The **OGS** will also cater for the handicapped in ways that will provide for their needs but will also allow them to participate in the general activities.

...*"nearly four hundred similar projects successfully completed"*

"self funding"

"catering for the needs of the young, the elderly and the handicapped"

School land not sold for store – say governors

CLAIMS that governors at Cowbridge Comprehensive School had voted to sell a sports ground and that it could figure in plans for a supermarket in the town were hotly denied this week.

In a letter to The GEM on May 7 a correspondent wondered if surveys conducted outside the Mason's Arms in Cowbridge and other surveys at cricket and rugby pitches were connected to the possible Waitrose development, alleging that governors had voted to sell the cricket pitch.

Mr Martin Blamey, chair of the school governors, told The GEM this week: "Your correspondent makes several assertions which are quite wrong. Although the writer admitted that they had failed to confirm the identity of the surveyors, unfortunately that did not prevent he or she from speculating as to the surveyors' purposes and drawing conclusions which, as far as the school is concerned, are entirely untrue.

"It would seem that the correspondent was unaware that the land used by the school for cricket is held in trust and is managed by the Vale of Glamorgan Council. Therefore, the governors have no power to sell the land to anyone."

He was supported by Vale councillor, Hilton Hughes, who said: "I have sought explanations from

officers of the council and I have been assured that the surveyors were not working for the council."

He added that Waitrose and the Vale Council have signed an exclusivity agreement, which allows the company to have information it needs to help decide whether to place a planning application. This agreement allows Waitrose to carry out surveys for their own information.

"Consequently, it seems likely that the surveyors were working for the agents employed by Waitrose," added Coun Hughes, "Clearly the very serious issue of traffic can only be properly addressed if reliable, factual information is available, so a survey of the road junction is an essential part of the process."

Coun Hughes attributed Waitrose's intention of designing a store to fit in with the area as an explanation for the surveys on the sports pitches.

"As for any adjacent land, belonging in part to the Cowbridge Grammar School Trust and in part to the Vale Council, Waitrose's stated intention of seeking to design any store in such a way as to harmonise it with the neighbourhood is surely the explanation. They have, after all, promised to mount a public exhibition of their proposals."

Coun Hughes said that a recent presentation by the Keep Cowbridge Special group had been received and was being given serious consideration. The council is now waiting for Waitrose to present their case.

14 | 5 | 1998

Thursday June 25th, 1998

D EDITOR'S POSTBAG

Cowbridge School: 'Separate site an advantage'

Dear Editor

I AGREE with Tessa Shellen's letter (GEM Letters, June 18) about the "depressing record of miserable investment in education in Cowbridge". However, I strongly disagree with the scheme put forward by the governors and senior teachers, covered in the same edition of The GEM in a news item by Don John.

The scheme is to combine Cowbridge lower and upper comprehensive schools into one school at the upper school site on Aberthin Road.

This may seem like "an exciting plan" and while I can see the advantages of new buildings and of teachers travelling around one site, there are many disadvantages for Year 7 and 8 pupils.

These include having to share facilities with all the other years in the upper school. The present canteen isn't big enough and the possibilities of intimidation and bullying can only increase. Also, there is the value of specialised teaching for two different age groups, which is enhanced through separate schools.

I was a pupil at Cowbridge Comprehensive School for seven years; two years in the lower school, three years in the upper school, and two years in the sixth form. The system served me well, with excellent headmasters in both upper and lower schools.

The school's academic success has always been despite the condition of its buildings and, I believe, one of the reasons for its success is its separate sites.

Wouldn't it be far better if the Vale of Glamorgan Council replaced the lower school buildings and actually invested some money on education in Cowbridge?

Yours sincerely

Mr J A Hailes, West Village

'Fund move with cattle market sale'

Dear Editor

WITH reference to your front page report in last week's GEM concerning the proposals to move the lower comprehensive school in Cowbridge to the main site at Aberthin Road, perhaps some of the funding for new buildings could come from the payment received by the Vale Council when the cattle market is sold for development - instead of the money disappearing into projects for Barry again!

Maybe the health and welfare of Cowbridge children and their teachers could receive priority on this occasion.

Yours sincerely

Mrs K Roberts, Cowbridge

Lower school a bridge for comp' pupils

Dear Editor

AS an ex-governor, ex-parent of Cowbridge Comprehensive, and a teacher, I wish to make the following comments on the proposal to close the lower school:

- In terms of child development, the existence of the lower school fits in with the concept of the 'middle school' and 'community school' philosophy, which matches the psychological and physical maturing of the child and acts as a 'bridge' between primary education and the advent of public examinations at 16.

- The old South Glamorgan County Council offered a similar deal to the then governors, which involved £1 million to rebuild on the Aberthin Road. This proved to be inadequate unless

a) the lower school site was sold for development and

b) the school playing field next to the cattle market was sold.

After prolonged discussions, a compromise was reached, which culminated in the construction of the new teaching block in the middle school. All this is a matter of public record as, in my time as governor, the minutes of meetings were lodged in the local public library.

I note with interest that, according to The GEM, a builder/architect is providing his "services" to the school and the school thinks fit to spend its resources on buying a feasibility study.

Incidentally, isn't it proposed to build a Waitrose on the cattle market site next to the school field?

Yours sincerely

Tim Buchalik, Cowbridge

THE COLUMN YOU WRITE

Readers' Letters

• WE reserve the right to edit all letters. We do NOT accept anonymous mail, though we will protect a writer's identity, if requested. Please keep your letters brief and address them to: The Editor, Gem Newspapers Ltd., Graig House, 53 Eastgate, Cowbridge CF71 7EL

Cowbridge single school plan is principal priority

MANY of you will be aware that the governors have for some time been actively pursuing solutions to the long-standing problems created by the totally unsatisfactory condition of the buildings on the Lower School site.

