

Notes from school review workshops

Ratho Primary School: Workshop held on Tuesday 23 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">• There was a feeling that Kirknewton was getting preferential treatment over Ratho – as they would be less affected.• Why does Ratho have to populate the untested high school?• There are more pupils attending Balerno Community High School from Edinburgh out of catchment areas than the projected numbers that would feed from Ratho to Balerno Community High School.• Currently there are 130 pupils attending from out of catchment.• Currently 230 children feed to Balerno Community High School from Ratho.• The projection over 10 years is expected to rise to 400.• 1/3 of pupils are out with the Edinburgh catchment. Edinburgh Council should look after Edinburgh residents.

Summary of Published Proposals:	
<p>Pupils from Ratho Primary would no longer go to Balerno Community High school but to the new West Edinburgh High when it opens in August 2022.</p> <p>Two potential sites identified.</p>	<p>Site option 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a railway, you would need to travel to Newbridge roundabout and then cross the A8. • This would take approximately 45 minutes in the morning. Impacts on already heavily congested route. <p>Site option 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There would need to be a safe walking route to school (Ratho Station option), this is not a safe route. • This would require a lot of work, the road is very narrow, it is a rural road. Buses / cars need to mount the pavement to pass. • Contact Lothian Buses and ask them how many accidents they have had on this road? • The same transport issues identified for site option one apply to site option two.
Alternative Proposals	
<p>Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as require.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roads from Ratho to Balerno are very bad. There is no direct route so you have to go far to the west or east to get there. • If status quo continues then bus service should be improved.

<p>Suggestions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hatton Mains site could be a possible alternative, this would be an easier transport route and a more pleasant site.
<p>Open Discussion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was concern that Maybury development (IBG) was not going ahead, or would take much longer to come through. • So, a new high school would be much smaller than planned – or may be abandoned. • There is uncertainty of the Kirkliston population. Who would populate the new school?

Discussion Group Two

Item	Discussion / Comments
<p>Published Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were positive comments about a single S1 stage, as they would have the opportunity to shape the school. • Would there be a pool and all mod-cons? • There would need to be a safe walking route to school (Ratho Station option), especially over the railway. • Or would there be a bus option? • There was a feeling that Kirknewton was getting preferential treatment over Ratho – as they would be less affected. • Why does Ratho have to populate the untested high school? • There was concern that Maybury development (IBG) was not going ahead, or would take much longer to come through, so a new High School would be much smaller than planned – or may be abandoned. • Uncertainty of the Kirkliston population as views on the proposals for Kirkliston to feed to Winchburgh or a new west Edinburgh school are split. • Both site options one and two were generally seen as okay, with a preference for site option two. • Community of Ratho has closer links to Hillwood than Balerno. • A high school in Ratho Station could be a good thing for the joint community.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Balerno Community High School pupils from Ratho can be isolated at times, especially with regard to missing after school activities. • There were also voices saying the opposite, that they had a tried and tested relationship with Balerno.
<p>Summary of Published Proposals:</p>	
<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"> • There was concern about the opening of a new school with only S1s attending. • With concern about the environment this would create, lack of mentors, older siblings etc. • Also concern that in any option there would be no sibling guarantee. • And even if there was in the new high school options - and older pupils wanted to transfer. • What if there were not enough of the older ages to fill a single stage? • How would there be enough teachers to cover all the subjects / curricular opportunities? • Can CEC look into how this kind of S1 filling has worked at other new high schools?

Alternative Proposals	
Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roads from Ratho to Balerno are very bad. • There is no direct route so you have to go far to the West or East to get there. • If status quo continues then bus service should be improved.
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"> • No interest in this proposal.
Other suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One comment: 'the council is asking the community to give up a lot and we are not sure what we are getting in return'. • Complaint that the review website uses the line 'Ratho Primary's catchment area is currently detached from the rest of the Balerno Community High catchment area' as an argument for the proposed change. But after the proposed change it will be attached – so we should not be using that as an argument.

Discussion Group Three

Item	Discussion / Comments
<p>Published Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not possible to comment on either site one or two at present as so little information is available about the new school or either site. • Transport issues are paramount. • House prices in Ratho could be affected by the proposals to change allocated high school.
<p>Summary of Published Proposals:</p>	
<p>Balerno Community High School 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"> • Neither of the two site options for the new West Edinburgh High School (WEHS) have good transport links to / from Ratho. • Until infrastructure proposals were known it would be difficult to make a choice between these sites and Balerno Community High School. • Perhaps the proposed M8 extension link directly to the Airport access roundabout would reduce traffic congestion along the A8. • Are other infrastructure improvements possible? • At present students are bussed from Ratho to Balerno Community High School. Would this remain for the new WEHS sites? It appears it may, through distance, to Site 2 but not site1? • If not bussed by CEC there would need to be effective public transport from Ratho as walking and cycling does not appear feasible.

- Real problems in dropping off and picking up students by private car, particularly in mornings and after extra-curricular activities – roads are poor and traffic is extremely busy at rush hours.
- Due to the issues above, community facilities at new WEHS would probably not be very attractive to Ratho residents but Balerno Community High School would still be available.
- Due to issues above, it is likely many parents would favour remaining at Balerno Community High School so this could split the Ratho cohort with some going to new school and some remaining.
- How would the new WEHS be brought on-stream?
- Concern about it being an unknown entity educationally.
- Although it may have a larger capacity than Balerno Community High School, would there be as much choice initially if roll was small?
- Building a new school community from scratch would be a big challenge.
- What are the prospects and timescales regarding the rebuilding project at Balerno Community High School, and how would this relate to the opening of the WEHS?
- The timing and extent of the proposals for Balerno Community High School would impact on the choice of remaining at Balerno Community High School or transferring to the new WEHS.

