

Notes from school review workshops

Balerno Community High School: Workshop held on Monday 22 January 2018

The following notes are separated by discussion group and have been categorised by subject discussed. The discussion group notes were taken by different council officers and in some cases by group members. The representations below are as faithful to the original notes as possible. Accordingly, the written approach of the notes taken at each discussion group will vary. None of the notes taken are verbatim. We have not included comments which may identify an individual who is not a Council Officer.

Discussion Group One

Item	Discussion / Comments
Published Proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All in favour of catchment change.• Balerno community have not provided much feedback as they are relatively happy with the Council's proposal.• The route from Currie to Balerno is not a safe route to school.
Summary of Published Proposals:	
Pupils from the Cherrytrees area of Currie Primary School would go to Dean Park Primary and then to Balerno Community High from August 2019.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All were in support of this.
The rest of the pupils from Currie Primary would go to Balerno Community High instead of Currie Community High once South West Edinburgh High opens in August 2022.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All were in support of this.

<p>Balerno Community High would be expanded and refurbished on its existing school site. Capacity would increase from 850 to 1200 pupils.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General support for this as it would improve quality of facilities and potentially create wider curricular choice through larger school. • Question about the projections – 140 houses would lead to 60 children. There are a proportion of B&B's so not all are necessarily family homes and some of these proposed homes may send their children to private school. • Comment from a few members from the table were that people max themselves out on buying a house and would not send to a private school. • Questions on where the space was at Balerno to build out too? If the car park was used to build on and they lose the car park this would be a terrible option. • All agreed that disruption is part of getting a new school.
<p>Pupils from Ratho Primary would no longer go to Balerno Community High but to the new West Edinburgh High when it opens in August 2022.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No strong feelings about this.
<p>Pupils from Kirknewton Primary would continue to go to Balerno Community High.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All were in support of this. • Kirknewton Primary School parents concerned with the new West Calder school being built would this mean that the catchment could potentially change to West Lothian.
<p>Alternative Proposals</p>	
<p>Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as require.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In an ideal world we would like to retain all schools. • WHEC has developed their teaching to meet the community needs. • Balerno has a high attainment record.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Table noted that Currie Community High School were performing better than Balerno Community High School but Balerno have recently minimised the gap.
Amalgamate Currie Community High School and Balerno Community High School in a new building on the existing Currie Community High School site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disagree and want this discounted. What happens to WHEC? Would there be a catchment review? If this proposal progressed Balerno parents/community would not follow the same route as Currie community by setting up a campaign. If the amalgamation went ahead this would be an 1800 to 2000 pupil school including WHEC. Would there be a reduction in sports facilities? Andy Gray, Head of Schools and Lifelong Learning advised that sport is an essential part of the curriculum; if a 3G pitch needs to be built on a separate piece of ground then that would happen. <p>Negatives of amalgamation - Travel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The entrance to Currie Community High School is already problematic. A70 is awful and will become worse when housing development takes place. There is no space available to build a new road.
Other comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication between the council and parents could have been managed better. Closing the attainment gap. What does that mean? How does a bigger school do this?

	<p>Community facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The general feeling was that the community should have more access. • Edinburgh Leisure has been a disaster. • The Lets Department have been non-existent. • Prices have increased. • Night school classes have been cancelled but at the time of booking people were told class was full <p>Woodlands School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All in favour to keep Woodlands School with Currie Community High School
<p>Other suggestions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A shared Balerno campus with Dean Park / split / shared site. • Other catchments could be included if it was built large enough.

Discussion Group Two

Item	Discussion / Comments
<p>Published Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally felt that timescales did not seem feasible, ie that the existing Balerno Community High School capacity would fill up between 2019 and new schools opening / extra capacity • It was felt the proposals would “rip the heart out of Currie”
<p>Summary of Published Proposals:</p>	
<p>Pupils from the Cherry Tree area of Currie Primary School would go to Dean Park Primary and then to Balerno Community High from August 2019.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All were in support of this
<p>The rest of the pupils from Currie Primary would go to Balerno Community High instead of Currie Community High once South West Edinburgh High opens in August 2022.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This was not supported as it would lead to half Currie students going one way (Balerno) and half the other (Curriemuirend Park). Not only would it split the Currie community in two but it would leave Currie without a school and facilities itself.
<p>Balerno Community High would be expanded and refurbished on its existing school site. Capacity would increase from 850 to 1,200 pupils.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General support for this as it would improve quality of facilities and potentially create wider curricular choice through larger school. An on-site decant was preferred to decant off site, despite the longer timeframe and operational challenges. Desire to reinstate Community High School Status.
<p>Pupils from Ratho Primary would no longer go to Balerno Community High but to the new West Edinburgh High when it opens in August 2022.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No strong feelings about this, even from Ratho resident, as current arrangements not ideal. Location of new school and what that would offer likely to dictate choice. Noted that whatever outcome, transport links for Ratho in general (and to and from high school in particular) needs addressing.

