

Notes from school review workshops

Currie Community High School: Workshop held on Tuesday 30 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">• Projections – don't capture changing demographics, older residents being replaced by new families.
Summary of Published Proposals:	
Currie Community High would amalgamate with WHEC in August 2022 upon the completion of a new South West Edinburgh High.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wester Hailes – needs a smaller school, complex needs, children do better in smaller schools in areas with less money, can travel to Currie to access broader range of subjects.• Could WHEC area be given dual catchment status so that people can attend Currie Community High School if they want to? Provide free bus pass.

Alternative Proposals	
<p>Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as require.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If school was rebuilt, people would want to know about how the transition would work / what would the disruption be. • Rebuilt school – keep gym, provide all day uses and make more attractive for adult users, potential for library, community facilities, running track, better swimming provision, health centre. • People can walk to school at Currie Community High School – promotes active travel. • Currie Community High School is already a high performing school – how can this be maintained / improved in a new south west school? • Where are the education benefits of shutting Currie Community High School? • Why was Currie Community High School not on a previous list of schools that were in poor condition? • The school is in a location that can be easily accessed for out of school activities. • Important role in the community – can cater for older residents e.g. improved dementia café with links to home economic studies. • Currie Community High School could be rebuilt a bit larger – i.e. up to 1000 capacity, although would have concerns if it was any bigger. Potential to have option for expansion in the design. • If Currie Primary School was built on site it would mean better transition, better links, better facilities.

Open Discussion

- Water of Leith walkway could be improved to promote more active travel.
- Currie was previously part of Midlothian, now have to deal with an Edinburgh Council school problem.
- Like the idea of smaller schools with a different niche. Can the schools work together more to share expertise and provide centres of excellence e.g. home economics at Currie Community High School?
- Woodlands school – keen for links to continue, offers benefits of Currie Community High School to a wider group.

Discussion Group Two

Item	Discussion / Comments
<p>Published Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two schools in three communities does not work. • 90% of parents are opposed to the proposals and only 2% support them. Pupils were worried when they heard about the proposal.
<p>Summary of Published Proposals:</p>	
<p>Pupils from the Cherry Tree area of Currie Community High School would go to Balerno Community High from August 2019.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be helpful to have a number in terms of pupils from Cherry Tree area who attend Balerno Community High School. • There has been an influx of new families, especially into council houses that were previously occupied by elderly residents.
<p>Currie Community High would amalgamate with WHEC in August 2022 upon the completion of a new South West Edinburgh High.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andy Gray, Head of Schools and Lifelong Learning asked the participants if a new school building was built on existing Currie Community High School site with all the advantages of a larger school including staff, expertise, and facilities – how acceptable would this be if it included the two primary schools that currently feed into WHEC, Clovenstone and Canal View? Participants said that if it also included Currie and Nether Currie primary schools this would be acceptable. Although there were safety concerns for pupils travelling from Clovenstone and it was highlighted that better safety measures would be required. • In terms of the proposal to amalgamate Currie Community High School (CHS) and Wester Hailes Education Centre (WHEC) one of the participants wanted to clarify that there was no snobbery from CHS parents around this proposal. If there was any reticence it was

	<p>due to the bringing together of two very different communities and splitting the Currie community. The two communities have very different needs and the small class sizes at WHEC help the students. Concerns around merging relate to the different approach to teaching.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would help to see a plan/strategy for when the merger would take place in terms of budget per head for pupils with additional support needs. Would the resources for WHEC be diluted? Have not seen the education strategy so it is difficult to see the bigger picture. • Would it not be a challenge to fill the additional capacity in WHEC rather than splitting the community? Improve WHEC. • WHEC has smaller classes and individual support, do not think that the demographic would fit into a merged school. Historically primary children from Wester Hailes have not been sent to WHEC, has there been any investigation as to why.
<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"> • Concerned re larger school. • There was some discussion about building a school of 1200 capacity and whether this would need extending again. Comments included that if the CHS site was sold to developers it would create further capacity demands.
<p>Alternative Proposals</p>	
<p>Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as require.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining the current site and rebuilding on this was the unanimously preferred option. • Extending all three high schools (Currie / Balerno and Wester Hailes) would help to avoid disruption.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was an understanding that the current CHS building needed to close but expanding or rebuilding on the current site would serve the growing community. There was a level of doubt that a new school would serve capacity needed. • There were questions around whether or not there was a structural review for Balerno Community High School and why there was a proposal to extend this and not the others. (Andy Gray explained that CHS survey found elements of CHS that required more improvements than anticipated so it was included in the Wave 4 Programme for Improvement. There is more urgency to deal with CHS than Balerno Community High School) • If CHS were rebuilt on the current site there should be ambitious thinking around facilities and what is required for Currie which is, essentially, a town. • CHS is a community hub and if the school is rebuilt then there should be a transition between old and new. • The current site feels safe.
Build a new school on the Muir Wood field site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The preferred option was to rebuild on the current site.
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"> • These are distinct communities, as is Wester Hailes. • Concerns over supersize school.