At the governors' annual general meeting held on June 24, the governors presented outline proposals for the construction of new buildings on the Middle School site which would accommodate all the pupils who are currently being taught in Lower School.

However, as most parents were unable to attend the meeting the other evening, I am writing to you directly to explain a little more about the governors' proposals.

You might imagine that any organisation which occupied three sites on two sides of a town divided by a busy trunk road would present quite testing problems for its management! Managing three separate 'schools' presents special difficulties which the staff and children have to deal with every day.

In September this year, we will be welcoming 220

This open letter is being distributed to parents by
MARTIN BLAMEY,
Chair of Governors at the
crisis-hit Cowbridge
Comprehensive School

new pupils into Lower School – a record intake! This will bring the total number of children on the site to approximately 430, which is an increase of 50 children in three years. Naturally, the governors have been especially concerned with the safety issues which arise from having to accommodate all these children in decaying buildings on what was already an overcrowded site.

Particular issues include the movement of staff and children on to and off the site. Anyone who has witnessed the cavalcade of buses, cars, pedestrians, mothers with pushchairs etc, all trying to manoeuvre along Town Mill Road each morning and afternoon, will appreciate that this presents a very hazardous situation for all concerned – including the residents from the area.

And then there is the 'hidden' cost of maintaining the schools' separate buildings. To enable us to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum, our split-site configuration necessitates the duplication of several specialist classrooms such as laboratories, gymnasias, technology areas etc. We also have to 'double-up' on ancillary services such as cleaning, catering services and caretakers.

The governors conservatively estimate the additional cost of all this to be approximately £30,000 – money which, we feel, would be better spent on additional teachers and resources.

However, the governors are aware that young pupils arriving at a new school require a very caring and secure environment, especially in their first year. Special consideration has been given to this in our new proposals by providing for a separate 'base' for new Year 7 pupils which will include social and play zones, toilets and locker areas solely for the use of these children.

The new plans, if approved, will also ensure that children in both Year 7 and Year 8 will benefit greatly from access to high quality specialist facilities and additional opportunities which we are currently unable to provide, given the very restricted facilities on the Lower School site.

Whilst drawing up our plans, the governors were mindful that, in the professional judgement of the staff, the academic and social development of the children would be progressed more effectively if they did not have to undertake a 'second transfer' up to Middle School at the end of Year 8 – just two terms before the children sit their national SAT tests at the age of 14.

For all these reasons, at a special meeting last February, the governors agreed that the unification of the school on a single, enlarged site was the principal development priority for the school.

Nevertheless, we would welcome your views on any of these matters. Please feel free to contact the school if you wish to express support, or have any concerns or anxieties about the way in which our plans might affect your child.

'The majority prefer split school site'

Dear Editor

WITH interest and concern I have read the reports of Cowbridge School in crisis. Also the upbraiding of parents for non-attendance at the last governors' meeting by Mrs Vaile (GEM, July 2).

It is not apathy, political dogma, complacency, or conflicts of interest which prevent the majority of parents 'coming out' on this issue. It is pure, logical common sense.

The majority agree with the previous correspondent's views on the value of a split site. The children are not presented with a faceless, overwhelming mass. Instead, they are welcomed by a non-bullying, non-threatening, caring and established regime of gradual integration.

Yes, some of the Lower School buildings need refurbishment. They have for years had to manage with hand-me-downs from the Upper and Middle schools to furnish the inside. (Not surprising, then, if facilities there lag behind somewhat.)

Contrary to reports bandied about, however, the children are not taught in rain-soaked classrooms. The recently refurbished roofs provide excellent cover. The combination of gas and electric provide adequate heating, both of rooms and water and the classrooms comfortably house the existing class sizes.

The rapport among staff is enviable and emanates its worth to pupils who are taught in a congenial and caring atmosphere.

The sports facilities of the Lower School are superb. The gymnasium is of enviable quality and the sports fields benefit the whole community. Only a few years ago, an all-weather cricket pitch was installed; there are two rugby pitches, a running track, hockey pitch, all extensively used – mostly by the Upper and Middle schools! Their own facilities are somewhat lacking by comparison.

The Middle School is beset by roof leaks, drain malfunctions (the new building closed after an embarrassingly short time due to sewage spillage – inside) and vandalism.

Yes, the Lower School buildings need refurbishment and painting. But, they are sound and a valuable place in which to teach our children.

The majority of parents are not apathetic. They would prefer to see a maximum influx of money to keep the excellent teaching levels high and conditions adequate. Let common sense prevail, along with the high standard of education we have come to expect.

Yours sincerely
S McLucas, Cowbridge
(Former pupil and concerned parent)

School should be grant maintained

Dear Editor

I WHOLEHEARTEDLY agree with Tessa Shellen (GEM Letters, June 18) saying that Cowbridge School should not be "the poor Aunt Sally of the Vale".

However, no-one has mentioned that the school could have been allocated a substantial sum of money for its building programme if it had changed its status to grant maintained.

Both Stanwell and St Cyres in Penarth did just this and obtained millions of pounds for their building programmes.

Regardless of one's politics, if becoming grant maintained meant hugely improved facilities for our children, why was the matter never given serious consideration?

Even Tony Blair and Harriet Harman overcame their scruples to put their children first and their politics second by choosing the best schools for their children, regardless of what kind of school that was. Surely our children's future and education should be beyond politics?

If the governors and all concerned wanted the best for the school, they should have put this option to parents.

I feel, as a parent, I should have had a say in the matter. If it's not too late, perhaps the school should now consider changing its status and thereby not remaining reliant on the whims of local politicians.

We should all be involved in ensuring that our children receive the same chance and enjoy the same kinds of facilities as the two grant maintained Penarth schools.

