

Notes from school review workshops

Wester Hailes Education Centre: Workshop held on Thursday 8 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">Loss of community identity if school moves. It will be difficult to attract and retain staff.
Summary of Published Proposals:	
WHEC would amalgamate with Currie Community High School in August 2022 upon the completion of a new South West Edinburgh High School.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Everyone opposed this proposal.
Potential sites at Curriemuirend Park, north of Baberton and Murrayburn identified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Everyone opposed this proposal.
S1 pupils from Sighthill Primary School would go to Forrester High School from 2022.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Parents from Forrester catchment choose to send their children to WHEC as it suits them better.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not supported as walk would bring too many distractions, railway / tramline to get passed. Forrester High School has a bullying problem.
Alternative Proposals	
Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHEC improving school • No bullying • Better Teaching • Better opportunities for foreign trips • WHEC benefits from smaller class sizes, teachers and pupils know each by name. • It is an inclusive school which is good for pupils that need extra support. • Brand new school with new facilities could be positive but general view that the current school already has good facilities. • Refurbish what is required is all that is needed. • Potential opportunity to provide more job clubs, clothing banks, debt advice and counselling services. • Located in centre of community, close to other facilities e.g. shops. • Current routes to WHEC are convenient and safe. Other potential locations will not have as easy routes.

Discussion Group Two

Item	Discussion / Comments
<p>Published Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group thought that the workshops were a just a “ticking the box” exercise. • It’s not IF it’s WHEN! • The proposed changes and other options would make traffic and roads worse. • The proposed changes are not what’s best for the children. It is more about costs and budgets.
<p>Summary of Published Proposals:</p>	
<p>WHEC would amalgamate with Currie Community High School in August 2022 upon the completion of a new South West Edinburgh High School.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All opposed this proposal.
<p>Potential sites at Curriemuirend Park, north of Baberton and Murrayburn identified.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All opposed these proposals. • Children can currently walk to school safely. • If their catchment school was changed to anywhere further away it would mean children would have to get a bus. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This would be too expensive for parents – not affordable. ○ The cost and distance could discourage children from attending which would have a negative effect on attainment. • The new proposed site at Curriemuriend Park would be unsafe and harder for children to walk there due to busy roads / bypass.

<p>S1 pupils from Sighthill Primary School would go to Forrester High School from 2022.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group wanted to disregard this as an option for all the same reasons mentioned above. • One parent did not want to send their child to Forrester High School due to bullying issues. They would apply for an out of catchment placement so they did not attend Forrester High School. • Do not change the catchment. • Sending children from Wester Hailes to other schools will mean that the Wester Hailes children would be an easy target for being bullied as they come from a deprived area. • A group member stated that they had heard that Juniper Green was over-subscribed. How can children get to attend this school from out of catchment areas?
<p>Alternative Proposals</p>	
<p>Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as required</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This was the preferred option of the group. • The group very much wanted to keep WHEC on its existing site. • There has already been a significant amount of money spent on upgrading / refurbishing WHEC, new windows etc. This has been a waste of money if you do not retain the building. • The group were extremely passionate about the school and the additional support it provides. • Why has the money not been invested in the high schools we already have?

The positives and reasons for retaining WHEC on its current site include:

- WHEC is more than just a school, it is a community hub. There are many community groups that use it and activities offered, e.g. swimming, dancing, majorettes, gymnastics.
- Everyone agreed in the group that WHEC is an excellent facility.
- This gives children in the area something to do with their time. If it was taken away there would be nothing else for children to do.
- It is also used by other people (not just children / parents) within the community.
- It will cost extra to go further afield, e.g. for bus fares that they cannot afford.
- Why are children going to an out of catchment school?
- If they had to attend their own catchment school, numbers would increase? Council should say there is no parental choice.
- 2018 intake for WHEC is 100 pupils
- Attainment level has improved
- Morale has been raised
- There is a successful transition programme at WHEC.
- Pupils desire to wear the uniform – everyone the same, no hoodies.
- Children with additional needs are already receiving it, this could be diluted in a larger school
- Currently no travel.

- WHEC provides a high level of support for people with additional or learning support needs.
 - Concerns that the good support for pupils may not be possible in a bigger school with more children.
 - Concerns about bullying, WHEC has a good anti-bullying policy. But it may be harder to implement in a larger school.
- Given how successful WHEC is, the council are sending out a strange message wanting to change this – it seems that it does not really matter how successful WHEC is!
- Questions to Liz Gray, Quality Improvement Manager, how do we deal with the fact that all schools have kids with additional needs?
 - Staffing for additional support is determined by need in each school.
- The group said that WHEC provides a sense of belonging amongst children and the community. Families know each other and get on well.
- Differences between social backgrounds of the children coming together into one school and this could cause problems in the community.
- Closing a school contradicts the challenges associated with the growing population.
- There are new housing estates being built and growing communities in Wester Hailes that we should be accounting for.

