

Notes from school review workshops

Nether Currie Primary School: Workshop held on Wednesday 24 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">• Is there an educational strategy for the published proposal?• Concern about 'super school' approach. Currie Community High School already provides good breadth of curriculum.• WHEC: more challenges, but serves its pupils well at the moment (although deserves more).• Would like to understand why WHEC rolls are so low – what are the root causes of this and can these be addressed to increase roll and reduce out-of-catchment placements.• Will take the heart out of the Currie community, don't want to live in a ghost town.• Community facilities important.• Concern about impact on Woodlands School.• Doesn't promote active travel / safe routes to school.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about super-school; • Concern about loss to community of facilities at either Balerno or Currie.
Summary of Published Proposals:	
Pupils from the Kinleith Mill area of Currie Primary's catchment area would be realigned with Nether Currie Primary for August 2019.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining catchments as they are. Support from entire group. • Support of Kinleith Mill change; • Would support extension of catchment to west to Riccarton Mains Road – although people may not support if there is uncertainty about what this would mean for secondary school.
The area of Currie Primary's catchment around Heriot Watt University would be changed to Nether Currie Primary from August 2019.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining catchments as they are. Support from entire group.
Nether Currie, along with Juniper Green, Canal View and Clovenstone Primary, catchment areas would feed to the new South West Edinburgh School when it opens in August 2022.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining catchments as they are. Support from entire group.
Alternative Proposals	
Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preference is to rebuild on Currie Community High School playing fields <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why was this not the published proposal? • Provides breadth of subjects already – although if this is a problem could the three schools work together more.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would like to know what the cost of refurbishing the existing schools is in comparison with building new schools. • Would provide space / flexibility for future pupil growth.
Build a new school on the Muir Wood field site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not feasible, cost of pylons. • Potential for new housing on Currie site is a concern.
Other comments / suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What impact will the growth in pupils and larger schools have on workforce planning? • Concern that projections don't account for new housing developments that may come forward which are not in the Local Development Plan. • Need a solution that is flexible to allow further pupil growth in the future.

Discussion Group Two

Item	Discussion / Comments
<p>Published Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't want Currie split. • Major concerns around both new school sites in terms of traffic, safety, distance, and congestion. • Main concern is about attainment. Think that the proposal is purely related to budget and that it will be disruptive to education. • There would need to be evidence that the amalgamation would be of benefit. • Not convinced that the curriculum choice is better in bigger schools or about whether this is valid as happy with the current curriculum at Currie Community High School. It offers a broad range of subjects. • WHEC – The group were looking at Currie community and not Wester Hailes. • People have moved / purchased houses in the area for the schools. • This is causing a lot of uncertainty for people. • Share curricular choices across other schools. • Building bigger schools does not necessarily mean better schools. • It is not about roll, it is about saving money and state of buildings. It is an estate problem not an education problem. The website showed that Currie Community High School had the lowest amount of annual maintenance spent. The cracks have been there for years and not physically any worse. • We should think about what we have initially.

Summary of Published Proposals:	
<p>The area of Currie Primary's catchment around Heriot Watt University would be changed to Nether Currie Primary from August 2019.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nether Currie has been fighting for a larger catchment, the proposed catchment change gives a little more but possibly not enough. • There are many empty fields around Nether Currie. • Left of Riccarton Mains Road - Allow Nether Currie Primary School to fill more classes and relieve Currie Primary School. • Nether Currie Primary School is full because of out of catchments pupils.
<p>Nether Currie, along with Juniper Green, Canal View and Clovenstone Primary catchment areas would feed to the new South West Edinburgh School when it opens in August 2022.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was general agreement that it would be beneficial to expand the Nether Currie Primary School catchment area. • This proposal doesn't reflect the primary school catchment change. • No-one wanted to see the school go down to six classes. • Why extend Currie Primary School when there is space at Nether Currie Primary School?
Alternative Proposals	
<p>Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as require.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group felt this was the only acceptable option. • There is enough land to rebuild on the current Currie Community High School site and to build a larger school and to future proof to allow for current catchment (1200). • This would not incur any extra purchasing costs as the land is already owned for that purpose. Needs to be future proofed for new developments for the area.

<p>Build a new school on the Muir Wood field site.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some discussion about Donkey Lane as a site for a new build. Would this even be feasible?
<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"> • A merger between Currie Community High School and Balerno Community High School would create too large a school. • Moving into the Balerno Community High School building would not address issue of future capacity.
<p>Comments / Suggestions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were questions around how an expansion to the catchment would impact on the school grounds. • Would like information on possible 150 place nursery. • Pupils already leave home at 8am and don't get home until 4pm. • If the pupils move to a new school it will mean a longer commute and they may not want to go to their after-school clubs as a result. • The Currie community want safer routes to school, walking, cycle paths. • Even with new facilities there can still be issues. • If going with the status quo could share sports facilities. • Currie does not have a High Street; Currie Community High School is the community hub. • Currie lacks massively in facilities • Want to make their community more vibrant and maximise the community facilities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If the new school site is west of Currie Community High School there would be traffic congestion.• If the Currie Community High School land is sold to housing developer this would increase school roll.• How many secondary schools are in Scotland?• Rebuild the current high schools on their existing sites to address any issues with the buildings.• What schools have the same proportion in numbers / capacity?• How many smaller schools are there in Scotland?• Is there a map available showing what the land the council own in Edinburgh?• Woodlands School should be considered.
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Discussion Group Three