Yours sincerely
A concerned parent

9/7/1998

Cowbridge is still the Cinderella with no political will

Dear Editor

A LONG with a disappointingly small proportion of fellow parents, I attended the meeting called by the governors at Cowbridge Comprehensive School recently.

It was clear that a great deal of work had been done on our behalf by the governors and staff. They were responding positively, not only to the demands of the Government for improvements in standards of attainment by pupils, but also in trying to tackle the appalling accommodation problems on the three sites.

We were given a costed redevelopment programme for the replacement of the rotting third-hand portacabin classrooms and a vision of what could be achieved. There followed an insight into the real world where the priorities of 'Education, Education, Education' were supplanted by a school budget of staff and resources cuts and a reduced maintenance budget for the already neglected and sub-standard buildings.

Where had all the extra Government resources for education gone? There was no explanation, but a strong impression that Cowbridge had yet again been neglected.

Many of us supported the changes in local government structure in the hope that as the distance from the Vale of Glamorgan's offices from Cowbridge was less than that of South Glamorgan County Hall, we would receive more attention for primary needs - such as education in the Vale.

The reality is that Cowbridge School will continue to be the Cinderella because there is no evidence of the essential political will to rectify these wrongs.

Perhaps the large majority of parents who stayed away from the meeting had more to show for their time.

Yours sincerely

(Name and address supplied)

Cowbridge school facing crisis, parents warned

PARENTS of children at Cowbridge Comprehensive School have been warned it is in "dire straits" and urged to support the governors' plan to move the lower school across town to new classroom blocks at the main Aberthin Road site.

Last week the governors reported to a poorly-attended meeting of parents that action could no longer be delayed on the school's long-running problems of physical neglect and chronic under-funding.

The ambitious project has been designed and costed by a civil engineer for submission to the Vale Council, though there is no immediate

prospect of capital funding.

As reported in an earlier edition of The GEM, his phased proposals envisage all 1200 pupils being accommodated for the first time in modern, purpose-built blocks at the main site, which would eventually be developed at a projected cost of around £7.5million.

Meanwhile, one mother alarmed at reports that the school faces a financial crisis which could see staff cuts imposed by the end of the year, has suggested a controversial solution.

She has called for land administered by the governors and the Vale authority in Cowbridge to be sold off to raise funds for the cash-hit school.

(See Page 3).

2 JULY 1998

'Dire financial position' brings call from parent

'Sell off land to give the Cowbridge School a future'

Dear Editor

IT WAS a pity that more parents were not present at last week's Cowbridge Comprehensive School annual parents' meeting to hear the pro-active stance which the governors are now taking regarding the school buildings.

The present governors have officially 'come out' concerning the deplorable state of the buildings and facilities and, I have to add, not before time. Post-inspection driven it may or may not be, but it is refreshing to see a positive, collective, up-front move to address the problems which have beset pupils, staff and Cowbridge community for years.

As a parent of three children at the school, I applaud the moves. However, what is of greater concern in the very short term is that:

- the school is now financially in a very precarious position regarding day-to-day running costs;
- the school has no more monetary reserves upon which to draw;
- the school, because of its dire financial position is, as I understand it, just about able to fulfil its legal obligations regarding the delivery of the curriculum.

What will happen next year? Staff reductions, larger class sizes, further deterioration of buildings and facilities, fewer resources, reductions in academic and value-added standards? The staff and pupils **cannot** and **should not** be expected to have to operate in such a climate.

Something radical needs to be done. But what; and where do we go from here? Boats have indeed been missed - South Glamorgan County Council which should have been blasted out of the water for its apparent scant regard for the school, has since been scrapped; the 'grant maintained' has now sailed away over the horizon and the Vale Council is floundering financially.

There is no time for the school to wait for central Government to reconsider fairer standard spending assessments. So, we appear to be up a creek without a paddle.

Whether all agree or not, the vision of the governing body and the objective of the Vale Council is to house the school on one site on Aberthin Road. This will not happen overnight. The Vale Council purportedly are unable to provide capital funding for the project and this may very well be the case. There are, however, parcels of land within Cowbridge which either the Vale or the governors as trustees hold in trust for the school which could be sold.

It is the prerogative of the respective parties to consider disposing of them. Meanwhile, the existing buildings deteriorate.

From the governors' report to parents we learn that there has been dialogue between the governing body and the Vale Council over the past 18 months, with the initiatives coming from the governors, but really what message is sent to the school community when we read that the director of education and the director of finance were "persuaded" to visit the school to see for themselves the deplorable state of the buildings? Is this to be construed, at best, as disinterest?

The report also states "despite these not inconsiderable efforts (reference representations by the governing body to the Vale Council), the fact remains that two years after the school was inspected, we are no closer to obtaining the necessary funding in order to implement the key issues to the buildings that the OHMCI inspectors identified".

My question here is, are the governors legally bound to act on these problems identified on inspection and if there is no money forthcoming or available from the council or alternative funding agencies, where and to whom do they turn next?

In other words, who is accountable at the end of the day? If they are not legally bound then, in this instance, is the inspection report worth the paper it is written on?

The school is an integral part of Cowbridge life and the difficulties as above should now be a matter for informed public debate and action, not just locally and on a county level, but nationally if need be. Parental support is being sought by the governors and if ever there was a time for the 'partnership principle' to be exercised, this is it. In fact, it should be offered to the whole community where help, support and encouragement could be harnessed.

It is now time for apathy, complacency, political dogma and divisions, and conflicts of interest to be put aside. I would formally like to ask the governing body to agree, at their meeting next month, to draw up a framework for a campaign on these two issues, to which all interested parties can subscribe.

Yours sincerely
Helen Vale, Penllyn
(Cowbridge Comprehensive School parent)

£100,000 spent on old Grammar School

THE old Cowbridge Grammar School building has cost the Vale of Glamorgan Council £100,000 in security and renovation costs since 1996, it was revealed this week.