<p>Use WHEC building differently - realign Canal View and Clovenstone primary schools with Currie Community High School and Sighthill Primary School with Forrester High School</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current facilities are good and well used. • It gives children the opportunity to take part in activities after school. • Children might not be able to take part in after school activities at a school further away as they will have to get a bus home or travel further. • How can the Council justify keeping the community facilities side of the building open and not the school? • Would the community facilities become Edinburgh Leisure? If it does the prices will increase and people would not be able to afford this. WHEC is affordable for the WHEC community.
<p>Open Discussion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group asked, “would this proposal have come up if Currie didn’t need a new school?” • The group highlighted that if the school had been maintained properly the problems would not have happened. This is something which should be considered in the future. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some people living in WHEC catchment area are choosing to send their children to Catholic school or Currie Community High School (CCHS). This could be due to the untrue stigma about poor performance of WHEC. ▪ The group felt it was a constant battle to overcome the stigma. Is there a way to overcome this? Perhaps promote achievement in WHEC. ▪ If only the facilities were kept in the community this suggests that WHEC is not important for the children, when it is important.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If Edinburgh Leisure took it over, costs would increase and could be unaffordable for people to use. ▪ Building new schools but also keeping the facilities open to the community might not be the most efficient use of money by the council. • How did the Council get the WHEC land? The group were under the impression that the land had been bestowed to the council for education purposes. Is that correct? And if so would there not be restrictions on the land? • All felt passionately that the children should have a voice and be listened too.
<p>Suggestions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Invest in the primary schools, get the kids through the door! ▪ If retaining WHEC is not an option then the “Old Venchie” site could be a possible option: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Closer to the Wester Hailes catchment area ○ Within walking distance ○ There would be no transport needs/costs involved ▪ Would prefer WHEC to be refurbished and made good. ▪ WHEC community are aware off the bad comments that the Currie community have made. They all felt strongly that this was snobbery by the parents, it is not the children. ▪ Not interested in a new school. ▪ They were upset about it being labelled as a low performing school. ▪ They think there is a stigma attached to the school with regards to low performance which is untrue.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ They provided examples of children going on to be successful and continue with further education.▪ The group discussed that this could be promoted better to change attitudes and stigma within and out with Wester Hailes.▪ The group stated that there is an assumption in these plans that goes against small schools, but there is evidence that small schools achieve as well.
--	---

Discussion Group Three

Item	Discussion / Comments
Summary of Published Proposals:	
WHEC would amalgamate with Currie Community High School in August 2022 upon the completion of a new South West Edinburgh High School.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group very much wanted to keep WHEC on its existing site as WHEC. This was the preferred option of the group.
Potential sites at Curriemuirend Park, north of Baberton and Murrayburn identified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group wanted to disregard this as an option for all the same reasons mentioned below.
S1 pupils from Sighthill Primary School would go to Forrester High School from 2022.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group wanted to disregard this as an option for all the same reason mentioned below. Also, one parent did not want to send their child to Forrester High School due to bullying issues. They would choose to send their child to a different school if this happened.
Alternative Proposals	
Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WHEC is more than just a school, it is a community resource. There are many community groups that use it and activities offered, e.g. swimming, dancing, majorettes, soft play, it can be hired out for birthday parties, etc. This gives children in the area something to do with their time. If it was taken away there would be nothing else for children to do. It is also used by other people (not just children/parents) within the community.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will cost extra to go further afield, e.g. for bus fares. • Current facilities are good and well used. • It gives children the opportunity to take part in activities after school. • Children might not be able to take part in after school activities at a school further away as they will have to get a bus home or travel further. <p>Links with community groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHEC has good links with groups / organisations, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wester Hailes Healthy Living Centre ○ Lyceum Theatre - drama group - after school activity. ○ Costs are low and provides opportunities for work experience <p>Safety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHEC is a safe space for children • Home might be the volatile environment • The other options might discourage children from going there or staying there. <p>Travel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children can currently walk to school safely. • If their catchment school was changed to anywhere further away it would mean children would have to get a bus. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This would be too expensive for parents. ○ The cost and distance could discourage children from attending which would have a negative effect on attainment. • The new proposed site at Curriemuriend Park would be unsafe and harder for children to walk there due to busy roads / bypass.
--	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be difficult to pick children up from a school further away, e.g. in emergency situations. <p>Roads/Traffic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed changes and other options would make traffic and roads worse. <p>Achievement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group were not interested in a new school. They are proud of their current school. • They were upset about it being labelled as a low performing school. • They think there is a stigma attached to the school with regards to low performance which is untrue. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ They provided examples of children going on to be successful and continue with further education. ○ The group discussed that this could be promoted better to change attitudes and stigma within and out with Wester Hailes. <p>Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed changes are not what's best for the children. It is more about costs and budgets. <p>Current support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHEC provides a high level of support for people with additional or learning support needs, e.g. dyslexia. • The group were frightened this would be lost in a bigger school. Would there be time available to provide this additional support?
--	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are currently no problems with bullying at WHEC as there is a zero tolerance with bullying here. The group worried that this would be lost in a bigger school. <p>Financial support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHEC provides opportunities and support for different payment methods when it comes to extracurricular activities. E.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A Charity within WHEC and the community cover some costs for activities after school. ○ Parents can make payments over a period rather than a one-off cost which allows children to take part in extra activities / outings / school holidays abroad, etc. ○ This could be lost in a bigger school or if merged with pupils who can better afford to do this from Currie. ○ It could cause a divide between pupils – the children who can afford to do activities and the children who can't. ○ This could lead to bullying. ○ (This is something that should be thought about – how do current pupils at Currie Community High School who live in Wester Hailes cope with this? – Also, this might not just be a problem for people living in Wester Hailes but also some people in Currie.) <p>Identity / Relationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group said that WHEC provides a sense of belonging amongst children and the community. • Families know each other and get on well. • The group felt it was important that children from the different areas are not forced to get on. They felt it would damage the community.
--	---

