



FUTURE: Gresham's School at Holt can press ahead with £8.5m worth of improvements after selling spare land for homes.

Picture: ARCHANT ARCHIVE

Housing land sales spark £8m projects

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A trio of housing land sales has unlocked major improvement plans at a north Norfolk independent school.

Historic Gresham's at Holt won a planning battle to use three pieces of spare land for homes to fund its future visions.

Now the plots have been bought by developers Hopkins Homes, and the sale proceeds will fund two school projects costing £8.5m. The first is a new sixth form centre, which will be combined with a music school, costing £5m.

The second is a revamp of the girls' Oakeley boarding house costing £3.5m.

Plans for the housing land were first put in during 2014 and were approved despite 200 objections. The decision was reinforced in March when the plans came back in more detail.

Permission was granted for up to 126 homes on a farmland between Cromer Road and the bypass, and a further 19 and eight on two sports fields off Grove Lane.

Following confirmation of the land sales, headmaster Douglas Robb thanked supporting councils for helping the school move forward with its plans.

The sale of the land was also crucial Gresham's and the school could now progress with its plans for a new sixth form centre and music school.

It would also be able to start work on improving some of its boarding houses with a focus on Oakeley House, last refurbished more than 10 years ago.

Original plans for the sixth form earmarked a site near its Theatre in the Woods.

But school business and finance director James Stronach said there had been a rethink to include a music school and locate it near the Auden Theatre.

The new scheme and Oakeley improvements both need planning permission.



CRUCIAL: Head Douglas Robb says the development plans are vital.

But it was hoped to start work on the sixth form in May next year and have it finished for June 2017. Oakeley work was planned to start in July 2016 and be ready for August the following year.

The housing land sale also had community benefits, added Mr Robb, with more than £630,000 being invested in the local economy with money going towards primary education, health services, buses, highway works along Grove Lane and protection of important wildlife habitats.

A model of the planned Sixth Form Centre and Music School is on display in Gresham's Senior School reception area. Please contact the school on 01263 714500 if you would like to view the model between 9am and 3pm, Monday to Friday.