Security at the site is in operation between 4pm and 8am on weekdays and 24 hours a day at weekends. £30,000 was spent on security in one year alone.

The delapidated Grade Two Star listed building has suffered from vandalism and has been closed to the public for more than five years. Since then, it has had thousands of pounds of repair work lavished upon it.

More recently, in 1997, £20,000 was spent on emergency repairs to ensure the roof was watertight. Around half of that cost was paid with the aid of a grant from Cadw, who are involved with the preservation of Welsh historic monuments.

A survey is currently taking place to assess what else needs to be done to protect the building.

Nick Lloyd, Conservation Officer at the Vale Of Glamorgan Council, said: "The authority is doing everything it can to ensure the building is secure. If the site was unguarded it would be seriously at risk from vandalism."

He added that the building was "in relatively good intermediate repair."

21/1/1999

Safety fears close classes

CLASSROOMS at Cowbridge Comprehensive School were closed last week, over concerns for the health and safety of staff and pupils.

Four classrooms were closed on Friday, January 8, and a further eight classrooms were closed, by Head-teacher Mrs Joan Cowell, immediately following the results of an initial inspection of the first four buildings by a structural engineer.

Mrs Cowell told The GEM: "We are appalled at the condition of these classrooms. My main concern is that the children are educated safely."

She added: "I am not prepared to put up with this any longer; the only reason we have been able to hold things together this long is down to the amazing staff we have here."

An official statement released by Alun Davies, Director of Education and Social Services for the Vale said: "Options to replace classroom space lost at Cowbridge School when four portable cabin classrooms were decommissioned this week were the subject of immediate cross-departmental council talks.

"The portable cabins had developed structural problems. Vale of Glamorgan Council officers, from Education, Housing and Construction and Property Services, on Tuesday, began looking at temporary, semi-permanent and new building options as a solution. Short term measures to utilise space within the main school building,

including library and canteen areas, will enable pupils to be taught for the next few weeks."

GCSE pupil Lynsey Porter said: "It is such a good school, but we are battling against all the odds. Pupils at this school consistently achieve good grades but we have to put up with sub-standard classrooms."

Deputy Head Margaret Evans informed The GEM that some remedial work had been carried out over the weekend and some of the classrooms have been re-opened. However, four classrooms on the middle school site and one classroom on the lower school site are still out of use as The GEM goes to press.

Mrs Evans said that she envisaged that these buildings would not be suitable for use in the short to medium term.

Mrs Cowell said: "I believe three of these huts are beyond repair and we will be actively campaigning to get them removed from the site as soon as possible."

As yet no pupils have been forced to stay at home or miss lessons, however, the necessary closure of these classrooms has caused major disruption to the school timetable and teachers have had to resort to taking lessons in the staff work room, library, sixth form hall and dining hall.

One Year 11 pupil said: "It is the inconvenience that is really a problem. We need all the lesson time we can get so we don't want to be wasting time moving classrooms."

21/1/1999

OLD SCHOOL IS A DISGRACE

Dear Editor

EVERY time I visit Cowbridge, I am appalled at the sorry state of the 200-year-old building which used to house my alma mater, Cowbridge Grammar School. This gracious edifice that produced so many magnificent academic wonders has been reduced to a costly, empty shell.

If it were privately owned, I am sure the powers-that-be would be pressurising the owners to restore it to something approaching its former glory.

However, it seems that when such structures deteriorate in public ownership we must just watch helplessly and

wait for them to fall down.

Yet, money has been allocated, no less than half a million pounds, to erect a new teaching block at the successor to the grammar school, Cowbridge Comprehensive School, some half a mile away.

Surely it is not beyond the wit of the educational authorities to produce an up-to-date school within the walls of the old grammar school building?

Unless, of course, they are so locked on set designs ordained by faceless architects in Whitehall! Like the new £500,000 teaching block in Aberthin Road, perhaps?

Yours sincerely

Derek G Thomas, Brecon

16.9.99

Plaid's plan to move school to cattle market site 'ludicrous'

CALLS by Plaid Cymru to relocate Cowbridge Comprehensive School on the town cattle market site, were met with derision this week by the Vale Council and school representatives.

Cowbridge Plaid members Huw Llewelyn Morgan and Linda Morgan's scheme, which was posted through residents' letterboxes last week, proposed building a new unified school on the cattle market site, re-using the Old Grammar School as a sixth form college and administration centre, and selling the lower school site in Town Mill Road for housing.

They proposed selling the Aberthin Road school buildings to a supermarket chain, setting up a pedestrian footpath between the town hall car park and a subsequent supermarket car park, and abandoning plans to build a new school arts complex near the middle school.

Linda Morgan said: "We have proposed this to raise debate and to get people to think about Cowbridge. The market site, at the heart of the community it serves so well, would be an ideal setting for the new school, and... we feel that this fine school, currently housed on two sites in a motley assortment of buildings, deserves a more imaginative solution."

When pressed as to the plan's financial soundness and possible time scale, Ms Morgan admitted that she did not know the 'nitty-gritty' details, but claimed that the couple had received a positive response from many residents.

Martin Blamey, chairman of the school governors, said: "This is completely ludicrous, as not only have

they failed to consult anyone about their plan, but it is highly impractical.

"There are more than 240 sixth formers in the college and there is no way that you can fit them all in the old grammar school, which would need major refurbishment.

"We already have traffic problems with the buses going to the lower school site, so what would it be like with all the sixth formers' cars as well?"

A Vale Council spokesman also dismissed the couple's plans, claiming that the proposals were "economically unviable".

He said: "The proposal to locate Cowbridge Comprehensive in its entirety on the market site is not achievable, because the site is too small to cope with the whole school.

"What we are exploring is the transfer of trust status from the lower school to the upper school, with a development on the former paying for purpose-built, modern accommodation at the Aberthin Road site.

