

Education, Children and Families Committee

10am, Tuesday, 9 December 2014

Free School Meals

Item number	7.1
Report number	
Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	All

Executive summary

On 7 January 2014 the Scottish Government announced its intention, and gave its commitment, to give all children in primary 1 to 3 the option of a free school meal from January 2015. On 17 July 2014 the Scottish Government wrote to all Local Authorities to confirm its expectation that this policy would be delivered.

An interim report was considered by Committee on [11 September 2014](#) which provided information on several practical and financial issues arising as a consequence of the policy and the latest position regarding their resolution. On [25 September 2014](#) Council subsequently approved the immediate requirement for capital expenditure of £1,414,944 to address issues of capacity and production in the school estate to allow the extended free school meal policy to be implemented with effect from January 2015.

This report provides a further update on progress and the outcome of the detailed assessment of costs, and sources of funding, relating to the more substantive works identified as being necessary at four primary schools. The report also responds to the request from Committee to fully outline the interim measures for these schools.

Links

Coalition pledges

Council outcomes [CO1](#), [CO4](#) and [CO6](#)

Single Outcome Agreement [SO3](#)

Free School Meals

Recommendations

- 1.1 Note the further progress made towards the implementation of the extended entitlement to free school meals which will apply from January 2015.
- 1.2 Welcome the £4.5m of capital funding which the Scottish Government has confirmed will be provided to allow the implementation of the extended entitlement.
- 1.3 Approve remaining capital expenditure of £3,085,056 towards the implementation of the extended entitlement to free school meals, primarily to address issues of capacity at Cramond, East Craig's, Sciennes and Towerbank Primary Schools.

Background

- 2.1 On 7 January 2014 the Scottish Government announced its intention, and gave its commitment, to give all children in primary 1 to 3 the option of a free school meal from January 2015. On 17 July 2014 the Scottish Government wrote to all Local Authorities to confirm its expectation that this policy would be delivered.
- 2.2 A previous report to the meeting on [11 September 2014](#) informed Committee of a number of practical and financial issues which arise as a consequence of the introduction of this policy and the latest position regarding their resolution. At that meeting the Committee:
 - Noted the progress made towards the implementation of the extended entitlement to free school meals which will apply from January 2015.
 - Noted the immediate requirement for capital expenditure of £1,414,944 to address issues of capacity and production in the school estate to allow the extended free school meal policy to be implemented with effect from January 2015 which was then remitted to, and approved by, Council on [25 September 2014](#).
 - Noted that the detailed assessment of costs, and sources of funding, relating to the more substantive works identified as being necessary at Cramond, East Craig's, Sciennes and Towerbank Primary Schools (for which the total further capital expenditure required was estimated to be £3,257,243) would be clarified and taken to the Education, Children and Families Committee for consideration on 9 December 2014.

- 2.3 This report provides a further update on progress and the outcome of the detailed assessment of costs, and sources of funding, relating to the more substantive works identified as being necessary at Cramond, East Craig's, Sciennes and Towerbank Primary Schools. The report also responds to the request from Committee to fully outline the interim measures for these schools.

Main report

- 3.1 The total capital investment which was identified as being necessary to facilitate the implementation of the extended entitlement to Free School Meals which will arise from January 2015 was £4,672,187.
- 3.2 On [25 September 2014](#) Council approved the immediate requirement for capital expenditure of £1,414,944 to address issues of capacity and production in the school estate to allow the extended free school meal policy to be implemented with effect from January 2015. This approval was granted on the basis and understanding that these costs would be funded by the Scottish Government which was the expectation.
- 3.3 Of this expenditure, £347,623 was required to fund works to a number of schools where additional capacity in dining rooms could be created and/or an increase in the speed of service could be achieved by carrying out alterations to the serving counters or dining areas. The necessary adaptation works at all schools are now complete. Some schools identified a requirement for additional dining furniture in order to increase dining capacity. The tender for this seating has been awarded, the schools involved surveyed and the tables will be delivered on a rolling programme prior to the Christmas break.
- 3.4 The remaining expenditure of £1,067,321 was required to fund works to a number of school kitchens where additional equipment and/or upgrades to existing equipment were required to increase their cooking capacity in advance of January 2015. A contractor has been appointed and the work will be progressed during November and December 2014.
- 3.5 The Scottish Government has now confirmed that they will provide capital funding of £4.5m to undertake the capital works required as a result of the policy to extend entitlement to Free School Meals which is slightly lower than the full amount of capital expenditure requested by the Council of £4,672,187. This will fund the capital expenditure of £1,414,944 which was previously approved by Council on 25 September 2014 leaving a balance of £3,085,056 to fund the remaining capital expenditure for which approval is now sought. This is required to fund the substantive works identified as being necessary at four primary schools to address issues of capacity and allow the extended free school meal policy to be implemented. It was necessary to provide indicative cost information in fairly short timescales to inform the discussions which COSLA was progressing with the Scottish Government regarding capital funding therefore the original costs identified were very much initial estimates. Further detailed assessment was necessary to consider options and determine more accurate

