

Notes from school review workshops

Currie Community High School: Workshop held on Wednesday 7 February 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">• Site option one – nowhere for kids to go at lunchtime, not a big site; sandwiched between main roads; acoustic protection required; traffic along Lanark Road, not safe routes to school.• Site option two – closer to bypass; poor walking routes – Donkey Lane is quiet and unlit. Will open the door for more housing development. Traffic and transport problems.• Option three – too far. Traffic and transport problems.• Low pupil generation assumptions – expect number of additional pupils to be much larger;• New housing sites may come forward in the area;• Changing demographics – older residents being replaced by families;<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Therefore, need four schools in area to allow for flexibility and additional pupil growth;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would like to know the projection methodology • Primary school proposals – Nether Currie proposals supported • Keep Cherry Tree catchment area as it is. • Big schools – class sizes too big, lesser relationship with pupils, not flexible to accommodate future growth. Would like evidence about larger schools and why they could be better.
Alternative Proposals	
<p>Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as require.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All were in support of this. • Woodlands and Currie Community High School work well together; • Nether Currie and Currie primary schools have strong peer relationships that would be split if secondary school proposals progress; • Transition relationship from primary schools to high school has been built up over many years. • Council already owns the Currie Community High School site therefore don't have to buy land from a developer if rebuild on the site. • Rebuilding on site – continuity of education; could be a bit bigger and designed with an expansion plan; key position in community – the location has proven to work for kids and older people. If no school then the area would be dormitory. • If school is rebuilt on current site – community hub / medical centre could be included as high proportion of older residents in community. Youth facility. Better sports facilities, running routes, after school facilities, child care. • Currie and Balerno Community High schools have strong well-known brands and are known for quality. A new school won't have this recognition.

<p>Build a new school on the Muir Wood field site.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muir Wood – expensive to deal with pylons, prone to flooding, traffic impacts, not in the middle of the community.
<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"> • Big schools – class sizes too big, lesser relationship with pupils, not flexible to accommodate future growth. Would like evidence about larger schools and why they could be better.

Discussion Group Two

Item	Discussion / Comments
<p>Published Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is this benefiting? 90% of residents are against this, how can it go ahead if everyone is against the catchment change? • The group were mixed in their views on school size. • A parent stated that she has a friend who is a teacher at an amalgamated school, and the teacher does not know all the pupils and the teacher is now doing additional learning support. • A member of the group referred to Councillor Ian Perry's comment on 3 January 2018 re "interesting experiment". Group agreed that they will not prepared for our children to be part of an experiment.
<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"> • The group wanted more context around the percentages of Cherry Tree children going to Balerno Community High School. • A Cherry Tree resident stated that it has been 14 years that they have had links to Currie. Everything they know is in Currie. Parents would need to drive their children to school. • Parents could have children in different schools. • Would there be sibling guarantee?
<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"> • Nether Currie and Juniper Green should not split as they are on one side of the road.