"We are making good progress in our negotiations with the [school's] Charity Commissioners, but there is still some way to go before we will be in a position to relocate or develop."

A Cowbridge Grammar School Charity Commission spokesman commented: "We are looking, with the unitary authority, to facilitate the more effective use of charitable status."

Chris Franks, leader of the Vale Plaid Cymru party, said: "This is a local issue and the two party members have our support for trying to find a solution."

COUNCIL CUT IN SECURITY

Cover at some landmark sites is due to be reduced soon

By Luke Merlini

luke.merlini@wme.co.uk

SECURITY cover at some of the Vale's landmark buildings is being cut back, the Echo can reveal.

Cowbridge Old Grammar School and the former holiday camp site at Barry Island have been targeted for security cuts by the cash-strapped council.

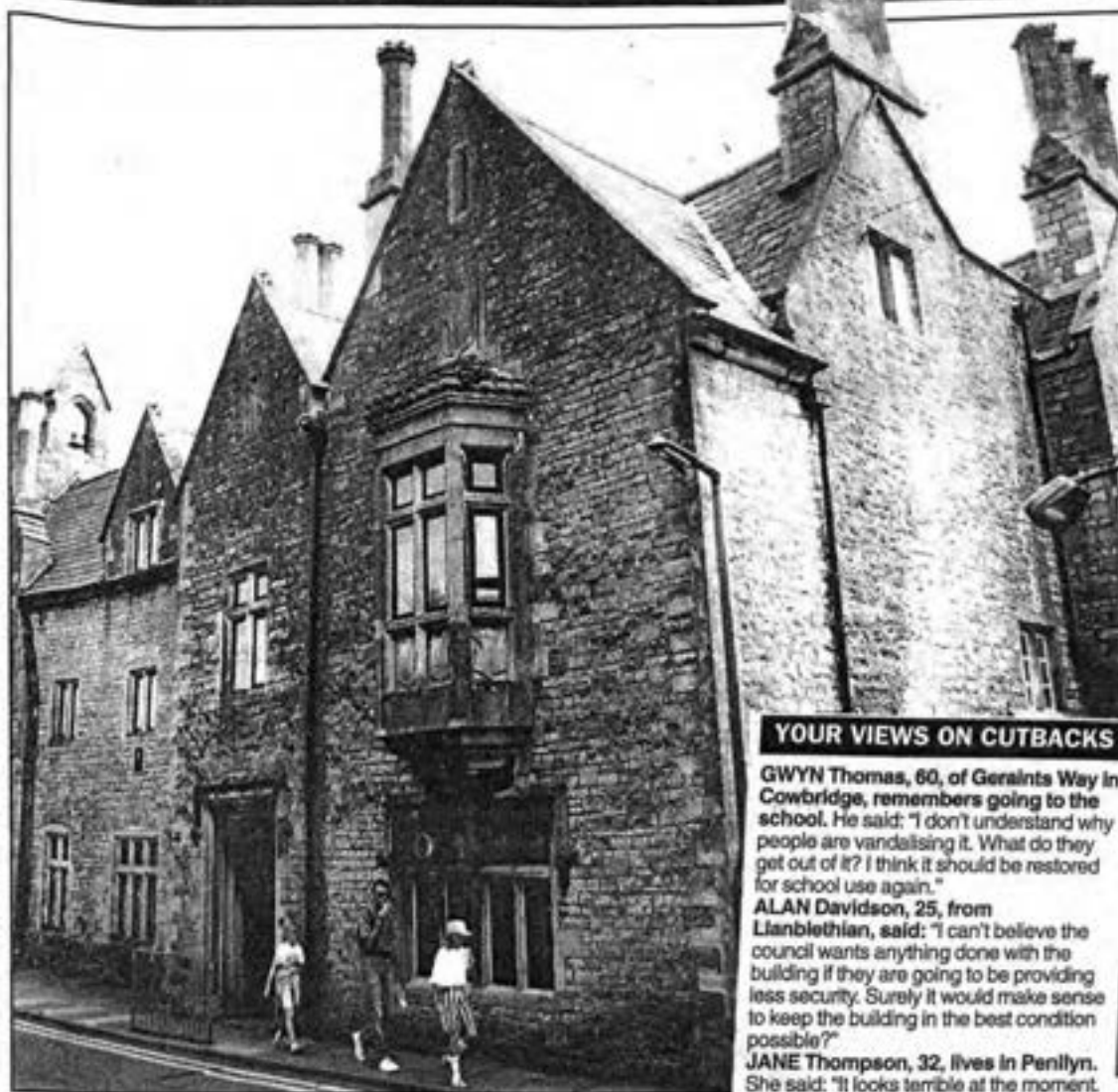
A leaked report has revealed that the council will save more than £50,000 a year by reducing security cover at the two sites.

The saving of £57,149 would be achieved by changing the manning levels at the camp site from a two-man operation to just one security guard – and changing the hours at the grammar school.

The school site is currently guarded for just over 98 hours a week, including constant cover at the weekend. But under the new proposals, the time would be cut by more than a third to just 63 hours a week, with a random patrol on Saturday and Sunday.

Cowbridge historian and author Jeff Alden said he wanted the need for security at the old school to be removed altogether.

"I would like to see something done with the site. That would end the need for security. At the



moment, it is an eyesore but the building is an important part of the Cowbridge townscape."

Cowbridge councillor Ray Davies denied the changes were to save cash.

"We are not doing it for any

cost reasons, we are just trying to change our tactics.

"It was done because it's still being vandalised."

The Vale council has a policy of not commenting on confidential reports.

19/10/00
Echo
▶ **SAVING MONEY**
Cowbridge Old Grammar School has been targeted for security cuts by the cash-strapped council.