costs. The necessary new, or updated, feasibility studies to achieve this have now been undertaken by colleagues in Services for Communities.

- 3.6 For each of the four schools where substantive works are required an option has been identified which would deliver the additional accommodation considered necessary to address issues of capacity and allow the extended free school meal policy to be implemented. These options have been discussed and agreed with representatives of the school management and parent council from each school. The estimated cost of delivering each option, taking into consideration an appropriate provision for contingency, is set out below. The total cost for the four options is £2,959,849 leaving a residual balance of funding of £125,207 which will be retained as a contingency towards the costs of these four projects and also the works which were previously approved by Council, the cost for some of which has exceeded the initial estimates.

	Total (£)
East Craig's Primary School	1,224,095
Cramond Primary School	918,418
Sciennes Primary School	413,217
Towerbank Primary School	404,119
Sub-total	£2,959,849
Retained as overall contingency for all FSM related works	125,207
Total	£3,085,056

- 3.7 Further detail regarding the option which has been identified for each of the four schools is provided in Appendix 1. It is proposed that the capital expenditure set out above of £3,085,056, being the remainder of the funding which has been provided by the Scottish Government, is now approved to allow the projects to be progressed to allow them to be delivered at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.8 Taking into consideration the timescales required for detailed design, planning, procurement and construction the projects to deliver the additional physical space required at each of these schools cannot be delivered for January 2015 and are likely to take up to 18 months; perhaps shorter for Sciennes.
- 3.9 In order to allow the anticipated number of additional meals to be delivered at Cramond, East Craig's and Sciennes Primary Schools interim arrangements will require to be established involving an extension to the lunch period within the existing dining spaces. This is likely to impact on the ability of these schools to meet the targets for the provision of PE.
- 3.10 At Towerbank Primary School the interim solution to accommodate the expected increase in numbers will be to provide hot meals on the first floor in addition to

the ground floor. This will require additional servery and clearing equipment as well as additional staff. The City of Edinburgh Council fire officer has assessed the space and is comfortable with this arrangement as it complies with current legislation.

- 3.11 A number of schools already have pre-order systems in place and it was noted that such a system could help with the implementation of the extension to free school meals in two ways. Firstly, it would allow the catering teams to cater for the correct number of pupils each day and ensure they receive their first choice of main meal. This will enable efficient ordering and deliveries as well as reducing food waste in the dining hall. Secondly, effective pre-order systems, where a band or token is given to each pupil to identify their choice prior to service, speed up service as staff can easily identify choices and pupils are not deciding at the counter which slows up service. It is anticipated that pre-ordering will be implemented in all primary schools prior to January 2015.

Measures of success

- 4.1 The successful implementation of the revised policy with all children in primary 1 to 3 who wish to take up the option of a free school meal from January 2015 being able to do so with no additional cost to the Council as a consequence.

Financial impact

- 5.1 The Council's Capital Investment Programme is funded through a combination of General Capital Grant from the Scottish Government, developers and third party contributions, capital receipts and borrowing. The borrowing required is carried out in line with the Council's approved Treasury Management Strategy and is provided for on an overall programme basis rather than for individual capital projects.
- 5.2 However, the capital expenditure identified above of £3.085m, along with the previously approved £1.415m, will be funded fully from the additional capital funding which has been provided by the Scottish Government for this purpose therefore this expenditure will entail no borrowing requirement or associated loans charges.
- 5.3 The position regarding revenue costs was covered in detail in the report to Committee on [11 September 2014](#).

