

MEETING:	Statutory consultation public meeting on the proposal to close Merkland and Campsie View schools, and establish a new build Additional Support Needs school in Kirkintilloch
VENUE:	Waterside Miners Club
DATE/TIME:	12 June 2018
OFFICERS ATTENDING	Thomas Glen - Depute Chief Executive Jacqueline MacDonald - Chief Education Officer Jan Pollok - Education Officer Fraser Robb - Capital Programme Manager

This was an additional public meeting as part the consultation, requested by the Waterside Community Council. The meeting was opened by the Chair of the Community Council, Janice Herriot, who welcomed those present and introduced panel members. She then gave an overview of the issues felt to be important by the Community Council. These included:

- The community felt that consultation meetings taken place to date had focussed on education and children, and that this meeting was required to give the community a public voice. She noted that Waterside Community Council had had meetings with Thomas Glen over the past couple of weeks;
- The community felt that the football field is not the right site as it is greenbelt, and was concerned that there was an options appraisal for site selection, but there was no appraisal for the impact on Waterside Community;
- The community felt that there are many brownfield sites that could have been developed including at Initiative Road;
- The community felt that the Auchinairn site was discounted because of topography and that could this issue could have been managed through additional spend;
- The community felt concerned that East Dunbartonshire Council did not approach Waterside Community until the latter stages of appraisal
- The community felt concerned that East Dunbartonshire Council had proposed a 5 or 7 aside football pitch which would cost for hire - Rosebank United can afford the current field and may fold if they cannot afford the hire of a new facility; and
- The community felt concerned that Waterside Community Council has been working hard to improve the village with some funding part of that being from EDC, grant funding for gala tday. If the community lose the field it will no longer be able to host community events.

Thomas Glen made some remarks regarding the proposal, these included:

- The site options appraisal considered 13 sites, of which only two were considered viable – Waterside and Auchinairn. At Auchinairn the topography meant that the school could not provide educational facilities on one level. This has an educational impact, and that is why it was discounted;
- The Whitegates/Initiative road site is not owned by the Council, and therefore could not be considered as a suitable site;

- With regard to concerns about consultation, there have been four public meetings to date. These had been open to all consultees, and were not exclusively for school or education stakeholders. The Community Council has been represented at every event;
- The site is greenbelt –this is highlighted in the options appraisal as a planning risk and was considered as part of the assessment process; and
- It is not accurate that a 5 or 7 aside pitch is proposed, or that this proposal would stop local community events taking place. As yet there is no finalised design. It is believed that the site could accommodate a full size pitch within a school development.

Chair invited questions from the floor. These have been summarised below. Questions have been grouped around the main topics discussed.

Consultation and decision making

Is it true that the council has already voted to go ahead with the Waterside site?

The panel advised that the consultation process was clear and governed by the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act. The Council had made a proposal, and only following consultation and the publication of a consultation report would it make a decision whether to go ahead with the proposal.

Could the consultation go ahead on the closure of the two schools, and the establishment of a new school, but agree not use the Waterside site?

The panel advised that the consultation process required the Council to have all of the relevant information when asking them to consider a proposal. The choice of site is a very important consideration when looking at establishing a school, and has educational impact as well as a practical impact on school users. It would not be fair to ask people to consider a proposal without tying in the site to that proposal.

Members of the public stated that they felt that the engagement with the community was too late, and that there was failure to engage with the Waterside community.

Members of the public stated that there was agreement with the development of a new school but not on the Waterside site.

Site selection

A number of comments were made about the site selection process, and the options appraisal carried out by the Council. A number of other potential sites were raised, including the Merkland and Campsie View sites, the St. Agatha's site, the Glebe, Hilton Depot, Parkburn Avenue, and others.

The panel advised that EDC have laid out the shortlisting process in the Options Appraisal Report, which has been circulated to the Community Council. This report demonstrates the process undertaken by EDC and provides a clear justification about why other alternative brownfield sites, which were considered for the development, were deemed unsuitable. This was primarily due to them either being in third party ownership, being allocated for another use or being too small.

It was noted, for example, that St. Agatha's, Merkland and Campsie View sites were too small. The Glebe and the Initiative Road site are not in EDC ownership.

The panel explained there was a separate planning process which would be required if the project were to be approved by the Council.

Issues related to the sites that were too small or not owned by the Council

The panel advised that a decision was taken to make sure that the process considered all options. For example, the sites of both Merkland and Campsie View schools were considered in the options appraisal, but they were too small for the development. Where EDC are proposing to close and merge two schools, there is a requirement to investigate whether one of the existing sites is suitable for the development. It was considered there was too much of a risk to acquire a site from a third party as the consultation would be predicated on acquiring the site and as it is owned by a third party, this could inflate the costs. This is not always the case for all Council developments. The principle view was taken that it was not right to make recommendation about sites out with the control of the Council.

Impact on the Waterside community and loss of the amenity

Significant concerns were raised about the impact of additional traffic and transport to the site, and how that would affect an already busy road. It was noted that a lot of busses use the road in the morning and school transport would provide further congestion.

A strong view that the community did not want to lose the football pitch and green field space at the site. There was a feeling that Waterside would lose its open space. This would have a significant impact on wildlife, and the wellbeing of people in the village. Local children would lose a place to play, there would be a loss of sports facilities, and the community would lose a space to hold fetes and other events.

A strong view that Waterside has a separate identity and robust community, and that the community was committed to improving the area, and to improving resident's wellbeing. It was felt this proposal would adversely affect that.

The Panel recognised the strong community representation, and affirmed the Council's commitment to better understand the needs of the community of Waterside and work to try to include these in the design of the new school and its facilities. It was noted by staff from the schools that an important part of any school, but particularly an ASN school was the link with the local community. School staff were keen to work with the Waterside community to develop a good relationship and work together, if the proposal went ahead.

The panel noted the concerns raised by the community and was keen to include these in the consultation and the decision making by Council. It was noted that there is a need to balance the impact on communities with the need to provide services for vulnerable young people, and that was an important discussion in considering this proposal. It was also noted that if the proposal were to go ahead, then the Council would be committed to working with community to look at how these impacts could be managed or mitigated, and to involve the community in

the development of the school. If the proposal were to go ahead it would be hoped that there would be benefits to community as well as the impacts discussed.