Item	Discussion / Comments
<p>Published Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the general rationale for making these proposals? • This is not clear. Is it about financial considerations? • There was concern about the proposals not meeting the long term strategic capacity required. • There was feeling that in addition to a new West Edinburgh High School of 1200 or 1400 capacity, each existing school would also need to remain (and some with increased capacity) to meet forecast rolls. • There was a query why there was a need (capacity-wise) to merge Currie Community High School and WHEC. (See alternative options below). • Were there precedents of two schools with different attainment profiles coming together, and how successful were they? • Examples of Broughton High School in Edinburgh and Dalkeith High School in Midlothian were mentioned. • There were varying views about how successful these previous examples had been.
<p>Summary of Published Proposals:</p>	
<p>Pupils from the Kinleith Mill area of Currie Primary's catchment area would be realigned with Nether Currie Primary for August 2019.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All were in support of this as it would potentially move Nether Currie Primary School to single stream roll and avoid current composite classes (which were not liked).

<p>The area of Currie Primary's catchment around Heriot Watt University would be changed to Nether Currie Primary from August 2019.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above, all were in support of this.
<p>Nether Currie, along with Juniper Green, Canal View and Clovenstone Primary, catchment areas would feed to the new South West Edinburgh School when it opens in August 2022.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong opposition to this part of the proposals. Main concerns were: • Currie Community High School is currently high-attaining / achieving and move to a new site, new staffing, potentially new leadership and merging with WHEC would create educational disruption, particularly in the transition period. • That would be a major risk to the initial cohort's education. How would this be addressed? • The proposals involve one of Currie's primary schools going to Balerno Community High School and the other to the new South West Edinburgh High School which would split the community in two. • Cohorts would not share experiences etc. • This would lead to risk of mental health and exclusion issues. • The proposals would leave Currie without a secondary school within the heart of its community. • This would have an impact on community use. • The proposed new site would have accessibility issues with traffic on Lanark Road being a major problem, particularly in the mornings. • Pedestrian and cycling to the new school would be a health and safety risk in terms of road safety (recent fatality on Lanark Road) and environmental pollution. • Concern was also expressed around students travelling through a new and 'unknown' neighbourhood.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new site would disrupt the community and family support networks established around the current site from early years onwards. • Concern was expressed about the support needed by WHEC students. • Would this still be provided in the new school? • Concern was expressed about Woodlands School losing the shared campus facilities of Currie Community High School.
Alternative Proposals	
<p>Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as required</p>	<p>The group favoured the status quo and felt that a proposal could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1200 capacity new West Edinburgh High School • 1200 capacity Currie Community High School on existing site • 1200 Balerno Community High School • WHEC to decide on their own future. One option mentioned was for WHEC to join Currie on existing Currie Community High School site. • Another was to distribute WHEC to neighbouring schools.

Discussion Group Four

Item	Discussion / Comments
<p>Published Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the council make the decision? What are weightings? Current outline is felt to be vague. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Answer is that it will be a political decision. Additional studies necessary as part of statutory process, subject to assessment by Education Scotland. The council would have to say why each site has been chosen, including why rebuild was not the option. • Question about political accountability. Why isn't the current proposal being championed by someone? • WHEC not seen as underperforming - but what is the expectation for this school? • What is the loss of WHEC? Is it the school or the community centre? Should the community centre continue to exist / be replaced? • Concern that schools should have long-term flexibility • Concern that people per household is increasing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Population projections do not include this, only new houses. ○ Garden district is not included in the plan. ○ The existing local development plan does include some housing projections. • Space on site is excellent for Currie Community High School. As your town grows the options to grow decrease. • Don't accept the rationale for change - what is the extent to which school buildings need to be replaced?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value of land is a potential motivation for the council’s decision. • Currie Community High School is “at the heart” of the community. • Concern about education for pupils with additional support needs - would the school still be able to take on out-of-catchment placements? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Answer is that this has been done in the past, can be done. • School is chosen for children with additional support needs because of reputation. • What happens to Woodlands School? Would it be fully integrated? • Maintaining two schools (Currie and Balerno Community High schools) provides long-term flexibility. Dividing the community is a bad idea. • A more rural school should not necessarily be large. • Currie Community High School already has an excellent curriculum. Excellence exists on the current site - moving is a risk. • Impact on children sitting Highers over the next several years. Children / parents will choose to send their kids to a different school.
Summary of Published Proposals:	
Pupils from the Kinleith Mill area of Currie Primary’s catchment area would be realigned with Nether Currie Primary for August 2019.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extending the catchment for Nether Currie Primary is fine. Could be extended even farther.
The area of Currie Primary’s catchment around Heriot Watt University would be changed to Nether Currie Primary from August 2019.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above.