YOUR VIEWS ON CUTBACKS

GWYN Thomas, 60, of Geraldts Way in Cowbridge, remembers going to the school. He said: "I don't understand why people are vandalising it. What do they get out of it? I think it should be restored for school use again."

ALAN Davidson, 25, from Llanblethian, said: "I can't believe the council wants anything done with the building if they are going to be providing less security. Surely it would make sense to keep the building in the best condition possible?"

JANE Thompson, 32, lives in Penllyn. She said: "It looks terrible at the moment. I think it should be sold but if the condition deteriorates any further, who would want to buy it?"

SARAH Black, 18, from Cowbridge, added: "It's been closed for years. Something should be done with it but it's a big job and I doubt the council could afford to do anything."

POOR ACCOMMODATION DOESN'T DAMPEN SCHOOL'S ENTHUSIASM FOR LEARNING



LONG WALK: Cowbridge Comprehensive in the Vale of Glamorgan might have one of the best academic records in Wales but this is in spite of its poor accommodation. It occupies three sites and pupils regularly have to walk across playing fields, along a muddy track, under a flyover and through a housing estate to go to lessons and catch the bus home which leaves five minutes after the last bell goes

Comment – page 2; report – pages 4&5

► **MERGER PLAN**
Cowbridge lower
School.

Echo 11/12/00



ONE SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

THE two sites of Cowbridge Comprehensive School could be merged, if plans released by the Vale of Glamorgan Council are approved.

Although plans are still in the early stages, the Vale council is hoping to release both the site of the lower school itself and the nearby cricket pitch for development. The council has been in contact with the Cowbridge Grammar School Charity Commission, which owns the site, and valuations are currently taking place.

At present, the lower school site caters for 434 pupils, while the larger middle school has

Councillor welcomes site merger proposal

By Luke Morlini

luke.morlini@wme.co.uk

875 pupils - including the nearby sixth form building. If the proposals are accepted, the school could be based on one site - at the middle school on Aberthin Road - for the first time in more than 30 years.

Cowbridge councillor Ray Davies said: "What we've got to do is use the money from the

sale - it will be ring-fenced - to be used at the site on Aberthin Road.

"I'm in agreement with this, so we can have the whole school on the one site.

"It's got to be easier to control."

But MP John Smith said he would not back any moves to sell off the cricket ground.

He said: "I support the sell-off of part of the site, which I

believe is a progressive move.

"Disposing of open space such as the cricket pitch which is used by the public is something I will certainly oppose."

A spokesman for the Vale council confirmed: "The Middle School site is deemed to be more appropriate, in terms of location and in light of existing facilities, to meet the educational aims of the charity."

A spokesman for the Charity Commission said: "The combined sale and exchange of the charities' property will release charitable funds for education in the area, as well as ensuring the future of Cowbridge Comprehensive School."

No decision for Cowbridge

School's future still hangs in the balance

1971

THERE has still been no decision as to what role Cowbridge will play in the field of senior education in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Members of a committee asked to investigate the position of the two Cowbridge schools have not yet reached a decision and will meet again next month. Until last month it

seemed certain that the proposals for the reorganisation of senior education in the Vale of Glamorgan were cut and dried.

BI-LINGUAL

The main feature of these proposals were that all senior education in the southern part of the Vale, including Cowbridge, would

be carried out at a new comprehensive school at Llantwit Major.

The children in the northern part of the Vale would go to a new comprehensive school based on the present Llanharry and Y Pant Secondary Schools.

Buildings now being used by Cowbridge Grammar School and Cowbridge Girls' High School, would be used for the provision of

a bi-lingual school, where Welsh would be the main teaching language.

People in the Cowbridge area, who had believed that there would be no change in the status of the two schools for about ten years, were jolted by the decision to make Cowbridge a centre of bi-lingual education.

This meant that the extinction of Cowbridge as an educational centre was brought much nearer and what had appeared to be a remote possibility a decade away, now became an immediate threat.

The reaction of the people of Cowbridge and district was a swift one.

A committee was set up and produced figures of expected population growth in the Cowbridge area which, they claimed, proved that Cowbridge would be large enough to have its own comprehensive school.

GROWTH

At the March meeting of the education committee, a letter was read from Mr. Brynmor Jones, the Director of Education for the county who stated that circumstances had changed since the preparation of the original proposals.

He expressed the view that in the next 10 to 15 years the population of the area would grow sufficiently to sustain two seven-form entry comprehensive schools, one at Cowbridge and the other at Llantwit Major.

County Ald. P. J. Smith, chairman of the executive who lives in Llantwit Major, expressed the view that the new scheme was absolutely shocking and he had strong reservations about them.

The matter was referred to the executive's staffing and development sub-committee for discussion.

The sub-committee met on April 8, when several minor points were disposed of. But no decision was made on the main feature of the new proposals.

It was decided that the principle of comprehensive education in the Vale area was universally accepted and that boarding at Cowbridge Grammar School should cease.

Further discussions will



THIS CAR was one of the vehicles involved in an accident on the Llantrisant-Cardiff Road, Talbot Green, last week.

Building programme

DETAILS of the schools building programme in South East Glamorgan Education Division up to 1972/73 were given to members of the Divisional Education Executive last week.

Mr. J. G. Edwards, divisional education officer, said that the building of Llantwit Major Primary School should be completed by September.

Turning to the future, Mr. Edwards reported it had been decided to start work on the new Peterston-Super-Ely Primary School and the new school to replace Y Bontfaen Junior School, Cowbridge in 1972-73.

should cease.

Further discussions will take place on May 10, when the members will inspect the sites of both the Grammar School and the High School.

When the sub-committee's report was presented to the full meeting of the executive on Wednesday, it was accepted without any comment being made.

Mr. J. G. Edwards, the divisional education officer, will submit a further report to the meeting of the sub-committee at Cowbridge on May 10.

