

Deputations

Education, Children and Families Committee

10.00 am Tuesday, 31st January, 2023

Dean of Guild Court Room - City Chambers

Deputations

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CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

EDUCATION, CHILDREN & FAMILIES COMMITTEE

31 JANUARY 2023

DEPUTATION REQUEST

Subject	Deputation
3.1 In relation to Item 7.1 – LOVE Gorgie Farm – Response to Emergency Motion by Councillor Day	Save Gorgie Farm Forever Campaign (verbal presentation & written submission)
3.2 In relation to Item 9.2 - Motion by Councillor Louise Young – Queensferry/Kirkliston High School Consultation	Kirkliston Primary School Association (verbal presentation & written submission)

Statement to the EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE – 31 JANUARY 2023

The Save Gorgie Farm Forever Campaign (SGFF) has been formed by the people of the local community most affected by the closure of Gorgie City Farm. We implore the City of Edinburgh Council and its officers to come up with a solution to reopen Gorgie City Farm as quickly as possible.

The farm represents an important part of the lives of so many people across the city, both the volunteers who work there and the people of the local community, who depend upon the area as its only major green space.

Many people, especially those with learning difficulties, who have volunteered at the farm over the years have greatly benefited from their experience interacting with the animals. We have met several people who have told us that Gorgie Farm "literally saved their lives."

It is important to also remember that Gorgie Farm and its attendant gardens represent the largest accessible green area in Gorgie. Gorgie-Sighthill is one of the most disadvantaged wards in the city. Gorgie does not have an Inverleith Park or Meadows. People in Gorgie rely on the farm for their leisure and recreation. It must not only be preserved as a green space, but one that is also accessible and affordable and recognizes the role the farm plays in the lives of the people of Gorgie.

We must also recognize the staff and the suffering they have endured since the abrupt departure of their current employer, LOVE Gorgie. We implore the council to make sure whatever solution is found to reopening the farm considers the previous staff and, where possible, looks to bring the same people back in.

The SGFF campaign wishes to work with the council in selecting a new bidder that can meet the needs and expectations of the area while delivering a sustainable business model that can ensure the long-term viability of Gorgie City Farm.

Regards

Martin Young

Chair

Save Gorgie Farm Forever Campaign



Deputation to Education, Children and Families Committee – 31st January 2023

Written Transcript

We welcome the opportunity to provide feedback about the current consultation on future secondary school provision for Kirkliston and Queensferry areas.

We felt it was important to present our concerns around the options being consulted upon to ensure they are heard in a timely manner, highlighting the areas where, in our opinion, more information is required before making a decision which will have a potentially decades long impact on our community.

We extend our thanks to our local ward councillor, Councillor Young, for submitting the related motion to the Education, Children and Families Committee which asks for answers on these matters.

Background

The KPSA have been engaging with parents and council officials about potential options for Kirkliston secondary provision since 2016 when it became apparent that, due to housing development in the catchment, Queensferry High School would not have capacity to meet demand.

Over this period we have captured the thoughts and concerns of Kirkliston parents to help us in our engagement with the council around the best way forward. Including, most recently, polling parents about the solutions proposed in the latest consultation.

As a parent council, the KPSA always looks to be balanced and pragmatic about the realities of enacting substantial change and the competing priorities and budgetary restraints that we recognise the Council is working under.

However, it would be disingenuous of us not to acknowledge that we as a parent body feel let down by inaction in this space. We first presented to the CEC Education, Children and Families Committee in December 2017 about how time was of the essence in reaching a resolution to the fact Kirkliston Primary School pupils had no certainty over their high school education and we feel that minimal progress has been since then.

Opportunities have been lost to potentially capitalise on delays in house building from the Covid-19 pandemic to achieve a more strategic and timely solution and we are in 'emergency' situation again. **There is no solution which can be offered in time to avoid overcrowding in the interim period so we ask the Committee to help ensure that future progress is made as efficiently as possible.**

The Consultation Process

We have been prompted to make this deputation to the Committee at an early stage as we have concerns that the Information Pack and Q&A provided as part of the consultation do not provide enough insight into the practicalities of options which would allow someone to make a fully



informed decision. We therefore question how much use can be gained out of the results of this process in collecting public preference and there is a danger that further time is being squandered.

All options are being presented with a caveat that additional work is required to determine if they are possible, should community opinion be behind them, but it would have been far more meaningful to have fewer, realistic and appropriately investigated options where the limitations of each can be fairly weighed up.