Alternative Proposals	
<p>Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as require.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some preference for three schools - concern the council is wedded to the idea of reducing to two schools. Parent choice is important - but suggestion that there needs to be some limit on how much the council can offer.
<p>Other comments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question about Kirknewton Primary School - as it's a West Lothian School, how does it feature in Edinburgh? • Where should Ratho Primary School feed into? • What order should decisions be made? Does this confer priority? • Question about what the potential expansion of Forrester High School could be. (Doubtful for geographic reasons). • Would like more information about the impact of size on curriculum choice. • Not convinced by the argument that size of school determines quality of education. • Not persuaded that there would be any impact on educational attainment / excellence. • Bringing two schools together does not necessarily impact on education / closing the attainment gap. Would prefer more of a school's catchment area to be from a better school.

Discussion Group Five

Item	Discussion / Comments
<p>Published Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the council spoken to parents who have chosen not to send their children to WHEC? • Not convinced that the curriculum choice is better in bigger schools or about whether this is valid as happy with the current curriculum at Currie Community High School (CHS). It offers a broad range of subjects. • In terms of attainment – struggling to see benefit of moving to a bigger school. In the league tables CHS is 6th / 7th would want a new school to at least match this and a guarantee that the attainment level will be upheld. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Arran Finlay, Quality Improvement Education Officer advised that the benefit would have to be set out in an Education Benefit Statement if a statutory consultation was recommended. • It is important to have continuity in terms of peers/groups/classes. • Major concerns around both new school sites in terms of traffic, safety, distance and congestion. Crawford McGhie, Acting Head of Operational Support had said that two miles is an acceptable distance to walk to school. There is evidence that children are more likely to be knocked over in their teenage years. • Don't want Currie split, if there has to be a move then move as one. • Main concern is about attainment. Think that the proposal is purely related to budget and that it will be disruptive to education. There would need to be evidence that the amalgamation would be of benefit. • In terms of amalgamation with WHEC, there is evidence to suggest that children who face challenges do better in smaller schools. Counselling and mental health support is better in smaller schools.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health is a concern if the proposal goes ahead. • It feels like there would be no benefit for CHS and that WHEC pupils would be disadvantaged as they need smaller numbers. • Concerns regarding loss of established teachers and a new high school being staffed by inexperienced teachers.
<p>Alternative Proposals</p>	
<p>Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as require.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the only option. • We should be looking at using what we have in the first instance • There was a question around whether the building survey had become more intrusive and a suggestion that perhaps this was the case rather than a deterioration of the CHS building. • Every school in Scotland will have a similar snagging list. • Concern that if current CHS land is sold to a developer then houses will be built and it will increase the school roll further. • It was felt that Woodlands School had not been considered in the proposals and that it was essential that it should be considered. It was selected especially for the pupils based on the environment and surroundings as well as funding for the pitches being raised by the community. • If school buildings were rebuilt on existing sites there wouldn't be issues with the fabric and they would be more sustainable. • Would be willing to compromise in terms of shared sports facilities if all schools were retained.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is enough land to rebuild on the current CHS site and this would not incur any extra purchasing costs as the land is already owned for that purpose. • It is not about roll, it is about saving money and state of buildings. It is an estate problem not an education problem. • Moving to a site anywhere west of current CHS would cause traffic congestion. • Moving into the Balerno Community High School building would not address issue of future capacity. • If WHEC pupils were to be moved to a new site on CHS then pupils would require a level of support in terms of transport to get to Currie. • It would be important to maintain WHEC facilities for the community if pupils moved to CHS. • There would be a smaller volume of pupils at WHEC so it makes more sense for them to move than CHS pupils. • Attainment levels may remain the same if WHEC moved to CHS as CHS is an established school. • A new building in Currie would be better maintained than a new building in Wester Hailes. Concerns re vandalism.
Build a new school on the Muir Wood field site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some discussion about Donkey Lane as a site for a new build.
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"> • If CHS and BHS are merged there are concerns that Juniper Green “would be pupils” might be moved to WHEC. Participants viewed Juniper Green as part of the community.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A merger between CHS and Balerno Community High School would create too large a school and concerns about Juniper Green being siphoned off. This is not an option.
<p>Open Discussion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In calculating the projected school rolls was there a standard deviation? What was the calculation? • There are no figures on how many people send their children to private schools. • Do the projected figures take into account only those in the catchment area or does it include out of catchment? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Councillor Webber confirmed that these figures are based only on in catchment areas. • There was general agreement that it would be beneficial to expand the Nether Currie Primary School catchment area, no-one wanted to see the school go down to six classes. There was a general consensus that it seemed strange to build four new classes at Currie Primary School when there is capacity within Nether Currie. • The primary school catchment change seems to have been lost in this proposal. • There were questions around how an expansion to the catchment would impact on the school grounds. It was mentioned that there is a proposal for a 150-place nursery. This was an urgent concern for participants who wanted more information on this matter. • Pupils already leave home at 8.00am and don't get home until 4.00pm. If the pupils move to a new school it will mean a longer commute and they may not want to go to their after-school clubs as a result.