26/4/01

Cowbridge Grammar School: protests mount over sell-off proposals

ANGER mounted in Cowbridge this week over controversial plans to sell playing fields next to the cattle market, in conjunction with the Old Grammar School site.

As trustee of the Cowbridge Grammar School Charity, the Vale Council has requested the Charity Commission to back new moves relating to the former grammar school land and buildings in Church Street, the town's lower comprehensive school at Town Mill Road and its cricket ground.

A council spokesman said: "The Commission have indicated they

propose to respond to the authority with their preliminary approval, subject to public consultation.

"On receipt of this approval, public feedback will be invited over a four-week period through notices published in the press and displayed locally.

"Any representations will then be considered by the Commission before they make a final decision."

Cowbridge resident, Huw Llewelyn Morgan told The GEM: "I hope many Cowbridge people will register an objection, as a first step to preserving the playing field from development."

The Vale Council feels that the former boys grammar school build-

ing is no longer capable of meeting the aims of the charity and in light of the positive valuation report, Commission approval would enable its sale.

The council spokesman added: "In order to achieve best value for its disposal, the authority will, at the appropriate time, advertise the old grammar school buildings for expressions of interest. A planning brief, prepared by the council as local planning authority, will be available for the information of prospective purchasers."

Another concerned resident, Christian Pederson, said: "Many readers may remember that five years ago there was a great deal of controversy about proposals to sell the Old Grammar School and the threat of a large super-market being built on nearby land.

"Indeed, more than 300 people attended a public meeting called by local residents who expressed their many concerns about these issues.

"Securing a viable future for the Old Grammar School property and maximising the benefit to the charity is an important issue that affects the community as a whole.

"The old school buildings have been left derelict for too long and it's about time positive action is taken to secure their future."

• Anyone who wishes to object to the Charity Commission has until May 11 to do so. The address is: The Charity Commission, Woodfield House, Tangler, Taunton, Somerset TA1 4BL.

PA Hopkins and co

ONE of Cowbridge's more persistent problems is what to do with the old grammar school which sits alongside Holy Cross church.

Long disused, many people are probably unaware that for many years it was a place where generations of schoolboys lived and slept as well as learned.

The atmosphere of that time is revived in a memoir *At Cowbridge Grammar School* by Peter Cobb, who taught there from 1949-1966, just published by Cowbridge Record Society.

He writes, "In any detached view conditions were awful," but he maintains that somehow they developed the character many old boys were to display in later life. That wasn't always clear at the time.

He goes on, "None of us saw the signs that would turn PA Hopkins into the only globally-celebrated expupil of the Grammar School. Sir Anthony Hopkins, actor, film star, knight and Oscar-winner."

Westgate - Western mail 24-7-01

COUNCILLORS DEFEND OLD GRAMMAR SCHOOL MOVES

17/5/01

Dear Editor

AS the three councillors representing Cowbridge on the Vale of Glamorgan Council, we have noted with some concern the recent reports in your paper which have not included the detail necessary to make an informed

decision. We take this opportunity of putting the record straight.

The Old Grammar School has been deteriorating over many years. Previous Vale administrations have worked hard to resolve the problems associated with the charitable status of the land which is dedicated to secondary educational purposes.

When the present Conservative administration of the council was formed in May 1999, the resolution of this long-running sore was given high priority.

A new scheme has been devised which would allow the land in question – the site of the Old Grammar school itself; the old depot opposite the School in Church Street; the site of the present lower school and 3.46 acres of land called The College Field, better known as the cricket pitch – to be exchanged for additional land at the present school in Aberthin Road.

This would enable the Old Grammar School to be released from the constraints which hitherto

blighted progress, and allow the present day school to be enlarged so that all pupils can be accommodated in Aberthin Road. The school governors support these moves.

The Vale's planning committee recently agreed the development brief for the Old School site and the former depot opposite. This brief will ensure the protection of the exterior facade and internal features of merit, together with the town walls, which form part of the boundary.

A decision as to what should be done with the sale of the remaining land would follow when provision had been made at Aberthin Road to accommodate the lower school pupils. This will inevitably take some years.

In our view a sensitive and imaginative development of the Old Grammar School building will bring back to life a sad and decaying area in the heart of this town. The alternative of a further period of decay is too worrying to contemplate.

Yours sincerely
Hunter Jarvie, Catherine Clay,
Geoffrey Cox.

Lack of Cowbridge voices on Grammar School Committee raises concerns

VALE COUNCIL DEFENDS CHOICE OF TRUST COMMITTEE MEMBERS

VALE Council officials this week defended their decision not to place Cowbridge politicians on the Old Grammar School Trust Committee - though Wenvoe, Barry and Penarth members have been chosen.

The committee, which comprises seven members (one from Llantwit Major, one from Penarth, one from Wenvoe and four from Barry), is elected on an annual

basis by the full council and deals with matters Vale-wide.

A spokesman for the Vale Council said: "Representative of all political groups on the council, the Trust Committee was set up to deal with all trustee matters relating to the authority, and not just the Cowbridge issue.

"Councillors on the committee are fully aware of their role as trustees to act in the best interests of the charity."

News that none of Cowbridge's three Vale council-

lors - Catherine Clay, Geoffrey Cox and Hunter Jarvie - is on the committee has surprised some residents, who have called for a town representative to be appointed.

One resident who did not wish to be named, said: "I am astounded - we are talking about a Grade-II * listed building and there is every reason to bring on a representative from Cowbridge."

Mr Mike Bassett agreed, claiming: "There should be two or three people to represent what Cowbridge wants and I can't see how people from Barry and Wenvoe can serve the community."

At a special Cowbridge Town Council meeting, on April 26, to discuss the Old Grammar School Trust, Coun Jon Harris raised the possibility of co-opting a Cowbridge representative onto the committee.

