

Future Secondary School Provision – Proposal to build a New High School on the Kirkliston Leisure Centre site.

RESPONSES SUMMARY

Purpose of this paper

In response to a previous engagement process regarding future secondary school provision in Queensferry and Kirkliston, City of Edinburgh Council received significant feedback expressing support for a new High School in the Kirkliston area. Several respondents highlighted the opportunity to redevelop the existing Leisure Centre site for this purpose. As a result of this feedback, we commissioned an Architect to develop a viability study for this site and asked people to give us their views on whether they thought this was a suitable site for a new High School, alongside the new Early Years and Primary School building currently under construction.

The questions we asked:

- Do you think Kirkliston Leisure Centre is a good site for a new High School?
- Are there other sites in or around Kirkliston we should be considering for a high School?
- How could we make a new school in the Kirkliston Leisure Centre site a facility for the whole community.
- What do you think about replacing older buildings like Kirkliston Leisure Centre, Kirkliston Library and Kirkliston?

This paper summarises the responses we received.

The Council's response to the feedback we received, and our next steps are set out in a separate report considered by the Education, Children and Families Committee on 5 September 2023. This report is called, "Learning Estate Update: Statutory Consultations required for St Catherine's Primary School, a new Primary School in Queensferry and a new Kirkliston High School".

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1. Summary

1.1 Key Messages

These are the key messages that we took from the responses we received:

c) *Build A New High School in Kirkliston*

Most people support the need for a new high school in Kirkliston, just not on the leisure centre site. Key concerns about the redevelopment of the leisure centre site is that it would add to congestion, impact on local residents, reduce greenspace and sports provision, and that the overall site is too small.

d) *Alternative Sites for a High School*

Many alternative sites were suggested for the development of a new school to the North, East, and South of the village that people felt would be less disruptive to residents and better serve the community's needs and aspirations.

e) *Community Hub facilities*

There is support for locating all community facilities and services in one location. However, there were also concerns about the loss of much valued assets from the High Street that were deemed more accessible, as well as concerns about any reduction in services/activities during school hours.

1.2 Response Summary

We received 177 responses to our online survey. We also received 5 emails and 4 flyer returns. This chart shows what people think about the Kirkliston Leisure Centre site for a High School.

2%

EXPRESSED NO
PREFERENCE

62%

NOT SUITABLE
FOR A NEW
HIGH SCHOOL



36%

SUITABLE
FOR A NEW
HIGH SCHOOL

Kirkliston
Leisure Centre
Site
ALL
186 responses

We used people's postcodes¹ to see if where they lived made a difference to their preference. A significant number of respondents who do not think the leisure site is a good site option came

¹ 11 of the 186 responses did not indicate where they lived. 5 responses came from areas outside Kirkliston.
Education, Children and Families Committee – 5 September 2023

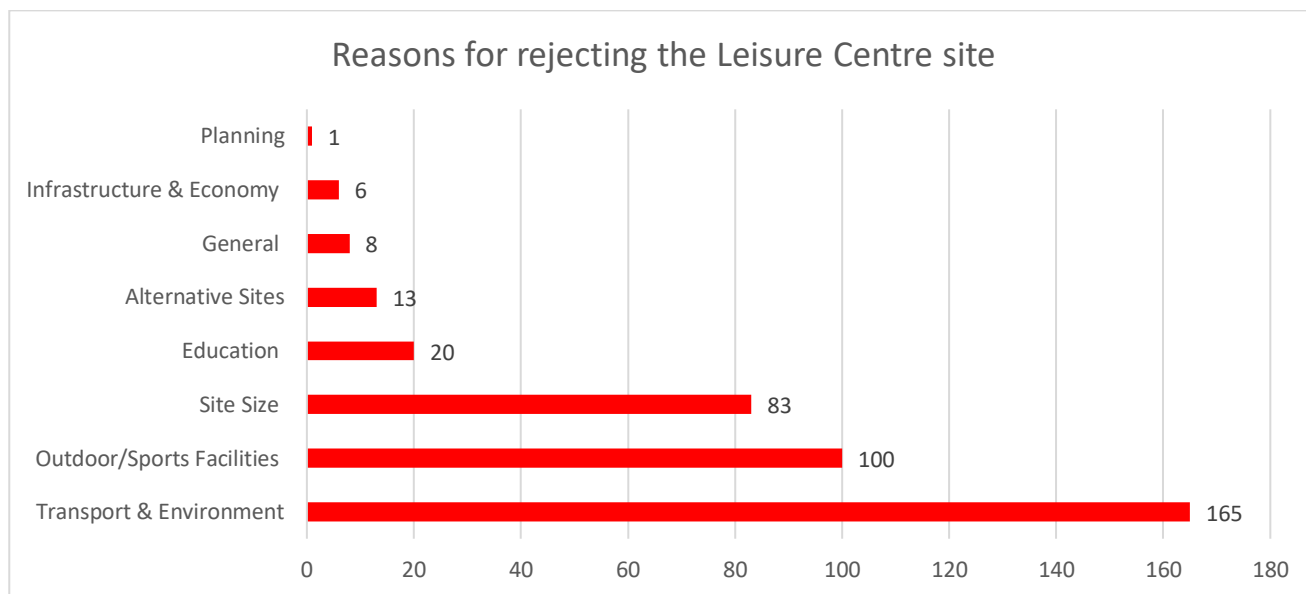
from residents around the area proposed for redevelopment. This is the area where a leaflet drop advertising the proposal targeted every home and so a greater response was anticipated from this area.