Open Discussion

- The provision of support at CHS helps one participant's son who is autistic. Not sure that travelling to a larger school would work. There has been no assessment of educational need. Demand for some facts/strategy. (Andy Gray advised that allocation is based on individual assessment of needs. The school has a per capita allocation for staffing. This wouldn't change. There would be no dilution of resource unless there was a cut across the city. Every child would be considered irrespective of location)
- They share clubs and classes (Andy Gray commented that there was a strong argument to preserve the relationship from all the workshops so far. None of the participants have suggested making the distance greater)
- There are many extra-curricular activities run from CHS – concern that there will be a knock-on effect.
- The proposals pose a risk to staff (unemployment), local shops (economy), it is not just about the school – it would be stripping the heart of the community.
- The medical centre and chemist are under a huge amount of pressure so if the school is knocked down in favour of housing this would be a real a concern.
- It is important to be able to walk or cycle to school rather than being driven.
- Moved to area specifically due to proximity to school.
- There is an obesity epidemic – if you move the school so that active travel is not possible then you are creating further issues around this.
- Zero carbon ambition – this must be considered.
- People base their whole lives around the school.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents are concerned that the school will lose teachers.• Could consultation have taken place sooner, before planning permission was granted for the new housing development.• There is already a wide range of curriculum options on offer at CHS – not sure what could be added by expanding.• Does the council have economists? Why wasn't this situation planned for? There is not joined up thinking and it has caused infrastructure issues.• Elderly residents are carrying out a survey of traffic on Lanark Road would be useful to see results.• It is worrying that no evidence of school mergers is collected by the council or Scottish Government (Andy Gray advised that although there are no studies, lessons learned show that transition should start three or four years in advance).• One participant was upset after reading a suggestion from Councillor Perry that six years of disruption for current pupils was acceptable for the sake of the 60-year plan.• Participants were keen to see the Education Strategy.• Participants wanted more detail on reducing the attainment gap and carbon footprint.• Communities, pupils, and the elderly should be brought together for discussions.• Concern about rumours following workshops – these have the potential to cause splits between communities.
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Discussion Group Three

Item	Discussion / Comments
<p>Published Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council proposal to amalgamate WHEC / Currie Community High School – opposed to this. • Concern that this would not close the attainment gap – where is the evidence for this? • Are larger schools necessarily better? • There are 14 schools in Edinburgh that are smaller than 1200 already. Research? • Ainslie Park / Broughton merger – what information is there available on this? • Concern that it took a long time (“a generation”) for attainment to rise again there, following a dip? • Currie Community High School already does really well – what about the impact on pupils? • How will a merger raise attainment further? • Exam results / developing the young workforce / positive destinations already very high. • This is being billed as an amalgamation but it will split the school and split the community – part of the current catchment moving to Balerno Community High School etc. • If this were to go ahead, it would be the case that siblings could be at different schools – not only that but an individual may have to attend two or three secondary schools within their educational career.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is unacceptable and would interrupt their routine. • A phased approach might mean uncertainty and disruption to learning. • What about those in exam years? • A parent with experience of a school merger in a different local authority spoke about things being “quite tribal” to begin with and of it taking many years to successfully combine two cultures, 20 years, a long journey, teachers had to adjust. • It can be difficult to mesh two different communities. • Woodlands School was not mentioned tonight – a full Equality Impact Assessment would need to be carried out. • Better communication needed. • There is feeling that Woodlands School is being ignored. • What about the wellbeing of teaching staff? • Current pupils are already experiencing a negative impact. • They are unsure, uncertain over what will happen in the next four years. • Why has the status grade of the school building changed in a short space of time? • More communication and information needed. • How confident are the council in roll projections? • What is the confidence interval? • Boroughmuir High School already too small. • Rejuvenation of population in existing housing stock needs to be considered, alongside the Local Development Plan when making any roll projection
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a School Estate Strategy or Policy? Does the council have one? Where is it? • Concern over community facilities being removed – something like 38 community groups use the school, swimming pool facility, older people access the school. • Semi-rural issues discussed – unique context of the community. • Splitting of the community is unacceptable – loss of whole community identity. • “We are not like the other schools of 1200”. • “We already get really good, maximum use out of this school”. • Group generally in favour of a new school building – although quality of some new buildings discussed and this could be a concern. • A year ago, a separate catchment area meeting took place. • Nothing came back from this, no communication and now this – primary school catchments were discussed back then. • There is no public transport to either of the new proposed sites. • Early mornings/evenings a particular concern.
<p>Summary of Published Proposals:</p>	
<p>Pupils from the Cherry Tree area of Currie Community High School would go to Balerno Community High from August 2019.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newmills to Balerno Community High School – travel concerns. • In particular, primary children walking to Dean Park Primary School is a concern.