Speaking to The GEM this week, he said: "This is such a major issue of importance to Cowbridge that if

the Vale Council cannot include representation from the town, then they should co-opt a member from Cowbridge."

Coun Jarvie, who was not present at the meeting, was unaware that some residents felt a Cowbridge representative was needed on the Trust.

He said: "It is not a matter that has been brought to my consideration and it is up to the Vale Council to elect the members."

Coun Clay said: "The people who serve on the Trust are non-cabinet members, whereas the three Cowbridge councillors are cabinet members, and it is not at all unreasonable that there should be no town representatives on the Trust Committee."

The GEM was not able to contact Coun Cox for a comment at the time of going to press.

Go-ahead for sale of old grammar school

VALE Council officials this week announced that the proposal to sell the former Cowbridge Grammar School building has been approved by Charity Commission officers.

Meanwhile, negotiations are still being carried out to transfer charitable status of the lower comprehensive school and cricket ground to the middle school on Abertin Road.

A council spokesman said: "Before prospective purchasers are invited to express their interest, an officers'

working group will finalise a planning brief by the Trust Committee.

"The Charity Commission is also being asked to approve a recommendation of the Trust Committee leading to the charitable status of the lower comprehensive school and cricket ground... and this is the subject of ongoing negotiations between the commission and the council."

A Charity Commission spokesman said: "The scheme has been sealed to enable the trustee to sell the charity's property where it considers this would be in the best interests of the charity."

23/8/01

20/5/21

School welcomes sale of grammar

DELIGHTED Cowbridge Comprehensive School governors this week claimed that the decision by Charity Commission officials to approve the sale of the Old Grammar School building would lead to the "consolidation of the middle and lower school buildings."

They also believed that improvement of lower school facilities will be easier if the charitable status of the lower school and cricket field is transferred to the Aberthin Road site, and are eagerly awaiting the commission's decision on this matter (expected within a few weeks' time).

Martin Blamey, chairman of Cowbridge Comprehensive School governors, said: "Last week's decision by the Charity Commission was a very welcome and long awaited develop-

ment which should mark the beginning of a new chapter in the school's history.

"It is to be hoped that matters can now be progressed quickly, which will lead to the consolidation of the lower and middle school."

Mr Blamey, who claimed that the lower school was 63 pupils over the local education authority's own safety estimates, called the situation at the lower school "intolerable" and promised that school management were "determined to provide the facilities that any modern school needs."

Commenting on the Old Grammar School sale approval, a spokesman for the Charity Commission said: "We have carefully considered all the representations put to us by members of the public.

"However... we could not conclude that it would not be in the charity's interest for the trustee to have the power of sale conferred."

LAND SALE DELIGHT ^{12/12/01} FOR SCHOOL

COWBRIDGE Comprehensive School governors were last week celebrating, following the Vale Council's decision to allow an exchange of school lands to proceed.

At a Council Summons meeting on December 5, Vale councillors ratified, in principle, a proposal to swap Cowbridge Lower Comprehensive School and playing field for land and buildings of equal value on the school's Aberthin Road site.

The councillors also agreed to approve the sale, by Chestertons, of the old Grammar School building and tennis court.

Welcoming the news, Martin Blamey, chair of Cowbridge Compre-

hensive School governors, said: "We are delighted that, at long last, progress is being made to resolve issues affecting the old Grammar School.

"We are also delighted that steps are being taken to consolidate the schools into one site."

As part of the arrangement, the Lower Comprehensive School and playing field will be used by pupils until alternative facilities are available on the Aberthin Road site.

The Vale Council has also agreed that it will meet the cost of providing alternative facilities, while an alternative playing field is to be made available at the new site.

20/21 *New plan for old school*

VALE councillors were last night (Wednesday, February 27) set to recommend the inclusion of a tennis court, ball court and landscaped land near the 'Twt' in the development brief for Cowbridge Old Grammar School.

Following the marketing of the site, which includes the former Headmasters' House, the Boot House and the School House, and the 1894 classroom extension, Vale Council officers have recommended that the three new areas also be offered for sale (to be approved at a planning meeting last night).

Vale councillors were also set to recommend the receipt of tenders for the amended site by April 26.

In the agenda for last night's meeting, a Vale

Council officer wrote: "The tennis court... is now included on the instruction of the governing body of Cowbridge Comprehensive School, as custodian trustees to the Sir Thomas Mansel Franklen Trust, while the ball court is now recognised to be needed for use as car parking/servicing in connection with the whole Cowbridge Old Grammar School scheme.

"The land subject of the brief can now be made available for disposal on an open market tender following approval of a new

charitable scheme by the Charity Commission."

The inclusion of the tennis court, ball court and landscaped area near the 'Twt' will cause some concern in Cowbridge, as residents are concerned about the gradual disappearance of areas for recreational use.

Cowbridge Comprehensive School governors, though, need to sell the Old Grammar School site before any plans to move all school-children to an Aberthyn Road site can be addressed.

Old school draws in the buyers

28/3/02

THE old Cowbridge grammar school has been attracting "a huge amount of interest" from potential buyers, since it went up for sale recently.

Erected in 1847 on the grounds of the original grammar school of 1608, the school boasts a fascinating history, counting Welsh actor Sir Anthony Hopkins amongst its former pupils.

Surveyor Caroline Lane, of acting sale agents Chesterton, spoke to The GEM about the sale:

"The old school has been subject to a huge amount of interest, ranging from local entrepreneurs to national developers, and there have already been a lot of viewings. We expect to know who will be buying it by April 26, which is the closing date for the sale," she said.

The Vale Council is responsible for the building and its subsequent sale, but a spokesman declined to comment this week on its future. He agreed, however, that the school was on "a very desirable site."

The For Sale sign is up at the old Cowbridge Grammar School.