Alternative Proposals	
<p>Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as require.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group strongly preferred this option of Currie Community High School remaining on its current site as there is no good evidence for change. • Keep the three schools is the better option. • Currie Community High School is successful. • There is no evidence that the proposal will close the attainment gap. • The proposal could create division. • St Cuthbert's RC Primary School is a very small primary school. The children are mainly autistic, the ratio is 12 children to five adults. A couple of children moved to Woodlands School. The children's needs are very different. Woodlands School is doing a fantastic job. Measuring their attainment gap must be very different. Woodlands School needs to stay with the Currie community. Woodlands School use the home economics facilities. • Keep sport facilities. Currie and Balerno have no facilities, the nearest facilities are a 30 to 45 minute bus ride away. • Currie Community High School is the community hub as there is no high street. • Believe it is not cost effective to close schools the current capacity should remain the same. • Build a new school on Currie Community High School site and when Balerno Community High School is refurbished move the Balerno Community High School pupils to Currie Community High School. • Concerns over traffic and safety travelling to school particularly the flyover near the site option.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Donkey Lane would be the optimum route and this is a mud bath. ● Relationship with Woodlands School.
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"> ● The group agreed this was not a proposal they would consider.
Open Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How is the attainment gap measured in the three schools? Worried attainment will become smaller. Broughton High and Ainslie Park School took around 17-20 years to get over that attainment gap. ● What would be the benefit of WHEC amalgamating with Currie Community High School? The WHEC pupils require additional support. Andy Gray, Head of Schools and Lifelong Learning confirmed that WHEC is attaining, the school is doing very well. Parent said that pupils from WHEC will be affected and there will be increases in behavioural issues. ● Murrayburn feed to WHEC and Forrester High School and to various other schools. The pupils at WHEC would need a higher level of support. There are so many undiagnosed children. ● It was stated by a member of the group that there are four schools that amalgamated in Fife, this has caused behavioural problems, the Police are called every day to the school. ● A member of the group works at one of the suggested amalgamated schools. She stated that it is tricky for the pupils and made it difficult for the teacher to teach due to the trauma and violence. ● Where is the evidence to support amalgamating additional needs children? ● Why are there no planners in attendance?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happens to the land if this proposal goes ahead? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If the school moves out of Currie and onto the periphery and houses are built on the land. If this happens where is that in the council's forward planning? • The reason for the catchment change is due to lack of space at Currie Primary School. 12 years ago CEC merged the new schools, the council sold off the land and houses have been built on the land. Our schools can be over-subscribed before they are fully open. Have the council not learned their lessons? History is repeating itself. CEC have not learnt from mistakes. • A member of the group stated that an officer at Nether Currie workshop said that 1200 capacity school is an excellent size of school. However, these 1200 schools are in highly populated areas. Currie is a sprawling corridor and should not be viewed the same. • Are Edinburgh Council collating data on air quality due to traffic impact?
<p>Alternative Proposal from Currie Community High School Parent Council</p>	<p>Build a Community Hub</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This would provide facilities/opportunities for all ages. • Reference to Peebles High School, similar to Currie Community High School, there is a sports centre, café etc. • The wood at Currie Community High School is named after a teacher, moving Currie Community High School away from the wood, would reduce their access to outdoor learning – Foraging trips. • All thought the community hub an excellent option. • Inveralmond and Peebles have a good community hub. Inveralmond is in the middle of the housing estate.

Option 1A Rebuild Currie Community High School on the current Currie Community High and Woodlands School joint campus site:

- Would this work?
- Uncertainty around the size of the school.
- Boroughmuir High School pupils think the classrooms are too small and can feel claustrophobic.

Option 1B as above incorporating Currie Primary School:

- It would depend on leadership.
- Is there enough space to fit the three schools on the existing site?
- If there is space to build the three schools, would there be enough outside space.

Discussion Group Three

Item	Discussion / Comments
Summary of Published Proposals	
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"> The group wanted more context around the percentages of Cherry Tree children going to Balerno Community High School.
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"> One person asked, “Should we not be facilitating the 700 kids to remain at Currie Community High School rather than the 300 from WHEC?”
S1 pupils from Canal View PS, Clovenstone PS, Nether Currie PS, and Juniper Green PS would go the new West Edinburgh High when it opens in August 2022.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nether Currie and Juniper Green should not split as they are on one side of the road.
Alternative Proposals	
Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current proposal will create a division through the centre of Currie. This doesn't feel right. The relationship with Woodlands School is a major reason to keep Currie Community High School on its current site. Buildings and land are nothing to do with education. The published proposal does not take educational benefit into account. This option is the most flexible option.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would not cause as much disruption. • The group wanted to keep sport facilities and the field. • They wanted to retain a strong community. Closing the school would be a loss to the community. • Traffic/Travel – safety is an issue with the other options. The flyover near the proposed site would be very unsafe for children to cross. • Attainment Gap – there is no evidence to suggest merging would improve this. There is evidence that suggests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Building links with communities ○ Parental engagement ○ Leadership <p>Can improve attainment.</p> • It's currently a successful school. We should build on this example and make it even better. • It will cost the council more in the long run if we take away schools. We should keep the current capacity.
Build a new school on the Muir Wood field site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group did not think this was a good site because it being a greenfield site. • There appear to be no advantages to pupils from Wester Hailes or Currie. • The group said they can't give an opinion without more information.
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"> • The group thought this option was not even worth considering as an option.