<p>Pupils from Kirknewton Primary would continue to go to Balerno Community High.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All were in support of this, so long as it was not at the expense of Edinburgh primaries
<p>Alternative Proposals</p>	
<p>Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as required</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was a general feeling that the desire to do something with WHEC was the factor which was driving the published proposals and preventing this option of simply rebuilding all three schools on their existing sites, each to appropriate capacities for the future.
<p>Amalgamate Currie HS and Balerno HS in a new building on the existing Currie HS site.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially the group thought the amalgamation of the two schools would be ok in principle, however transport issues likely to be an issue. If the location of the new school were to be at the existing Currie Community High School site then the group would not be in favour as it would deprive Balerno of school and community facilities.
<p>Possible new Proposals</p>	<p>Discussion about other options included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distributing the associated WHEC primaries to neighbouring secondary's (effectively closing WHEC) Creating a new WHEC building on the Currie Community High School site as a shared campus Creating a Senior school on the Currie Community High School site for all S6 (and S5 and perhaps S4). None of the above options were fully supported.

Discussion Group Three

Item	Discussion / Comments
<p>Published Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It could mean a revitalised school for Balerno. • Refurbishment and expansion of Balerno is a positive. • The high school would remain a main part of Balerno community. • Some people thought that a bigger Balerno Community High School could be a good thing. • There was some debate about the size of the school. Some thought a capacity of 1200 could be a good size. • Keeping Balerno Community High School can offer a richness to the community with good facilities. • Most people can walk. • The Church meet at Balerno Community High School and have been doing so for the past 20 years. They will lose where they meet for 2 years when decanted during refurb. However, their view is that it is necessary and will deal with it. • People have bought houses in the area due to catchment schools. House prices may be affected if there are any changes. • Pupils will be going to different schools during the process. • S1 and S2 pupils will be affected. This is contrary to what it says on the website.

Summary of Published Proposals:	
<p>Pupils from the Cherry Tree area of Currie Primary School would go to Dean Park Primary and then to Balerno Community High from August 2019.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The catchment changes for this option were seen as positive changes. • The group would be happy with the catchment area covering Deanpark Primary School, Ratho Primary School, Currie Primary School and Kirknewton Primary School
<p>The rest of the pupils from Currie Primary would go to Balerno Community High instead of Currie Community High once South West Edinburgh High opens in August 2022.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group agreed with this proposal.
<p>Balerno Community High would be expanded and refurbished on its existing school site. Capacity would increase from 850 to 1200 pupils.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This option could improve facilities at Balerno Community High School. • Decant: While refurb takes place, this will cause disruption for the pupils. • Timescales of the proposal are a concern. • There is not enough information. People want more information. • The problems could occur again in future. • Maintain the current meeting space (size/capacity wise) for community groups. It is needed currently. • It will be important to maintain current facilities as well as improve.
<p>Pupils from Ratho Primary would no longer go to Balerno Community High but to the new West Edinburgh High when it opens in August 2022.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No strong feelings about this. • It was thought that that some people in Ratho also wanted Balerno Community High School to remain their catchment school.