<p>Currie Community High would amalgamate with WHEC in August 2022 upon the completion of a new South West Edinburgh High.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's best for pupils at WHEC? • Feeling that WHEC parents would be best placed to discuss this and share views. • Travel distance important. • Community facilities at WHEC important to consider. • Moving to a different community and how that would be accepted. • There is additional resource at WHEC to consider.
<p>S1 pupils from Canal View, Clovenstone, Nether Currie and Juniper Green primary schools would go the new West Edinburgh High when it opens in August 2022.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Nether Currie catchment area to one of the proposed amalgamated school sites is a 25-minute walk (for an adult); it is a further 25 minutes from Currie Primary School to the site = 50 minutes
<p>Alternative Proposals</p>	
<p>Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as required</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain all schools and refurbish/rebuild - group unanimously in favour of this option. • Nothing is broken so why fix it? • Refurbish or rebuild Currie Community High School here. • This has been done at Lasswade High School, for example – it is tried and tested. • Falkirk High School also mentioned. • There is scope to extend on the current site. • Some discussion that a rebuild might be better – although that decision would be made by qualified builders / architects. • Refurbishment with proper maintenance.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiency is important. • Built to last.
Build a new school on the Muir Wood field site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opposed to this. • Didn't make sense to the group. • Environmental issues. • Pylons owned by Scottish Power – removal costs. • A non-starter – is this even a possibility?
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"> • Opposed to this. • Too big. • Concern about impact on Juniper Green Primary School.
Other Comments	<p>Travel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lanark Road West – congestion and safety. • Bridge over the bypass – a potential health and safety issue. • Children walking to school is very important.
Other Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each “retained” school could be a centre of excellence for a particular subject or group of subjects. • 3-18 campus – efficient use of land, supportive to Currie Primary School capacity, very positively. received as an idea by this group, gives us a chance to re-imagine this site. • Group also very positive about the Community Hub idea (as put forward in Parents in Partnership paper).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Widening Nether Currie catchment and extending Nether Currie Primary School to create a “two-tier” school also discussed as possibilities.• “We’re not up for experiments”.• Craigroyston High School is the only school in Edinburgh to get very good for its curriculum even though it’s a smaller school.• Very happy with current curriculum offer at Currie Community High School – eight subjects in S4.• A newer / refurbished school could offer even more.• Some support for a completely new build here – if like-for-like or better (including things like swimming pool), and shared facilities with Woodlands School.• Eco credentials of school.• Cafeteria/ quality of food.
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Discussion Group Four

Item	Discussion / Comments
<p>Published Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council owns sites that are zoned for Education – why buy another one? • Council needs to demonstrate why the published proposals are better than the status quo • Need educational evidence to show larger schools close the attainment gap • Travel to proposed sites not safe, not walkable, congested, heavily polluted • Concern about staff shortages – staff may leave due to uncertainty • Proposal divides Currie community
<p>Summary of Published Proposals:</p>	
<p>General</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Baberton Site: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Greenbelt ○ Community will not support its development ○ Unlikely to get planning permission to build on it, therefore the council's strategy fails • Curriemuirend Park: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Zoned for housing ○ Main arterial road, hard boundaries (bypass) – concern about pollution and safety