Open Discussion

- When asked if they are in favour of a new school, the group thought that they could be good, however, they would like some studies to show how attainment, achievement, etc, could be improved.
- When asked if the group would like a refurb/rebuild, some said that they wouldn't want to cause a detrimental effect at any other school by using money to upgrade their school. They want equity across the whole area.
- There was a request for information about how Currie Community High School's condition compares to other schools in Edinburgh.
- The drivers for change are not clear.
- The group wanted more information and concrete numbers,
 - e.g. are children who attend private schools being factored in and what is this percentage?
- We need a more robust methodology for forecasting pupil numbers for the next 60 years.
- Are we accounting for the new development in the Garden City?
- There is a lack of information to give an informed opinion on all the options.
- How confident are we that we are accounting for any knock-on effect of decisions made in the West of Edinburgh?
- With lots of new development and increasing children, why if there is spare capacity in schools are we getting rid of a school?
- The current basis is fundamentally flawed because:
 - Schools are under capacity
 - Schools don't need to be torn down now based on condition reports.
- The proposal feels like it's withdrawing flexibility, e.g. for expansion.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• History is repeating itself. We have not learnt from mistakes.• When asked how they would like the council to conduct the consultation – two people in the group said they would have liked the proposal to have come with a list of the pros, the cons and evidence. However, one person said the opposite and would have liked to have shaped it from a blank canvas.• The proposal should focus on the needs for the community<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ What is needed is a more bespoke/personalised approach focussed on communities. This might help close the attainment gap.• There was some debate around what size of school the group wanted. One person wanted a smaller school as children might get lost in a bigger school. Others didn't mind increasing the capacity by a couple of hundred to allow for flexibility.• There was discussion around the disruption of the proposal. Have other decants been considered
--	--

Discussion Group Four

Item	Discussion / Comments
<p>Published Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the evidence that larger schools are better educationally? • Discussion throughout the evening referred to a number of reports and academic studies that allegedly demonstrate that smaller schools were better than larger ones, and that WHEC cohort would not benefit from a merger. • Craigroyston High School cited as the only Edinburgh secondary school with HMIE report of 'very good' for curriculum.
<p>Consultation Process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was criticism about the way the process was undertaken. • Why was there not community consultation before any proposals were drawn up? • The communication approach was damaging to children – no care or thought given to their emotional welfare. • Criticism that the proposal did not include a Status Quo option. There needs to be a lesson learned from this approach and the way things were handled. • There was a desire to ensure that there was consultation on further, costed and appraised, options before moving to a Statutory Consultation. See list of information below under Alternative options. • One parent asked that the following statement from the Education Officer be recorded "the final recommendations will be a direct result of your feedback".