<p>Pupils from Kirknewton Primary would continue to go to Balerno Community High.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kirknewton did not receive a letter informing them of the review. • One person from Kirknewton Primary School at the group would still want Balerno Community High School to be their catchment school. • They were unhappy that there had not been workshops organised at Kirknewton.
Alternative Proposals	
<p>Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as required</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHEC has been underutilised. Is there anything we could add onto this, e.g. a Tech School? • It was suggested that children from Wester Hailes could go to either Forrester HS or Currie HS instead of WHEC and could close WHEC. • Why do people living in Wester Hailes send their children to Currie Community High School? • There were questions asked around how the range of curriculum be improved. • How big does the school need to be before the curriculum is improved? • Need to recognise that there are social issues.
<p>Amalgamate Currie and Balerno Community High schools in a new building on the existing Currie Community High School site.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group wanted to dismiss this as an option. • There was a reason why Balerno Community High School was built. It was due to the community needing it in the first place and to invest in the community. • If Balerno Community High School was removed Balerno would become just a housing estate. • Balerno covers a large geographical area:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People need to come from afar. ○ Roads are unsafe to go from Kirknewton to Currie ○ It is too far to travel to Currie for some. ○ The traffic would increase and cause problems if travelling to Currie. ● This area should not have a 'city solution'. It should be a 'village solution' as it is very different to the city in terms of density for example. ● The proposals may cause a rift between Balerno and Currie community which now see themselves as one community. ● Any changes will affect community groups of Balerno Community High School. ● The Church invest money into the school. Any changes could impact upon investment which could be bad for Balerno Community High School. ● The group do not want to turn Balerno Community High School into a new Dean Park Primary School. ● It was suggested that a rebuild Deanpark Primary School could be carried out on the existing Deanpark Primary School land. ● There were concerns that there will be no room to support the Balerno and surrounding population in the future if the schools are taken away.
<p>Other comments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communication should be improved. ● Could have communicated all options at the start. ● It will be very important to collect feedback from children and young people. ● Specific events should be organised for children and young people.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need proactive communication between housing and education to plan for the future. • Some thought that a much larger school could have implications for school pick up and drop off. • Some thought that a super large school could be a negative: children could get lost. • There was a bit of debate over capacity. Some thought bigger could be better (e.g. it was thought that a capacity of 700 could be too small) <p>Open Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community is a key word – it is the main hub for the village. • Demographic – elderly population – need to consider numbers and changing demographic for future plans. • An increase in childcare provision needs to be considered. • More houses being built in the area are causing the problems. <p>Suggestions for the consultation process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be good to send out a survey to parents to ask for their feedback. Questions like: what is your main concern? a, b, c, d, etc. • Children and Young People – it was highlighted that we need to recognise the importance of feedback specifically from children and young people. It was thought that specific events/opportunities need to be organised to collect this information.
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Discussion Group Four

Item	Discussion / Comments
<p>Published Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment proposed through this was welcomed, opportunity for next generation; an expanding school offers greater choice in curriculum, after school activities and greater interaction for children. • Community events have already moved elsewhere (Currie, WHEC) – the expansion allows the opportunity to bring that back. • The things being complained about are not related to education. • Balerno has a good reputation to build on – it’s a driver to build the new school, continuing the journey of excellence and attracting teachers. • People in the catchment area stay here – can’t say that for the other schools. Currie Community High School attracts catchment from Wester Hailes (WHEC). Currie Community High School pulls from Currie, Juniper Green and Baberton. • Strategic element: What’s the timescale for these proposals in relation to the local development plan? Is there a plan of what the urban area will look like? • Andy Gray, Head of Schools and Lifelong Learning (AG) advised the LDP cover 10 years, this looks at the lifespan of school (50-60 years) • Reason there has been little feedback is because community is generally supportive, have empathy for Currie but supporting the benefits this would bring to Balerno. • Semi-rural, don’t have access similar to that in city centre. If you take away the high school, then you will leave the area isolated.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion not to be at the cost of the community space and resource available at the moment. • Risk that Currie doesn't have the necessary infrastructure to support pupils (condition of building etc) – concerned this may impact on children
Summary of Published Proposals:	
Pupils from the Cherry Tree area of Currie Primary School would go to Dean Park Primary and then to Balerno Community High from August 2019.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive of Cherry Tree area joining catchment for Balerno Community High School, makes sense.
The rest of the pupils from Currie Primary would go to Balerno Community High instead of Currie Community High once South West Edinburgh High opens in August 2022.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed.
Balerno Community High would be expanded and refurbished on its existing school site. Capacity would increase from 850 to 1,200 pupils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions around the transitional arrangements. Will children be allowed to stay with their peers to finish education? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ AG advised that the last thing wanted was to separate families therefore consider sibling guarantee. ○ Not just about siblings, also about individual transport to get there, if children will be able to stay with friends etc. Need to protect children when at vulnerable point in education (exams, P7 into S1 etc). ○ AG advised that all of this would be considered, that close contact would be maintained with teachers to determine the best times for moves etc. ○ Need to ensure pastoral support is maintained too.
Pupils from Ratho Primary would no longer go to Balerno Community High but to the new	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group felt that it makes sense to send children to a location that is closer. In the long-term this seems sensible and they think that Ratho