Alternative Proposals

- Have considerations been given to alternative sites for the new WEHS to the south of the over congested transport corridor?
- In particular, there is a brownfield site (cement works) just north of Ratho?
- While this site was closer to Ratho (and therefore easier to get to for Ratho residents) others noted it may bring its own transport problems with it.

Discussion Group Four

Item	Discussion / Comments
<p>Published Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site option two – how would this work for pupils travelling from Maybury? • Is there a budget in place and plans to bring children together in advance of a move to a new school e.g. community events to build community? • Is there a vision for the new school? If so this has not been publicised. • It is difficult to comment without knowing the status of the other proposals. • Site option one – how will noise issues be addressed e.g. airport noise pollution? <p>Travel to school / safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are safety issues around travelling, in particular, cycling and walking. If improvements were made to the route to site option two, including pavements, street lighting and cycle network this would help. • Site option one would require improvements to cycle network, if this was carried out would be more encouraged about plans. • With improvements to the roads, cycle network and infrastructure taken into consideration, site option two would be more viable of the two new site options. • There needs to be commitment from the council to continue the bus service to Balerno Community High School for children who still attend, there are no alternative public transport options. • Traditionally there are links to the Balerno community. Children attended clubs including scouts and cubs in Balerno.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site options for the new schools may be closer in proximity but the commute would take longer • The site options one and two are out of the way of local facilities. Would the children be confined to the school canteen? Where would they eat? • There was concern about transition and about disruption to the education of children who start off at Balerno Community High School and face a move during their school career.
Summary of Published Proposals:	
Balerno Community High School would be expanded and refurbished on its existing school site. Capacity would increase from 850 to 1200 pupils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestion - to increase Balerno Community High School to capacity of 1500 to keep Ratho Primary as a feeder school. • Is it council policy to aim for schools to have a capacity of 1100/1200? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alistair Gaw, Executive Director of Communities and Families, advised this is not a council policy but this allows for the provision of optimum range of offer
Pupils from Ratho Primary School would no longer go to Balerno Community High School but to the new West Edinburgh High School when it opens in August 2022.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People buy homes in Ratho due to the Balerno Community High School catchment.
Pupils from Kirknewton Primary School would continue to go to Balerno Community High School.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestion - Has anyone proposed that Kirknewton is taken back by West Lothian Council?

Other comments / Suggestions

- What is being done about teacher recruitment and retention?
 - Alistair Gaw mentioned the 1-15 teacher - pupil ratio being maintained and that energy is going into this area.
- Suggestion - Could the road from Norton House be opened for public use?
- Would want children to meet with other keen learners if a new school is established, there was a mention of Wester Hailes pupils and an amalgamation
 - Alistair Gaw pointed out that WHEC currently has a roll of 270, the proposal would involve 2 schools being redistributed to the new option, this would amount to approximately 100 pupils, calling this a merger is misleading
- Would there be an opportunity for parents to go and look at the proposed new facilities?
 - Alistair Gaw and Robbie Crockatt, Acting School Estate Planning Manager confirmed this could be arranged
- Would the new schools be Public Private Partnership schools?
 - Alistair Gaw and Robbie Crockatt confirmed they would not
- Would there be consultation with pupils now or later?
 - Robbie Crockatt explained that there is an element of anxiety about involving children at this early stage when there is little certainty and that they would be involved at the stage when well-developed proposals can be put to them for consultation.
- Is there any weighting given to the number of comments received back from schools e.g. Currie 400 and Ratho 4?
 - Robbie Crockatt advised that comments are not weighted according to volume.

Exams / disrupting education

- FAQs should be provided and include information about pupil transition and clarity in terms of continuity of education.
- It is key that children are supported through any transition.
- What happens in situation where there are siblings?
 - Alistair Gaw mentioned the sibling guarantee here.
- How would six years of a new establishment be populated?
- Will children be moved during their school career? This would be disruptive for children.
- How will this be managed?
- What will be the point at which the shift would take place?
 - Alistair Gaw mentioned that part of the formal consultation would be an Educational Benefit Statement this would have to set out the benefits and disbenefits of transitioning to a new school.
- There were questions around how long it would take a new school to become established and whether it might take time for it to get on its feet. One participant described a positive experience when she attended what was the new Balerno Community High School.
 - Alistair Gaw advised that there would be approximately five years of transition planning where contributions of parents and pupils would be sought.
 - Robbie Crockatt later mentioned that insight would be gathered from other Local Authorities including Fife and Perth and Kinross.

	<p>Local sports facilities/clubs/other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans for any new school should be aspirational and include elements such as great sports facilities, this would give people something to get excited about. It is not good enough to maintain educational excellence we should be pushing forward with aspirational and exciting plans. • Will new school facilities be open to the community? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alistair Gaw confirmed that any new school would also be a community facility. • Great facilities would benefit the community and create a sense of ownership for the new community they create. It would make sense to co-ordinate with other regeneration plans e.g. with site option one there are regeneration plans for this site so any school site plans should co-ordinate with this. <p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there any indication of level of greenspace around new buildings? Robbie Crockatt, advised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Site option one does not have a defined site at present but standards would be set out in school premises regulations and the council would have some control over size. ○ Site option two is a very large site and the council would have some control over the land and size of site but no definitive figures were available)
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