Outside of this area 58% of respondents felt that the Kirkliston Leisure Centre site was suitable for a new high school.

2. Suitability of Kirkliston Leisure Centre site

2.1 Majority do not support the redevelopment of the site for a new high school.

116 (62%) of all responses stated or indicated that they did not support the redevelopment of the Leisure Centre site for a new High School. The chart below shows the reasons given for rejecting this option:



4) Increased traffic congestion and impact on the local environment.

People said that traffic congestion and lack of suitable infrastructure is a concern and building a high school on the leisure centre site would only make the situation worse, with insufficient parking for staff and school buses, and pupil drop-off. The new high school is too close to residential properties and would be noisy and disruptive for residents living in the surrounding area. People also thought noise from the motorway and historic flooding make this an unsuitable site for a new high school.

5) Loss of greenspace and sports provision.

People said that the open green space and pitch is well used and valued by the local community. The loss of leisure facilities during the construction period would not be acceptable due to the lack of any other facilities available locally.

6) Size of the proposed Leisure Centre site.

The site is below the recommend size and people felt there is insufficient space for everything required for a new school let alone community use as well and assumed that community access would be restricted to out of school hours.

Other reasons for not supporting a high school on the leisure centre site included:

- Too close to the new nursery/primary annexe which is deemed inappropriate.
- Better alternative sites available.
- Not deemed in the best interests of the village or local children.

“1. Traffic Congestion and poor road infrastructure would only add to the major issues with traffic in Kirkliston especially on main street, it can already take 20 minutes to travel from Leisure centre to crossroads at peak times.

2. As a nearby resident very concerned at the noise levels, congestion, and car parking in residential areas.

3. There appears to be complete lack of car parking spaces required for staff and visitors on the proposed plans. I object to this location.”

People who do not support a new High School on the Leisure Centre site said...

“...regards to the potential loss of the 11 a side football pitch...Kirkliston & South Queensferry (KSQ)space is already at a premium. The club has grown significantly in the last 10 years...and now has more than 600 children from the community who play for KSQ.”

“The site is too small, it will take the leisure facilities away during the day and the traffic will be horrendous at drop off and pick up times.”