West Edinburgh High when it opens in August 2022.	community would like Balerno Community High School to be their catchment school.
Pupils from Kirknewton Primary would continue to go to Balerno Community High.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catchment – Kirknewton to Currie is a big change for children travelling. If reviewing catchments, will Kirknewton be moved elsewhere?
Alternative Proposals	
Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status Quo – would go back on the positives highlighted earlier, that we want. Would mean a lack of investment and the same curriculum? • Structural problems at Currie Community High School need addressed. What's best value for the city, best use of our money? • If no government investment, what's the best design for us to consider? • If we retain all schools, what happens to the new South West school? • Suggestion to expand Balerno (Currie Rugby Club is on Council-owned land, could move out) – would allow us to keep all we have now and grow school. • Balerno is a low-rise school, have option to build up. • Are we thinking as three independent schools or as the South West? Need to think about where new housing is being built, the types of development being built etc. Group raised issues about development on the greenbelt and the number of expensive 5-bedroom houses being built – these are too expensive for average families and don't help alleviate the current problems faced. • If more information was provided on the criteria and the impact in 30 years, then the group would be in a better position to develop an optimum solution for all. • How do we use the existing schools to give children the best education? Wider choice for three separate schools, create a sixth form college,

	<p>Currie or Balerno could become a senior school (transition at one and then study exams at the other). A potential risk with creating a senior school would be difficulties in attracting teachers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If Currie Community High School needs to be rebuilt, all the money would be concentrated there and there could be nothing left to refurbish Balerno Community High School. • How would the Council manage the refurb? • Currie Community High School doesn't feel like a building that is ready to fall to bits. How many years is it still fit for purpose? What are the risks / dangers etc? • Again, more information and detail is needed to illustrate the proposals and consider implications.
<p>Amalgamate Currie and Balerno Community High schools in a new building on the existing Currie Community High School site.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Currie Community High School is quite tight, you couldn't have buses queuing there. Bridge Road can be difficult with Ratho etc coming in. Implications for safety and the environment. • Balerno Community High School was built in the 1970s, feels like a backwards step to close Balerno Community High School and move to Currie. That was the option originally considered in the 70s. • Balerno and Currie Community High schools combining would mean a roll of 1400. Feels like a super school. • Arguments that Currie are putting forward for this option are also relevant to Balerno (but the other way – amalgamating the schools at Balerno). It could be argued that the reasons are even more relevant to Balerno as it is a semi-rural location. • Needs community space, sport provision

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All schools have pools at the moment, would swimming pools be part of new build? ○ Currently have to travel to WHEC for children’s pool, arts resources etc, to amalgamate this would be good. ● Juniper Green were offered tours of facilities at new Boroughmuir High School. Would be good if this was offered to others. ● Currie Community High School is high performing, even with mix of pupils from Currie and Wester Hailes. ● Balerno Community High School has suffered from a lack of choice in curriculum – maths vs photography, pupils haven’t been able to get the choices they wanted. ● Craigmount High School (roll of 1200) pupils can choose what they want, pupil led. Balerno Community High School would welcome that ability in the future. ● Option two is negative with regards to logistics, want the opposite. ● Need group with all three areas having a constructive conversation with everything on the table. ● Wider services and impact for Balerno: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Medical Practice - already strain at Pentland Medical Centre, expanding brings even more issues ○ Why is there no gym in Balerno? Option to have one in school would be attractive, rather than focusing on organised sport ○ Array of clubs – requires parents to be on the ball ○ Huge congregation of church, school hosts gala days etc where would these go?
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you take the school, you rip the heart out of Balerno. Why would people come here if there are no community services? • One reason I moved to Balerno was the walkability to schools and safety aspect for children. If the school is moved then travel will mostly be by bus. • Need to carefully consider the infrastructure and we need this information to actually seriously consider the options. • A70 is busy, unsafe, some of the sections don't have pavement – means children will have to consider travelling through back estates or by the Water of Leith (which isn't safe during winter or travelling at dark). • This suggested option feels like 'backtracking' – why would the Council propose something that wasn't our best option? Why did the Council come up with the original proposal in the first place?
<p>Other comments</p>	<p>Discussion around the original proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be interesting to map routes at schools, if buses are available to help children travel to school in their catchments. • Are all choices equal regarding catchment, securing transport? • Catholic schools have wider catchments, therefore more options to transport for pupils. • Transport could be extended and increase the choice either at Balerno or new South West school. • More capacity to build in Balerno. <p>Kirknewton</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfortable with the original proposals