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"> • Strong opposition to this part of the proposals. Main concerns were: • Currie Community High School is currently high-attaining / achieving and the disruption of a merger would definitely result in an attainment dip. • Rebuilding on the existing site would also be disruptive but, as proved at James Gillespie's High School, if the school remains intact and educational continuity is maintained, attainment could go up. • The proposals would leave Currie without a Secondary school within the heart of its community. This would have an impact on community use. • The existing school is sized correctly and located appropriately for its community. A move away from Currie would disrupt the community and family support networks established within 3 unique villages along the transport corridor. • Concern was expressed about Woodlands School losing the shared campus facilities of Currie Community High School. • Concern was expressed about the roll forecasts – the methodology is flawed as it does not have an error bar. It does not reflect demographic change as evidenced at James Gillespie's High School and Boroughmuir High School catchments.
Potential sites at Curriemuirend Park and north of Baberton identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was suspicion about the council's motives regarding use of Currie Community High School site. A view that the proposals were engineered to release a capital receipt from the site. A deal had been done with developers. • There was suspicion about financial incentives regarding site two (North Baberton site) – was this not in Murray Estate's ownership? There was a view that a deal had been done with Murray about this site. • There was a view that the Curriemuirend Park site was 'ridiculous for a school'. Not even worth discussing. It was in the 'triangle of doom'.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The new sites would involve all Currie and Juniper Green residents to travel East in the morning to join and add to the congestion. Currently most travel West against the traffic.
<p>Alternative Options</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Parent Council had held an extraordinary general meeting on 11th January to discuss an alternative proposal – details of which are with the council. ● There were two options. The first was to rebuild Currie Community High School on the existing site and retain shared campus links with Woodlands School. A second option was as above, but also to include Currie Primary School in an all through educational campus. The opportunity would create a community hub supporting prevailing Scottish Government policies on community and educational development. ● The following information was requested for options to be assessed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Traffic impact ○ Transitional management for pupils and teachers ○ Educational rationale for CEC proposed option ○ Pupil projections to 2047 ○ Research behind super schools ○ Support for Learning figures ○ Risk and impact assessment on community ○ All costs ○ Survey information on Currie Community High School building

Discussion Group Five

Item	Discussion / Comments
<p>Published Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No evidence the published proposals will close the attainment gap • Proposals driven by an estates strategy rather than educational benefits – no educational research has been provided showing evidence in support for the proposal • Splits the Currie community down Riccarton Mains Road – split friendships, peers • Divisive and create conflict in the community – particularly the villages of Juniper Green, Currie and Balerno • Adds time to children’s journey to school – will be more challenging for single parents • Children will not be able to walk to school • Buses will not be able to cope with extra passengers • Removing the school from Currie removes the community from Currie • Proposed sites are not in safe areas – concern about pupil safety after dark • The Currie community should not suffer because of the knock-on effects of changes in other areas (Kirkliston, Ratho and West Edinburgh High School; Kirknewton and West Calder High School) • Council’s history of projections is poor – closed Curriehill Primary School and now need extra classrooms at Currie Primary School

	Administration are thinking in the short term and opportunity to raise capital from the release of the Currie Community High School site.
Summary of Published Proposals:	
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"> • Cherry Tree area should continue to feed to Currie Primary School because it is a safer route to school
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"> • Some felt there was no problem amalgamating with WHEC on the Currie Community High School site
S1 pupils from Currie Primary School would go to Balerno Community High School from 2022.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currie Primary School to Balerno Community High School is not a safe route
Alternative Proposals	
Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unanimous support for this proposal – all schools are the heart of their own communities • Existing Currie Community High School site is in a good location • Less disruption to existing pupils, the site is big enough for a tandem build • Existing clubs, like gymnastics, (c. 48 clubs use existing Currie Community High School and Balerno Community High School facilities) could continue to use local facilities • Children can continue to walk to school • Maintain links with Woodlands School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Low achievers at Currie Community High School benefit from integration with Woodlands School

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Woodlands School cannot be incorporated into a big school ● Rebuilding on existing site presents opportunities to improve on existing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ include more community facilities, i.e. health centre ○ learning for all generations ○ Early Learning ○ Day care for elderly - high percentage of retired people in the area, opportunity to tackle loneliness ○ Create a Centre of Excellence building on Hospitality courses ● Improved Sports Facilities.
<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"> ● Existing subject / curriculum choice is already high – need to see evidence about the educational benefits of a large school.
<p>Build a new school on the Muir Wood field site.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Concern this has been suggested to further divide the community.