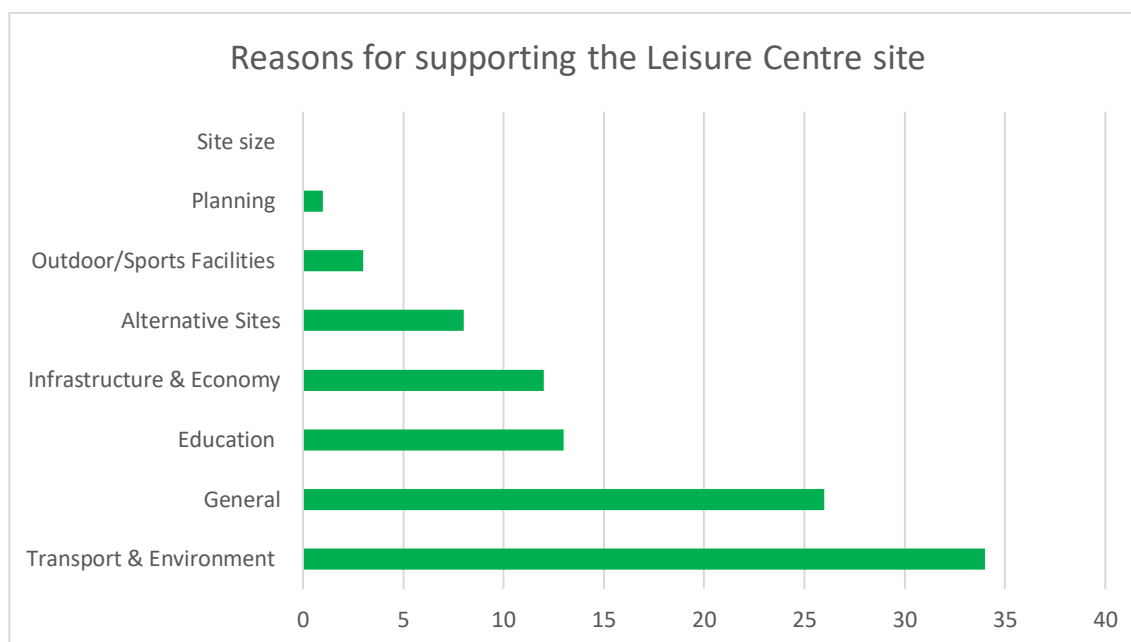
““Although I do not oppose the requirement for a new school in Kirkliston or surrounding area. I am of the professional opinion that the site is not suitable for either interim use of approx. 600 pupils or future 1200 pupils for the location and density of the indicative four storey on the site.”

“The Leisure Centre site whilst the relatively speedy option, still does not tick all the needful. Understanding that the council does own the Leisure Centre property, we will still need to locate proper playing fields. Further to this, there are still infrastructure shortfalls such as an inordinate amount of traffic which would impact teachers and any potential pupils coming from other schools that will potentially be the catchment”.

“Proximity to the motorway, inappropriate infrastructure, horrendous traffic management, removal of one of the only green areas Kirkliston has which is well used by local groups, families and children, existing pickup point for South Queensferry HS pupils, adjacent to local flooding area.”

2.2 Support for a high school on this site

67 (38%) of respondents expressed support for the redevelopment of the Leisure Centre site for a new High School. The chart below summaries the reasons why:



- 1) Easily accessible walking, cycling etc to school. Close to the Primary school, for ease of transition.
- 2) A sense of the Leisure Centre site being the only option as no alternative sites agreed or timescales determined.
- 3) Protects the greenbelt area from further development.

“Close to the primary school, would tie in early years, primary and high school together easing transitions and allowing flow through all sections”.

People who do support a new High School on the Leisure Centre site said...

“By building on the leisure centre site it means a school can be built more quickly - ability to just get on with it as opposed to dragging out the process. Sense that if this isn't done at the leisure centre site it'll be far too many years before anything will get done”

“It's a brilliant idea, it's so good for families in Kirkliston and near, walking distance, nice area, good for community, environment”

*“- the council currently own it
- it doesn't build on green belt
- no further building of house developments is likely with this option whereas it is likely with building on east side of town
- it makes sense to replace the leisure centre with a community centre and sports facility.”*

“There doesn't seem to be anywhere else in the village which is a suitable site and a high school is definitely needed as the village continues to grow.”

Appendix 2: Summary of Responses to the Informal Engagement on Secondary School Provision for Kirkliston

3. Alternative sites in and around Kirkliston

3.1 Many respondents felt there were better alternative sites more suitable for a new high school.

Of the 157 responses, 96 people suggested alternative locations for a new high school:

1) In the village:

The existing primary school site and/or Allison Park.

Play area as part of the new housing, previously proposed for a second primary school.

2) North of the village:

South of the Motorway near the railway track and dog run area.

North of the railway bridge heading towards Queensferry.

3) South of the village:

Below of the Scout Hut towards Newbridge.

Behind the car village at Newbridge.

4) East of the village:

One of the sites out the Burnshot Road including Almondhill.