The KPSA submitted a full response to the consultation outlining the main perceived positives and negatives of each proposed option, extracts of which have been submitted as an appendix alongside our deputation transcript to give a complete picture. Here we will briefly touch on the key areas where we believe more information is required to allow the right decision to be made.

Extension of Queensferry High School

At a meeting with Council officials in June 2022 we specifically asked that the Queensferry High School extension option be properly evaluated as quickly as possible to determine if this was an available option in terms of likelihood to get planning approval.

If this option is ruled out at an early stage it would enable a swifter and greater focus on identifying a site for a Kirkliston High School – a process which is expected to be protracted. It appears from the information document that whilst a potential location has been identified which is sufficiently sized to house the required extension it is not yet backed up by indicative approval from pre-planning advice.

Planning issues aside there are some unanswered practical questions which have significant implications on the desirability of this option:

- **School size**
For years we have been told that 1,200 was the 'best' size for a high school but now that is being dismissed. The consultation paper mentions there are 4 high schools with a roll in excess of 1,800 in Scotland at present and gives some theoretical reasons as to why this is desirable but does not provide any details of how these 'super-schools' are performing in reality.

Our parents are concerned about how a school of this size ensures adequate supervision and support to avoid increasing antisocial behaviour and bullying as well as to whether the noted benefits in terms of staffing and subject choice translate into enhanced academic performance.

- **Local impact**
Queensferry High School is located within a restricted site reached via narrow residential roads which are unsuitable for buses. It is surrounded by private housing and in a relatively small site.

An extension significant enough to accommodate a 50% increase in school roll would take up a considerable amount of external space in an already restricted site. The consultation suggests the most likely location being the current car parking area which is only just sufficient for current requirements, before any increased staffing etc. at its current size. The increase in parking



problems plus significantly higher footfall in local streets is likely to heavily impact the surrounding area.

- Transportation
In terms of the logistics of getting to school, more information is required on how we can transfer pupils safely from Kirkliston and where potential drop off points may be is needed to address parent concerns.

Local Kirkliston High School

In our poll of local parents 78% of those who responded (172) rated a Kirkliston High School as the best option available with the primary drivers being the impact of travel / transport on wellbeing and extracurricular activities, that an 1,800 'super school' is unpalatable and a general lack of belief that there will be no further development in and around the area making this an inevitable requirement at some stage.

This is however entirely contingent on identifying a suitable and available site.

Discussions regarding a potential site in and around Kirkliston have been ongoing for many years now. In 2018 the KPSA were advised that a number of the sites included in the current consultation were unsuitable because of significant flood risk and / or proximity to the airport. The Education, Children and Families committee also set a task to identify appropriate sites in 2018 and it is difficult to understand why there has been no progress over the last four years to narrow down these options to ones which are most practical, to receive approval and where landowners have indicated a willingness to sell. This is very disappointing to us in terms of avoiding further delay.

If a site can be identified there are still important issues to be addressed in relation to overcoming some of the drawbacks of a smaller, single feeder high school such as subject choice and socially the lack of meeting new people.

Some of these may involve innovative working with Queensferry to extend the subject choice availability and building a multi-school community or looking at the developing need in nearby locations to identify if other primary schools could potentially feed into a Kirkliston High School catchment. The consultation has not explored these options.

West Edinburgh High School

We are extremely opposed to this option and very limited positives were identified in our consultation with parents.

The issues we raised in 2017/18 with the logistics of Kirkliston feeding to a West Edinburgh high school still stand – lack of community links, limited public transport, significant commute times along Glasgow road, impact on local traffic, no sustainable travel options available.

These have been compounded by the current lack of any timescales for development of this school.



Conclusion:

The number of unanswered questions and variables in the proposals make it difficult to make a balanced decision between Queensferry and Kirkliston options and inadequate work has been undertaken to ascertain if these options can be translated into reality.

There is no ideal solution which can be delivered in a guaranteed and sufficiently rapid time frame to avoid the use of temporary solutions at Queensferry High School over the short term. This is our opportunity to get it right for the medium to long term.

We urge committee members to support the motion being proposed today to ensure a deeper understanding of the status and practicalities of available options is achieved quicker - helping to avoid further delays in progress and ensure the best decision is reached for future Kirkliston children as soon as possible.