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pupils should be directed west, against rush hour traffic rather than to a site that joins rush hour traffic ○ Steep site, will be difficult to develop
Pupils from the Cherry Tree area of Currie Community High School would go to Balerno Community High from August 2019.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Crossing Lanark Road West a concern due to volume of traffic, unlikely to walk to Dean Park Primary School from there and is likely to lead to more pressure for drop-off and pick up ● No controlled crossing until Bridge Road ● 40% is not a majority
Currie Community High would amalgamate with WHEC in August 2022 upon the completion of a new South West Edinburgh High.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Merging different communities is challenging
Alternative Proposals	
Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unanimously in favour of retaining the status quo ● Retains two of the city's best performing schools ● Retains community ● Opportunity to create a community hub – sports facilities, ATM, dentist, health centre ● Keeping schools in existing communities avoids creating transport issues
Build a new school on the Muir Wood field site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Significant constraints to development: Greenbelt, owned by housebuilder, power cables, planning history resisting its development ● Environmental concerns – loss of greenspace

<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"> • Not in favour of amalgamation on either High School site – too big • Need evidence that larger school is better, will offer a broader curriculum than currently available and closes the attainment gap
<p>Parent Council Proposal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed views • Better to keep the issues separate
<p>Other comments</p>	<p>Existing School</p> <p>What works well</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing feeder primary schools • Educational excellence • Good performing school • Sufficient breadth of curriculum choices • Well used by the community, including youth clubs • Walkable routes to school • Interaction with Woodlands School – integrated learning opportunities • The existing site could accommodate projections • Dynamic school, award winning, staff

Discussion Group Five

Item	Discussion / Comments
<p>Published Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group felt that the Council had not accounted for future development and the pupil generation represented by potential sites in the area. • There were serious concerns raised about the impact of the proposals on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community; ○ Distance and travel – cost of travel; • It was suggested that if the proposals were to progress all Currie pupils should go to Balerno rather than splitting them between two schools. • There were concerns about the ability of the schools to attract new staff and maintain their existing through a period of significant uncertainty. • Some felt that the uncertainty in the proposals would disrupt the quality of teaching. • Woodlands School and its role in the Currie community and the way it broke down barriers was discussed. • There was discussion about Curriculum choice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The group were uncertain what Currie Community High School failed to offer? ○ Surely any lack of offering could be resolved by improving links and cooperation between schools? ○ It was pointed out that the school in Edinburgh which was highest rated for Curriculum choice was Craigroyston Community High School which has a low roll.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions were raised about the way that Learning Support needs are met in larger schools – is there any benefit supporting larger schools? • Discussion around the size of a school resulted in suggestions that 800-900 would be optimal but there was no clear consensus. • There were discussions about what facilities would remain on the Currie Community High School site under the proposal – a sports Hub does not create community.
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 walk to Dean Park from the Cherry Tree area is long and not a safe route – nearer Currie Community High School and there is only one crossing point. • Traffic from the new developments and Cherry Trees would be turning west which would cause more congestion at the Balerno/Lanark Road junction. • It should be noted that the majority of pupils in the Cherry Tree area attend Currie Community High School. • Just because the Cherry Tree area is within the Balerno boundary doesn't mean it should be aligned with Balerno Community High School. • Some people would rather have the eight additional classrooms rather than the longer less safe route to school. • There was concern about Dean Park Primary becoming a large school. • Concerns were raised about separation of siblings under the proposals.

<p>Currie Community High would amalgamate with WHEC in August 2022 upon the completion of a new South West Edinburgh High.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was pointed out that WHEC has done very well in recent years in terms of pupils reaching positive destinations. • The needs of children from both Currie and Wester Hailes need to be considered by the council – are the support needs the same? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It was suggested that they are not. • Closing the Attainment Gap <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Where is the evidence support the proposal closing the attainment gap? • Concern was raised about the impact on the mental health of children in Wester Hailes the disruption of the proposal would cause.
Alternative Proposals	
<p>Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was suggested that Balerno Community High School pupils could be decanted to the existing Currie building once a new Currie Community High School had been built to allow Balerno Community High School to be refurbished.
<p>Other comments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An alternative option of having WHEC run first to fourth year stages with S5 and S6 taking place in other schools (such as Currie) was discussed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Travel routes for pupils from Wester Hailes to Currie was raised as an issue. • There was discussion about creating an all-through Hub on the existing Currie Community High School site – nursery, primary and secondary on a single site. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This would result in relationships being retained through nursery, primary and secondary school.