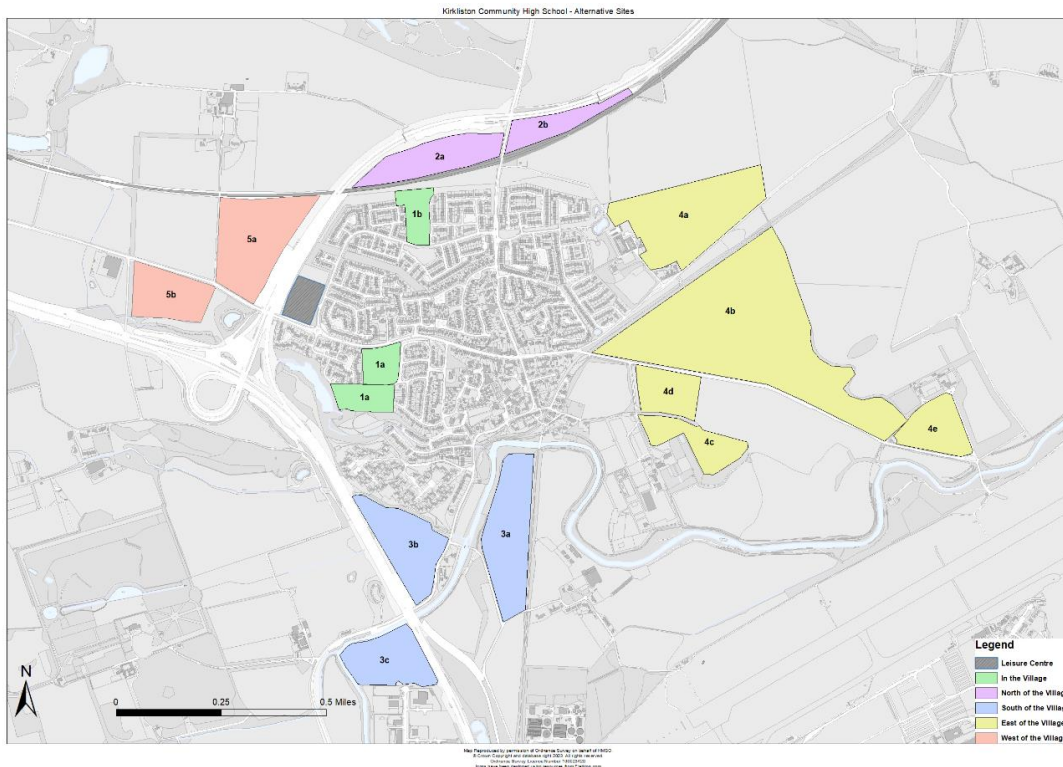
Lower fields opposite Conifox, next to Foxhall.

Out the Airport Road over the burn

5) West of the village:

Fields beyond the motorway heading towards Winchburgh

The map below highlights the locations suggested in and around Kirkliston:



- The former Ministry of Defence site at Craigiehall was also proposed as part of a West Edinburgh solution but has not been captured on the map due to the distance from the village.
- Utilisation of capacity within Winchburgh was also proposed, but not shown on the map.
- Sites at Foxhall and Ratho currently under development have also been excluded.

“A larger site, say off Burnshot road or at the north of the village would be preferable. One where a school with all the required footprint/facilities/transport links could be met without causing huge amounts of taxpayer’s money to be spent on a facility which is unsuitable.”

“there’s a site in easy walking distance at the back(west) of the car village Newbridge on A8 and B800.

- 2. B800 prior to entering village on left side(west) prior to Scouts Hut.*
 - 3. Old tyre factory Newbridge.*
 - 4. Field on Old airport Road.”*
-

“1. Demolish all/part of existing primary school and use this site and Alison Park, although this would still result in same traffic congestion issues

2. Burnshot Road”

Alternative site suggestions...

““The land beside Foxhall or towards the North of the village. Conscious this will open up risk of developers and loss of green space...”

*“The road from Queensferry to Kirkliston
The Road from Kirkliston to Carlowrie Castle
The Road from Kirkliston to the Traffic Lights at Newbridge.”*

4. A new High School as a facility for the whole community

4.1 The needs and aspirations of the local community

Many people felt there was a lack of facilities and activities available in Kirkliston to support the needs of a growing community and welcomed the opportunity to improve what is on offer in the local area.