Kirkliston Primary School Association



Appendix: Supporting Information to Deputation (31/1/23)

In support of our submitted deputation we also include the following extracts from our recent submission to the public consultation:

1. Consultation Options Review

A more detailed list of the positives and negatives of the presented options plus our key areas where more work is required.

2. Outcome of KPSA parent survey

The high level preferences recorded in our recent parent survey inviting parent responses to the consultation options.

3. Other options

A short note on other alternatives previously raised but not covered in the current consultation. These may become relevant depending the outcome of further investigation into the viability of the primary alternatives.



1. Consultation Options Review

We note the following summarised comments around the viability and desirability of each option below:

- **Extension of QHS**

Positives	Negatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains existing community links between Kirkliston and South Queensferry • Potentially shortest timeframe (assuming no planning issues) • Bigger school may mean more choice of subject (when established) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of current outdoor space around existing school • Zero capacity for further growth to accommodate future need • Concern around ensuring wellbeing / adequate supervision / tackling bullying may be more difficult in this stretched site • Safety of pupils and nearby residents from additional traffic. The surrounding residential roads are narrow and struggle to cope at present • Impact on local area if lose such a large area within the car park at same time as increasing the school size by 50% • Expect strong local objections to planning application in immediate vicinity which may extend the timeframe • Traffic implications for Kirkliston, South Queensferry and B800
Critical Areas to be answered	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a school of such a significant size appropriate for the location – significant impact on the surrounding area (parking, traffic, potential for anti-social behavior, adequacy of indoor and outdoor space for sport, recreation, dining etc) • What possible solutions there are for transporting children there safely given surrounding roads are narrow and residential • Confirmation required as to extent to which pre-planning advice has been sought from Planning and Roads departments. • There are only a handful of schools greater than 1,800 in Scotland, there is discussion in the paper around the benefits of a larger school. Is this substantiated by performance in these schools? 	



- **Local Kirkliston High School**

Positives	Negatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives Kirkliston its own clear, long-term pathway • Future proofs for growth in either Kirkliston or South Queensferry • Enables easy sustainable travel to school – walking and biking is accessible to all • Reduced traffic load on Kirkliston and South Queensferry • Smaller school (1800 is seen as too large) • Gives local alternative high school choice for children in both catchments • Building could potentially provide leisure or other facilities which would benefit the whole community • Participation in extracurricular activities is easier when no transport is necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realistic sites are limited and possible compulsory purchase could extend time frame; • KPS will be vast majority of intake so social aspect of going to a multi-feeder school is lost • Possibly restricted subject choice in a smaller school – most likely advanced higher and the provision of more vocational subjects • Ability to attract staff to a new school given size and limited transport options • Is pupil roll sustainable in the long term (20+ years) from Kirkliston alone
<p>Critical Areas to be answered</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realistic and researched site needs to be identified as a priority - taking into account practical factors such as flood risk and the high pressure gasline and also interest of landowners in selling the sites. • Would there be opportunity to share non-core subject choice with QHS ensuring all ends of academic spectrum are catered for? • Are there any other schools which could potentially be included in this catchment? • Taking a long term view beyond the 2030 city plan, how realistic is it that there will be no further housing in and around Queensferry or Kirkliston over the next 10-20 years? 	



- **West of Edinburgh option**

We are extremely opposed to this option and very limited positives were identified in our consultation with parents.

The issues we raised in 2017/18 with the logistics of Kirkliston feeding to a West Edinburgh high school still stand:

- There are no community links with this area of Edinburgh and the extended catchment area and limited public transport would make it very difficult to build friendships and attend out of school activities.
- Traffic issues in Kirkliston can be very significant, particularly at rush hour periods and the additional pressure of transporting 500-600 children daily via crossroads would be significant.
- There are very limited opportunities for sustainable travel options and development would require significant improvement and investment
- Glasgow road is prone to significant delays so the impact on wellbeing of these extended commute times is a concern – including the opportunity for safeguarding issues such as bullying.