	<p>Transition Programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current transition programme, e.g. for English / Maths, is currently very good.
<p>Use WHEC building differently - realign Canal View and Clovenstone primary schools with Currie Community High School and Sighthill Primary School with Forrester High School</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current facilities are good and well used. • It gives children the opportunity take part in activities after school. • Children might not be able to take part in after school activities at a school further away as they will have to get a bus home or travel further. • If only the facilities were kept in the community this suggests that WHEC is not important for the children, when it actually is important. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If Edinburgh Leisure took it over, costs would increase and could be unaffordable for people to use. ○ Building new schools but also keeping the facilities open to the community might not be the most efficient use of money by the council.
<p>Other comments</p>	<p>Facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If WHEC could get refurbished it could be an opportunity to improve / create new facilities, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ WHEC have been fighting for an Astro Turf pitch. ○ This could be hired out to bring in revenue. ○ This would also create extra activities for children and others to take part in out with school. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would give children something else to do. • It would keep children out of trouble

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote success and achievements of WHEC as there is an untrue stigma around poor performance.
<p>Suggestions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refurbish WHEC and fix the bits that are broken. • Bring back the creche so that young mums can be supported again <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The group felt very strongly about this and saw it as a positive asset for their school and the community as well as the rest of Edinburgh. ○ The creche allowed young mums to continue as normal in education enabling them to continue through to 6th year. ○ This could actually improve the attainment rate and wider achievement. ○ It could increase the numbers attending WHEC. ○ Mums came from all over Edinburgh as there was nothing like this anywhere else. ○ There may be lots of mums that are not going to school/college now. ○ It is great for young mums that also want to go to college. ○ It was good for young mums without family to support them. ○ It was good for young mums with English as a Second Language (ESL) as it meant that they could be in the same building. This is the same for all mums. ○ The creche was closed due to low numbers/money. It was not publicised enough. ○ However, in the long term this could prove valuable/preventative. ○ The creche could be opened up to the community and not just the pupils. It is more affordable than other methods of childcare.

Discussion Group Four

Item	Discussion / Comments
<p>Published Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site option two would provide a healthy walk to school • The underpass is a useful route • Transport links will be an issue • Transport fees down to Currie would be very expensive for WHEC based pupils • Site option three was too far away and does not work for Currie community. • Site option one – traffic is very bad – it would need to be addressed • Site option two could open the door to green belt development • The underpass is unsuitable • Blending two cultures could have a negative impact – schools are like football teams
<p>Summary of Published Proposals:</p>	
<p>WHEC would amalgamate with Currie Community High School in August 2022 upon the completion of a new South West Edinburgh High School.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All or near all opposed this proposal (See 'comments negative' above)
<p>Potential sites at Curriemuirend Park, north of Baberton and Murrayburn identified.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic would be a major factor (See 'comments negative' above)

<p>S1 pupils from Canal View, Clovenstone, Nether Currie and Juniper Green primary schools would go to the new school from 2022.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All or near all opposed this proposal (See 'comments negative' above)
<p>S1 pupils from Sighthill Primary School would go to Forrester High School from 2022.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All opposed this proposal (See 'comments negative' above) • Also, there was bullying at Forrester High School for WHEC based pupils.
<p>Alternative Proposals</p>	
<p>Retain all schools on their existing sites refurbishing or rebuilding as required</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport links for WHEC are currently good • Smaller, community schools like WHEC work better. In 1200 school more vulnerable children would be lost • Transition is good from primary to secondary • Smaller class sizes are better • If WHEC is surviving why not keep it as a school • Reinvest in WHEC to bring pupils back. • WHEC Teachers are excellent • Good Counselling service at WHEC – it is a safe place for pupils • Retain all schools on existing sites, refurbished • WHEC supports clubs, pool and dance academy • WHEC should be retaining / improving facilities • Government will give no money until 2021.

<p>Use WHEC building differently - realign Canal View and Clovenstone primary schools with Currie Community High School and Sighthill Primary School with Forrester High School</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHEC supports clubs, pool and dance academy • WHEC should be retaining / improving facilities • How can the building be fit for community facilities and not a school? • WHEC needs to keep ownership of the pool in any circumstance – If Edinburgh Leisure took over they would overcharge
<p>Open Discussion / Other Suggestions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the current investment in WHEC still going to go ahead? • High schools should work together to find best long-term solution • Balerno is expecting 400 more houses • WHEC upset that the young people's crèche had been taken away • Alternative Muir Field site would be a nightmare for traffic