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The recommendations in this report do not impact on an existing policy of the Council and there are no health and safety, governance, compliance or regulatory implications that elected members need to take into account when reaching their decision.
- 6.2 If the recommendation to approve capital expenditure to address the acute issues of capacity in four primary schools is not approved there is a risk that

there would be insufficient capacity in these schools to allow the extended free school meal policy to be implemented.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 There are no negative equality or human rights impacts arising from this report. The provision of additional accommodation within the four primary schools is necessary to meet the expected increase in demand for school meals.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 There are no impacts on carbon, adaptation to climate change or sustainable development arising directly from this report. Whilst the proposals would see the extension of existing school buildings, the purpose is to create additional accommodation to meet the expected increase in demand for school meals. The new accommodation will be designed to minimise the impact on carbon emissions and energy consumption.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 An extensive survey of all schools which have children in the P1 to P3 year stages was undertaken in the week commencing 4 March 2014. All head teachers and business managers were contacted at the beginning of the new school term in August to outline the findings of this survey; to provide information regarding progress towards the implementation of the extended entitlement to free school meals and to ask for support in implementing pre-order systems for meals in their school.
- 9.2 In November all head teachers and business managers were contacted again to provide an update on progress towards implementation in relation to the servery works, the dining furniture tender and to explain next steps. This included a short survey for schools to complete to ascertain the current status of each school in terms of planning for January 2015 including progress towards the implementation of pre-order systems, details of any parent surveys carried out by schools and an offer of support or information on best practice. Requests for support and school visits are being followed up as, and when, they are received.
- 9.3 Information on the arrangements which have been put in place, ongoing plans and management information have been shared with the neighbourhood groups of parents. A frequently asked question and answers sheet was provided which has since been shared with all schools to pass on to parents and to display on their school websites. This is also displayed on the City of Edinburgh Council food in schools web page.
- 9.4 For each of the four schools which require significant additional physical space to be provided, meetings have been held with school management and parent council representatives. The findings of the feasibility studies were shared and

the impact of the proposed solutions discussed as well as the interim solutions which will be in place until this additional space can be provided.

Background reading/external references

- Report to the Education, Children and Families Committee on [11 September 2014](#)
- Report to the City of Edinburgh Council on [25 September 2014](#).

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Links

Coalition pledges

Council outcomes

CO1 - Our children have the best start in life, are able to make and sustain relationships and are ready to succeed.

CO4 - Our children and young people are physically and emotionally healthy.

CO6 - Our children and young people's outcomes are not undermined by poverty and inequality.

Single Outcome Agreement

SO3 - Edinburgh's children and young people enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential.