Feedback has been summarised below:

- Space for everyone with Open Access (daytime, evenings and weekends)
- Improved and Inclusive Sports and Leisure Facilities: Swimming Pool, Fitness Gym, Multi-purpose space for Dance, Gymnastics, Martial Arts, Racquet Sports etc.
- Pitches, Kick About and Play Spaces.
- Theatre, Performance and Events Space.
- Café and safe Social Spaces.
- Library, Wellness Hub and Community Spaces including meeting rooms and bookable facilities.
- Classes/Workshops/Clubs for all ages.

“Incorporate leisure facilities, library and Community Hub into the building in a manner that extends the opening hours and service offered by each individually, i.e. a positive sum outcome.”

What people felt would make a High School a facility for the whole community...

“yes a good idea if the facility if available during school hours, properly built with a good sized gym with proper equipment - not just a set up for school children, similar to the SQH or recently built Winchburgh HS where there are restrictions on the type of equipment and free weights because it is available to school children, it needs to be designed for the community access in mind too. Some studios - 1 or 2 would be good for classes. The current leisure facility holds many popular classes with local residents and children's gymnastics, etc. we don't want to lose these!!

“Good sport facilities that can be used by all. Addition of library with family classes - bookbug etc. - allow local groups to run classes in the evening eg scouts, guides etc.”

“You need to ensure that members of the community have access to leisure facilities - the leisure centre is very heavily used and this should not be taken from us. The opportunity for any drama society that might already exist (or be created) to use a stage like facility at the new school would be appreciated, I would think. A café would also be good, especially as a social space were some of those individuals who live alone can meet others. Somewhere that parents can rent to hold birthday parties etc would be beneficial as I know the leisure centre is already used in this way...”

5. Replacement of older community facilities: Leisure Centre, Library and Community Centre

5.1 Potential to relocate or share other facilities and services as part of a new High School campus.

Comments received were mixed, whilst many could see the benefit of having everything in one location, other people were concerned about the loss of facilities from the high street.

Overall, 92 (54%) responses were supportive of the idea of a Community Hub, if it did not compromise spaces or facilities required for the school, was available to the community during the school day, resulted in a net increase in affordable activities/services on offer, public transport to and from the hub was improved and the existing buildings were re-purposed.

However, approximately a third of the respondents above (32), although supportive of the principle of a Community Hub, felt the Leisure Centre site is not suitable for this purpose.

Key reasons given for supporting the idea of a Community Hub:

- New and modern facilities associated with a new High School
- Greater range of facilities and activities on offer in one location.
- A more sustainable option.
- Frees up existing buildings for other purposes.

59 (35%) of the respondents did not think the relocation of other services was a good idea.

Key reasons given for objecting to the relocation of other facilities:

- The Leisure Centre site is too small for a High School, with insufficient space for anything else.
- Existing historic buildings are part of Kirkliston's character, located in the heart of the village and easier to access.
- Sharing space and facilities with the High School will restrict community access to out of school hours.
- There is a shortage of community spaces and facilities in the village, a spread of assets also disperses traffic.
- A school environment is intimidating and a potential barrier for older people.

“In theory yes, but definitely not on that site. As stated, it is not big enough for a school, let alone additional facilities. Also moving those facilities provides not a single additional service to the community..... How about supporting the local Village Hall initiative, which is trying to build a multi-use space in the heart of Kirkliston. That would be actual new services that the Village desperately needs, instead of rehashing the existing services (and no doubt reducing them in the process). The Leisure Centre, due to the way it operates, provides little support to community groups in the area. The Community Centre team are fantastic, but fully booked in terms of the rooms they have to offer. Kirkliston is crying out for more community spaces provided at non-commercial rates!

“Makes sense as long as it still retains all of the facilities. Would open up opportunities for businesses to move into existing buildings.”

“That will be even perfect, one stop destination for all.”

“I think we should continue to use the existing nursery as a community centre provision, the village lacks halls space and the nursery moving opens up opportunity to expand the community centre”

What people said about replacing existing facilities...

“I think that’s a great idea, modernisation is key! Key for the future children to keep involved in these places. And if everything is in one place it’s easier for people to get there and maybe visit a few places rather than driving all over the place.”

“I think this takes away from the community element of the village. It compresses opportunities and strains available space/equipment. It also removes current beloved elements of the village...”