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise that Balerno Community High School’s science and music departments need refurbished. • What does that work mean in terms of provision for pupils? <p>Existing relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balerno is ‘end of the road’ – need community facilities retained, expanded. If move everything closer to town there’s a fear that the community will fade away. • Already a connection with Currie Community High School and WHEC (pupils from Wester Hailes already going to Currie Community High School). • Perceived deprived area want their children to go anywhere – feels like there’s a degree of snobbery in wider conversations. • Different communities need different things – one size doesn’t fit all. • Missing element in the discussions is children. Where is their voice in this process? They use the schools. Hope that high school pupils are involved in discussions.
<p>Suggestions / Open discussion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative options presented tonight feel like the goal posts have been moved, the rug has been pulled from under us and feels uncomfortable. Group felt that the conversation had been hi-jacked and that they can’t input into the original proposals. • Where will we get teachers for increase of 500 in roll? Are we going to be able to get teachers? • Important to have a school with lack of car travel – a closer location for WHEC would be better. Good community resources at WHEC; not here. Education and community should be considered.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What percentage of homes go to private school? (conversation regarding new builds in area being 5-bedroom, expensive homes, and lack of affordable 3-bedroom properties)• Whole infrastructure needs to align and match up. If you change one catchment area, it will have a knock-on effect.• Increasing roll from Ratho was mentioned in presentation but not in the figures. Ratho is not driving the increase in Balerno Community High School roll, it's the increase from Balerno.
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Discussion Group Five

Item	Discussion / Comments
<p>Published Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site options for South West Edinburgh Schools were not preferred due to being secluded sites involving bad walking routes. • Thus, the Currie site was suggested as a rebuild option for a combined WHEC/Currie Community High School. • There was concern that WHEC parents would not get as great a say as Balerno or Currie parents. • WHEC would need to retain a hub even if school closes (as would be the case for all three HS communities). • There are transport issues between Ratho and Balerno. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There used to be a good bus service that locals would like to return. • There are bigger transport issues (very bad roads) getting to West Edinburgh options (especially International Business Gateway option). • Traffic is seen as a main obstacle. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lanark road is an issue in terms of high volume of traffic and safety for pupil routes. ○ The further cars will have to travel and pupils will have to walk (if any high schools move) then the more likelihood of congestion and accidents.

Summary of Published Proposals:	
Balerno Community High would be expanded and refurbished on its existing school site. Capacity would increase from 850 to 1200 pupils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking is also an issue around Balerno Community High School. Spaces around the school are already maxed. Expansion would need to address this.
Pupils from Ratho Primary would no longer go to Balerno Community High but to the new West Edinburgh High when it opens in August 2022.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One parent was against Ratho moving from Balerno Community High School, as they had moved to be in the Balerno Community High School catchment area.
Pupils from Kirknewton Primary would continue to go to Balerno Community High.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kirknewton should have a voice. • There should be a Kirknewton Primary School workshop. • Will East Calder High School get built? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ if so will the only option be that Kirknewton will feed to it?
Alternative Proposals	
Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern that CEC have got their projections wrong in Balerno Community High School catchment area. • New housing is all multiple room dwellings (which would require a higher than average pupil production ratio). • Plus, much of the existing housing in Balerno is likely to become family homes in the next 10-20 years as the older population 'moves on'! • Many out of catchment pupils from East Calder also currently fill the school.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could increase to fill an expanded Balerno Community High School even before new pupils from Currie might join.
Amalgamate Currie and Balerno Community High schools in a new building on the existing Currie Community High School site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would not be safe for Balerno pupils to walk up to a new merger school in Currie.
Other comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balerno Community High School building could expand in different ways – build up, or expand to rugby club. • Could the primary school move to the same site (thus, being closer to new housing and Cherry Trees)? • In most eventualities better crossing facilities would be needed on health and safety grounds. • There is concern that money would not be available for a rebuild / refurbishment. • There was a strong feeling that a rural community like Balerno needs the school as a community hub. • It would devastate the community cohesion, sporting clubs, Children’s Gala, social clubs etc. • There was a claim beforehand that the size of the Balerno Community High School roll was unsustainable as is, the group heavily rejected this argument. • A WHEC-Currie option would be complimented by the train link between the two communities, although more services would need to run. • Better integrated transport is needed.