Appendices

1 – Outcome of Feasibility Studies

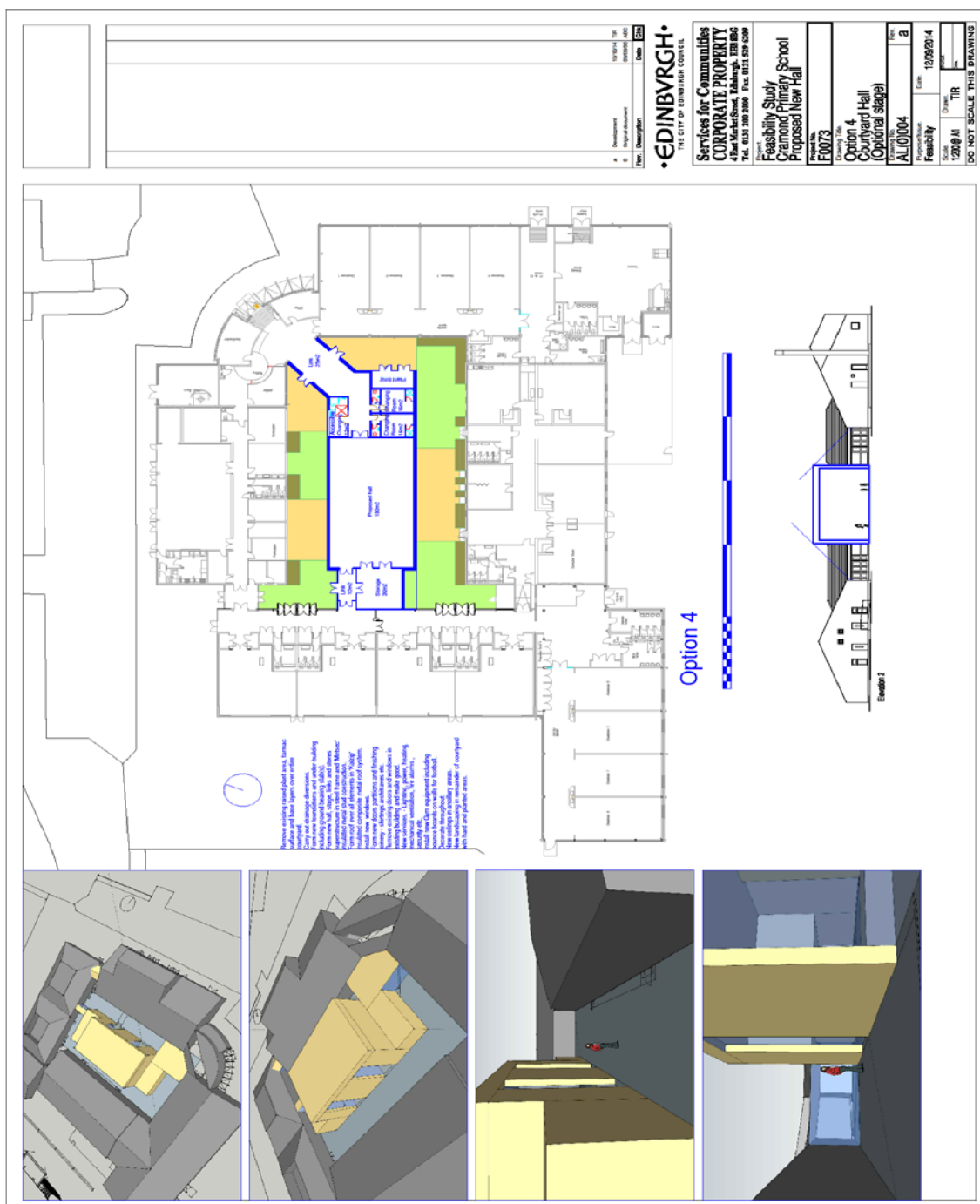
Outcome of Feasibility Studies

1 Cramond Primary School

- 1.1 This is a double stream, 14 class school and is one of several primary schools in the city which have only a single hall which must be used for dining, gym and assembly. The hall is only 131m² which makes the issue at this school particularly acute. There is already significant pressure on the school to accommodate school meals and also comply with the target to deliver two hours of PE and the increase in the uptake of school meals which will arise will make this unsustainable. The optimal solution which was identified is to provide a new gym hall and the associated ancillary functions and accommodation.
- 1.2 The feasibility study identified and considered four possible options with the preferred option being a proposal to build the new gym hall in the middle of the courtyard with minimal connections to the existing building for access and fire escape. The opportunity exists to connect the hall to the main entrance which has obvious advantages to the school.
- 1.3 The potential loss of daylight to courtyard facing rooms is a concern. The school feel that this is manageable as only one classroom faces into the courtyard and this could be swapped with a GP room. The remaining courtyard areas will be overshadowed particularly on the north side of the hall. The narrow space would probably render the courtyard unsuitable for playground use for reasons of supervision. However the area could be landscaped as a series of small sheltered gardens which could be used for a variety of purposes by the pupils and staff.
- 1.4 A good deal of the surface and foul drainage from the building passes below the proposed building and considerable localised diversions will be required. This option also includes the re-landscaping of the entire courtyard. Design options have not been considered at this stage, the layout shown is indicative only.
- 1.5 The construction of this option would benefit from lightweight materials and prefabricated sections to limit the time on site. However it is inevitable that heavy and wet constructions will be required for substructures and superstructure. It may be possible to remove the covered link for part of the contract, although the amount of services here may make this expensive, it would be for the contractor to make the final decision. The nature of the prolonged disruption, noise and dust during the construction phase has been emphasised to the school and remains a concern, however school management are confident that this disruption can be managed.
- 1.6 Planning have commented that whilst the courtyard location helps conceal the mass of the hall from neighbouring properties, the design of the hall will have to be sympathetic to the scale of the existing buildings. This would not necessitate

the use of pitched roofs, but could be achieved through the elevation treatments. The main comment was that this is their preferred option at this stage.

1.7 An illustrative plan for the preferred option is shown below.



2 East Craig's Primary School

2.1 This is a double stream, 14 class school and is one of several primary schools in the city which have only a single hall which must be used for dining, gym and assembly. The hall is only 110m² which makes the issue at this school particularly acute. There is already significant pressure on the school to accommodate school meals and also comply with the target to deliver two hours of PE and the increase in the uptake of school meals which will arise will make

this unsustainable. The optimal solution which was identified is to provide a new gym hall and the associated ancillary functions and accommodation.