The last time this option was considered the Education, Children and Families Committee asked for road study to be completed and upon review concluded other options should be sought. We believe that no fundamental factors have changed since then. However, we do note the following further issues:

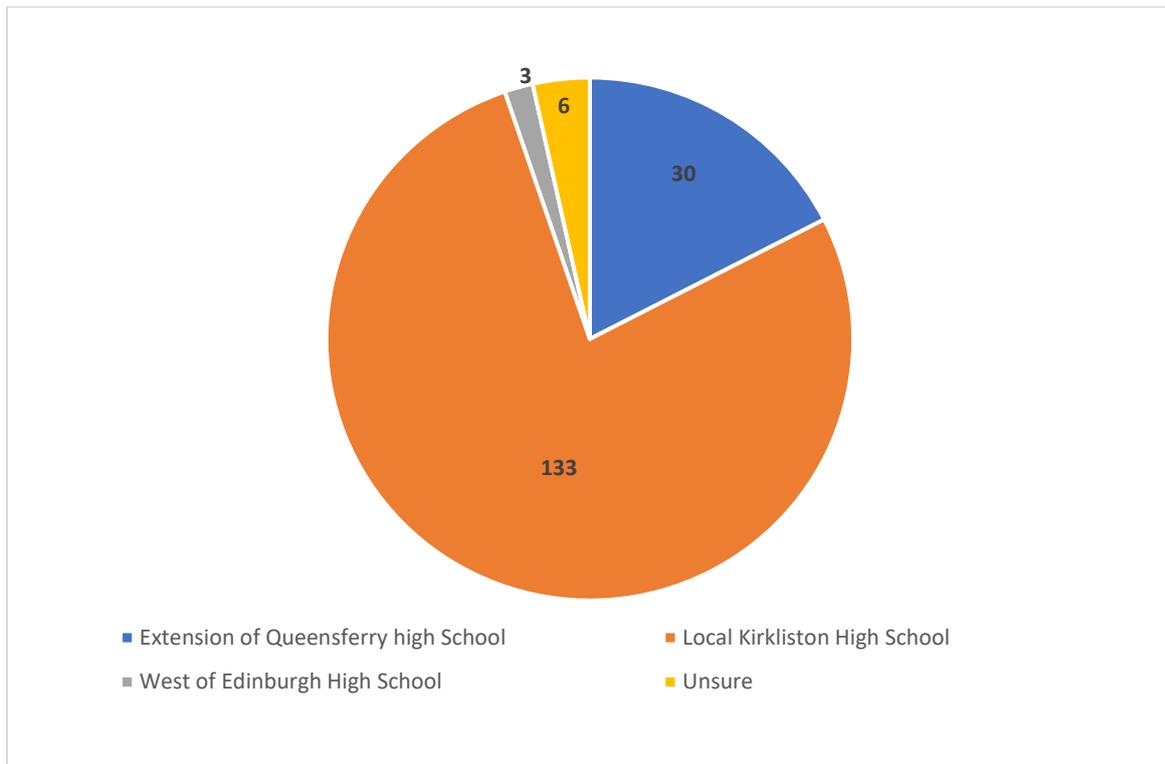
- There is absolutely no certainty around timescales on this – the city plan is yet to be approved and there is no indication of how long it will take till a new high school is complete.
- This high school will be part of a significant expansion in that area and would likely be surrounded by a building site around it for a very long time
- As noted in the Q&A document ‘we would anticipate that Kirkliston would be the biggest cohort in the new West Edinburgh High School for many years’ so the perceived benefits (subject choice and social) of a larger school are a very remote proposition



2. Outcome of KPSA parent survey

We surveyed the parents of Kirkliston Primary School on the current consultation to inform our recording of perceived positives and negatives as noted above and also to provide a clear indicator of ranked preference. We received 172 responses and the outcome is as follows:

1) When respondents were asked to select their preferred option:



2) When asked to rank the three options in order of preference:

	QHS extension	New KHS	West Edinburgh
1 st choice	33	135	4
2 nd choice	112	31	29
3 rd choice	27	6	139



3. Other options:

The following options have been discussed at previous meetings and working groups and have been raised by parents which are not included in the consultation and may be of merit in considering final outcomes.

- A larger Queensferry Campus – have any other sites in Queensferry been identified for potential to create an annex to the existing school. Parental feedback has raised the suggestion of potentially incorporating ‘The Hub’ which is immediately adjacent to the school.
- Twinned schools / annex – Is there potential twin the existing Queensferry High School with a Kirkliston High School which would initially act as an annex but be built with capacity to expand to a stand-alone high school if there is further growth which demands it. This is particularly practical should the KHS be located in one of the two proposed sites to the north of the village as these avoid the Kirkliston Crossroads, lead directly onto the B800 and as such are just a 5 minute drive / 15 minute cycle apart. This would future proof for growth in the area whilst giving pupils the social and staffing related benefits of a bigger school.