



St George's
WEYBRIDGE

From Michael Davie, Chairman of the Board of Governors

25th November 2014

Dear Parents,

I write to bring you some very exciting news for St George's. Over the Summer, the Governing Body became aware of a rare opportunity. Almost 40 acres of land immediately adjacent to the Junior School had been offered for sale and, following significant deliberation, Governors submitted a bid which was accepted by the sellers, Argent Estates Limited. Following exhaustive due diligence through the School's solicitors, the sale has finally been completed. This is a strategic decision, taken with professional advice and with the active and robust participation of the entire Board, both Headmasters and the Bursar, who overwhelmingly feel it to be in the best long-term interests of St George's.

The extent of the land is shown in the enclosed aerial photograph. Owning the land will protect the Junior School site from unwelcome building or mineral development on its boundary and of course other opportunities may emerge over time. Major building development is unrealistic in the foreseeable future as the land is designated greenbelt and there are a number of other constraints, but we are investigating possible near-term uses for it that would benefit both schools.

One such possibility is whether the land can help reduce traffic congestion around the Junior School. It may, for example, be possible to utilise the private road that we now own to encourage parents to approach from Walton Lane through to Greside Road as a route for a "kiss-and-drop" point, at which, under direction of school staff, upper years children could be delivered in the mornings without the need to park. Other obvious uses include sports pitches and outdoor facilities such as allotments or nature walks. Whilst a kiss-and-drop may be possible in the short term, major changes will necessitate a review of the strategic plans for the Junior School estate and this will take place over the coming months.

In terms of the financial impact, the purchase has been funded from our reserves and is not expected to result in future fee increases or pressure to increase pupil numbers. Furthermore, it will not detract from our plans to deliver tangible nearer term enhancements including our major building programme.

A Q&A about the land purchase is enclosed which is intended to address many of your queries.

I hope you will agree that this is an exciting strategic development for everyone connected with St George's, and I welcome your feedback through the normal means of our email address contact@stgeorgesweybridge.com.

And finally, although it is only mid-November, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a joyous and peaceful forthcoming Advent season.

Yours sincerely,

Chairman of Governors

Enclosures:

1. Aerial photograph: Land Boundary.
2. Land Purchase: frequently asked questions.

A leading independent, co-educational, Roman Catholic day school providing a perfectly balanced education for 3 to 18 year olds.

St George's College
Weybridge Road, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 2QS


Tel: 01932 839312 • Fax: 01932 839311
Email: bursar@stgeorgesweybridge.com

www.stgeorgesweybridge.com

St George's Weybridge. Registered Charity No.1017853 • A Company (2789023) Limited by Guarantee.

LAND PURCHASE ADJACENT TO THE JUNIOR SCHOOL



 Junior School Site

 New Land

ST GEORGE'S LAND PURCHASE – QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Why has St George's Weybridge bought this land?

A. Governors are mindful of their responsibilities as Charity Trustees to be custodians of the long term future and success of St George's. After much consideration, it was felt that the School should grasp this rare strategic opportunity to materially enhance the estate. The Schools are here for the long haul and the conditions today may not pertain in the future. The land provides long term opportunity and flexibility as well as short term benefit and control of our Junior School boundary.

Q. Will the land purchase result in increased pupil numbers?

A. No. The land purchase is not expected to result in an increase in pupil numbers at St George's Junior School or St George's College.

Q. Will School fees go up as a result of the land purchase?

A. No. It is not expected that the land purchase will have a direct impact on fees. The School holds reserves specifically to deal with the unforeseen – to counter threats and to exploit opportunities.

Q. How much did the land cost?

A. £1.5million. To put it in context, this is about what the School spends annually on routine capital works. It is understood that the sellers, Argent Estates Ltd, also received very competitive bids from minerals and other developers and are delighted to be able to sell to the School.

Q. Will the land purchase have an impact on local traffic?

A. Yes, to some extent we hope. A kiss-and-drop is being actively investigated routing parents from Walton Lane through the private lane to a back gate of the Junior School. Parents would then exit via Grenside Road. This will not be a drop off zone allowing parents to park and get out of their cars, but is rather a strictly controlled process in which cars will only pause for a few seconds to allow pupils to get out before moving directly on, because other cars will be waiting behind. Other ideas such as additional car parking will be explored but in general Surrey Highways do not support planning applications that encourage car journeys. The land will therefore not, certainly in the short term, solve the traffic density problem but we hope that the initiative will alleviate frustrations for parents and our neighbours alike.

Q. What uses will the land be put to?

A. A number of uses are being looked into for both Schools, including sports pitches and other sporting provision, outward bound activities, as well as educational and sustainability related initiatives. In the long term, should planning restrictions be relaxed, other options become available.

Q. Will the land be put to any community use?

A. We don't know yet, although we will explore how the land might benefit the local community as well as the School. The land encompasses the access road to Weybridge Health Club and the Weybridge Equestrian Centre at Dairy Farm and therefore the road will be subject to use by third parties. It is currently used for grazing and this will continue in the short term at least.

Q. Is the land subject to flooding?

A. Yes this is likely. The northern section of the land is, like the Junior School's sports fields, in the flood plain and we are accustomed to dealing with this. For many years we have found land in the flood plain to be useable for most of the year, even all year round. Purchasing only part of the land was not an option.

Q. What condition is the land in and is it subject to mineral extraction?

A. The land is predominantly well maintained grassland and contains some ordinary mineral deposits which have been noted in local authority plans. As an educational charity, St George's Weybridge is pleased to gain control of the land but does not have any commercial interest in mineral exploitation.

Q. Why are you buying land rather than improving other school facilities at the Junior School or College?

A. Every year there is a material on-going programme of upgrade and refurbishment in both schools and this will continue unaffected. A long term development plan for the facilities in both schools is already in place and is regularly reviewed to ensure these plans are sufficiently modern, progressive and affordable. This purchase does not impact on these plans. Likewise the current Junior School development programme will continue unaffected.

Q. Why is the Junior School receiving so much investment lately?

A. This is a purchase for the whole of St George's. The opportunity arose unexpectedly, unlike the new building for the Junior School, which is part of the long term School Development Plan. The College received significant investment in 2010 with the building of its new Sixth Form & Humanities Centre and the next major development is also planned at the College. The land purchase is enthusiastically supported by both Headmasters and provides long-term optionality for the whole of St George's.