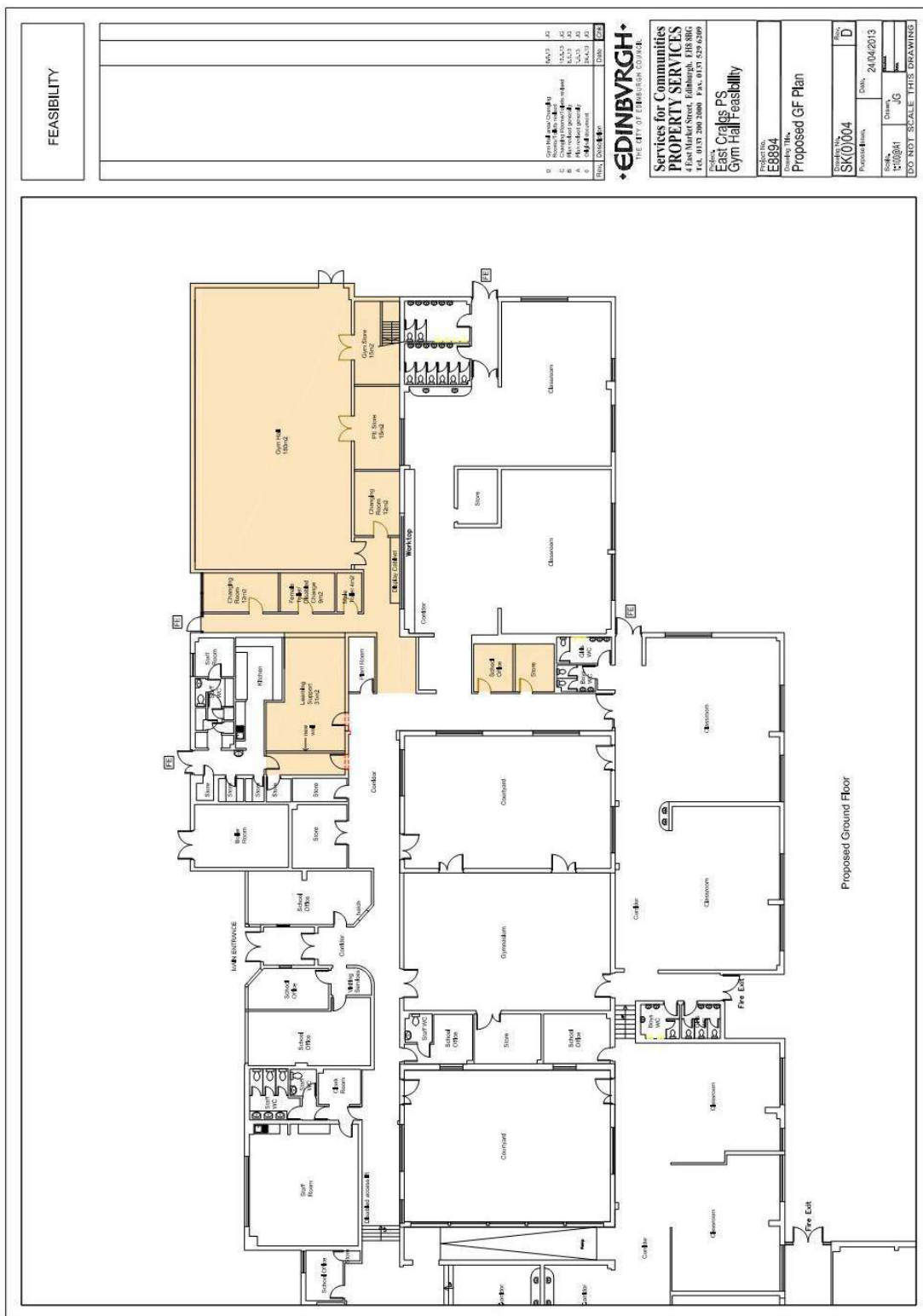
2.2 The feasibility study was undertaken during 2013. As a result of an assessment of the existing school site it was agreed that only one option to extend the existing school building would be explored. A stand alone building could only be located on the playing field and it was felt that this would be overbearing in the context of a single storey school and adjacent residential properties.