6. Other comments about a new High School in Kirkliston

As part of the online survey, we asked people:

“Do you have any other comments or thoughts about a new Kirkliston High School?”

This is a summary of the themes that people brought up in their responses:

1) High School design and capacity

- Build in sufficient capacity for a growing community. There are lessons to be learnt from West Lothian and their new Winchburgh schools.
- A 600-pupil capacity school is too small, with a single feeder primary school, examples of other successful models need to be provided and remote partnership models explored, to demonstrate pupils and families in Kirkliston will not be disadvantaged.
- Ensure the school design is inclusive and safe for neuro divergent pupils and other users.

2) Traffic/ Congestion

- Road infrastructure needs improved. A slip road to and from motorway would improve traffic management and reduce environmental impact.
- Public transport needs improved and the introduction of car sharing initiatives for teachers or a community e-bus.

4) Growth

- A new high school should have been delivered by developers as part of the additional housing growth.

5) Planning

- The Council is fighting its own planning policy and is being held to ransom by landowners/developers.

6) This is a matter for Kirkliston residents only and should not involve Ratho.

7. Criticism of the Council

Several critical comments were received. Most of these related to the Council's planning, the decision-making process, and the time taken to progress the capacity required.

- The consultation document presents the Leisure Centre and as the only option, and is a 'done deal'.
- A 600 capacity High School is too small and will not deliver the required breadth and depth of curriculum choices or social interaction.
- It's taken too long to deliver a High School which is needed urgently.
- Lack of transparency and trust in the decision-making process.

"When the consultation for either an expansion for South Queensferry high school or a new school in Kirkliston was undertaken, the proposals clearly stated other preferred locations in Kirkliston for a new school, and not at the leisure centre. For this now to be the only option being pushed is incredulous.

There seems to be the view that a school at the leisure centre site is the only option available and will be built there regardless of how unsuitable it is.."

"...Can I remind the council that some of the children in Kirkliston attend St Margaret's RC Primary School in South Queensferry. There is no mention of this school or thought for our children. The documents state that the High School will be for only one primary. What does this mean for the children of St Margaret's? Or have they been forgotten again?

I fear people are going to accept this not because it is the best option but because they are desperate. We are running out of time to sort this before our kids who have already lost so much education due to covid then find themselves without a high school to go to. This needs swifter action and a lot more thought..."

"...you're building on the site now and that doesn't auger well for clarity integrity and trust in political decisions for what your planning. I don't want corrupt practices in anything the council does but recent events leave me uncomfortable with this process.."

People criticising the Council said...

"The council is a disgrace in planning. Utterly disappointed beyond belief. It hasn't invested in Kirkliston for anything. Everything is a quick band aid. Shocking..."

"For once do some proper planning and delivery that can include the infrastructure the village badly needs even at the cost of new houses. commit to a village bypass, new shops, high school, additional primary school, tram and or rail link to Edinburgh. Be bold and build for the future instead of a cheap option that ticks a box for today but not for tomorrow..."

“I don't believe that the idea of a separate high school for Kirkliston is an acceptable solution, educationally or socially. Having a secondary school with a catchment area of a single village and single primary school would not expose the students to the variety and diversity that is crucial in developing well-balanced and worldly citizens. It is shocking that the Council seems to have backed itself into a corner in this, missing previous opportunities to ensure that there are adequate educational facilities in West Edinburgh to support all of the additional housing that the Council itself has approved.

Sadly, we've seen all this before, and the view of many local residents is that - despite protestations to the contrary - this is already a "done deal", and the Council will take the easy solution rather than the correct one. Time will tell.”

“Once more. A 600 person school is a poor idea. Including other outlying communities being bused in is not great. You had an opportunity to include Kirkliston in the west Edinburgh plan, within the west Craig's development. You had the chance to find a site which would create a school for all communities in west Edinburgh and more importantly create an education provision for all. We all know that the smaller the school the less can be offered. I am 100% certain that the locals saying "build a wee high school in Kirkliston" know nothing about the education value, or lack thereof, in a small high school.

One other thing. Well done making a pig's ear of the new Kirkliston PS, the new QHS and the new nursery. Not sure why this would be any different!!!”

“...Only CEC will know what they own where they can build what their options are. Also would have thought it would be their duty to have considered this whilst signing off the approval to build family homes, fully expecting those to bring families with children needing schools to the village...”