2.3 The proposed new gym hall is located to the north east of the existing building as an extension to the main building. This is for the following reasons:

- It will lessen the impact of the height of this building on all adjacent single storey and residential buildings (with a minimum unobstructed height of 6m in the hall) being set lower down.
- It will be located away from residential properties abounding the playing field site.
- It will have less impact upon the green spaces in the school grounds.
- It is located next to the only external walls available which do not have classroom windows. The rooms in these areas adjacent to the proposed building function as work spaces which are not used for long periods of time and can be top lit with roof lights to provide natural daylight.
- The proposed plan layout will align the existing building on both facades (with minor undulations to break it the facade) so will appear to be a continuation of the existing.
- The building will avoid major services.
- Pedestrian access around the building will be retained without affecting the existing retaining wall against the playing field approximately 2.5m higher than the school building level.
- The building will be viewed at the main approach to the main entrance of the school and will be expressed in a sympathetic and contemporary way enhancing the main entrance approach and will tie in with the existing building for example by using red vertical trespa panels in a scattered arrangement to match the existing building's red fascia board.
- The building can be accessed more directly from the main building as an extension rather than separately as a stand alone building.
- To enable the building to sit in line with the existing building it was agreed to leave the Learning Support room in its existing location with the option to obtain borrowed light through a new window and roof light in the new extension thus reducing the foot plate of the building.

2.4 The location and massing of the proposed gym hall was considered by the Planning Department as a favourable option at this stage.

2.5 An illustrative plan for the preferred option is shown below.



3 Sciennes Primary School

3.1 There is a particular issue with this school. The limited circulation space within the dining hall with shared entry and exit reduces the throughput of pupils and packed lunches are already located in other areas throughout the school. There

are no management solutions which can be identified to create additional capacity within the existing areas therefore additional space is required.

- 3.2 The deficit in capacity was estimated to be 189 which, based on an assumed two sittings, means that space for an estimated additional 90 pupils is required in the school. The optimal solution which was identified is to provide an additional area of dining space of approximately 105m² but recognising that a larger area may require to be delivered to include circulation and other necessary space.
- 3.3 As a result of an assessment of the existing school site it was agreed that two options to extend the existing school building would be explored. A possible two storey option which would have involved extending above the existing dining hall was discounted during the design review stage for reasons of cost, disruption to the school, impact on light/planning for the adjacent site and the problems of managing the service for this solution.
- 3.4 The first option was a traditional build extension in lightweight construction which relocates the kitchen in the new building to release space for the dining room. The second option was a pre-fabricated construction which would provide dining accommodation, storage and a new servery. Due to the benefits of lower cost, speed of construction and additional flexibility afforded by the creation of an additional general purpose room, option 2 was identified as being the most preferable. An illustrative plan for the preferred option is shown below with the area of new space being shown in green to the right of the pink shaded area.



- 3.5 Initial contact has been made with the Listed Building section (LB) of the Planning department regarding the new development. In strict planning terms

any form of new development on the site presents a challenge for a Listed Building Consent, due to the heavily constrained nature of the site which has already been substantially developed and is within a Conservation area. However, discussions with LB team indicated that in principle, they would support the operation of the school and it was understood that the available options to comply with new government requirements were limited on this site. Further, it was noted that an advantage of the two proposals was that neither reduced the available playground space as the proposed development site is a car park at present. Further discussion with LB team will be required regarding the impact of the development on Millerfield Place when viewed from the north.

4 Towerbank Primary School

- 4.1 There is a particular issue with this school which has a very high roll and already very constrained dining facilities. There are no management solutions which can be identified to create additional capacity within the existing areas therefore additional space is required. The deficit in capacity was estimated to be 165 which, based on an assumed two sittings, means that space for an estimated additional 80 pupils is required in the school. The optimal solution which was identified is to provide an additional area of dining space of approximately 93m² but recognising that a larger area may require to be delivered to include circulation and other necessary space.
- 4.2 As a result of an assessment of the existing school site it was agreed that two options to provide the necessary additional space would be explored. The first option would be to provide a new temporary unit building to accommodate a new servery and dining facility which would operate separately from the main school building and would mean that there would be two dining facilities for the school to operate. This was discounted in favour of the preferred second option which is to insert the proposed extended dining hall as an extension to the east of the existing Victorian building. The hall would be entered from both the north and south areas of the school and would still be located at the heart of the school.
- 4.3 Planning have commented that the courtyard location helps conceal the hall from neighbouring properties and since it is relatively small in scale compared to the main school building towering above and directly adjacent to this extension that there was no objection at this stage to the massing of this option. The officer felt that since the courtyard is already surrounded by buildings from three different genres that a simplicity in the style of architecture that is sympathetic to these existing buildings, particularly the Victorian building, which is not listed but is still of historical importance, must be considered. The officer added that the loss of a sunny sheltered courtyard for play is regrettable.
- 4.4 An illustrative plan for the preferred option is shown below.

