

Finance and Resources Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 21 November 2023

Newbattle Abbey College, Dalkeith - Proposed Licence for Forest Kindergarten

Executive/routine
Wards

Routine

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Finance and Resources Committee approve a five-year licence agreement to formalise the operation of the Council's Forest Kindergarten services at Newbattle Abbey College on the main terms and conditions outlined in this report.

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

Contact Claire Donaldson, Graduate Surveyor

E-mail: claire.donaldson@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 529 5772

Newbattle Abbey College, Dalkeith - Proposed Licence for Forest Kindergarten

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report seeks approval to enter into a five-year licence agreement with Newbattle Abbey College, to formalise the arrangement of operating Council Forest Kindergarten services on their land.

3. Background

- 3.1 From August 2021, the Scottish Government increased funded early learning and childcare (ELC) hours for all three and four year olds and for eligible two year olds from 600 hours per year – in nurseries, early years centres, playgroups and childminders – to 1,140 hours per year.
- 3.2 One (blended) model which Early Years have used to deliver the increase in ELC provision includes nursery half day – Forest Kindergarten half day.
- 3.3 Forest Kindergarten uses the outdoors as a ‘classroom’, offering a supportive learning and development experience in woodland or other natural settings, in almost all weathers throughout the year. The initiative encourages a child’s freedom to explore and promotes health and wellbeing, physical and emotional resilience and the acquisition of knowledge, skills and care for the natural world.
- 3.4 A number of simple stewardship activities/lessons (litter picking, tree and bulb planting, creating habitat piles, nature awareness and protection) undertaken by the children during Forest Kindergarten can also nurture the selected site.

4. Main report

- 4.1 To widen children’s access to high-quality and diverse natural landscapes, Newbattle Abbey College agreed to the use of their land in Dalkeith (Appendix 1) for the Council’s Early Years service to deliver Forest Kindergarten services.
- 4.2 The agreement includes rights to use the adventure area and Lord Ancrum’s Wood indicated on the attached location plan (Appendix 1) as well as use of the lodge house for staff welfare and kitchen facilities.

- 4.3 Initially trialled on an informal basis, all parties are agreeable to continue the arrangement and formalise terms and conditions by entering into a licence agreement.
- 4.2 The following terms have been provisionally agreed:
- 4.1.1 Transaction type: licence;
 - 4.1.2 Term: Five years;
 - 4.1.3 Rent: £8,355 per annum;
 - 4.1.4 Rent Review: annual based on RPI;
 - 4.1.6 Use: for woodland based activities to create an outdoor learning and development experience for children; and
 - 4.1.7 Costs: each party responsible for their own costs.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Following approval of the terms by the Finance and Resources Committee, solicitors will be instructed to conclude the legal documentation.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The Scottish Government is supporting local authorities to build the capacity required to phase in extended ELC entitlement. There is a multi-year capital and revenue funding agreement in place with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) which is fully funding the expansion of funded entitlement.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 It is not considered there are any adverse equality and poverty implications.
- 7.2 High quality early learning and childcare (ELC) can make a marked difference to children's lives, particularly if growing up in more disadvantaged circumstances. The main aims of the expansion in ELC are outlined by the Scottish Government as:
- 7.2.1 Improve children's outcomes and help close the poverty-related attainment gap;
 - 7.2.2 Increase family resilience through improved health and wellbeing of children and parents; and
 - 7.2.3 Support parents into work, study or training.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

8.1 No adverse climate or environmental implications have been identified and in addition:

8.1.1 All Forest Kindergarten staff comply with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, in particular the 'Do No Harm, Leave No Trace Policy';

8.1.2 Rotational plot use allows the landscape to 'rest and recover'; and

8.1.3 All waste generated is removed from sites daily.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

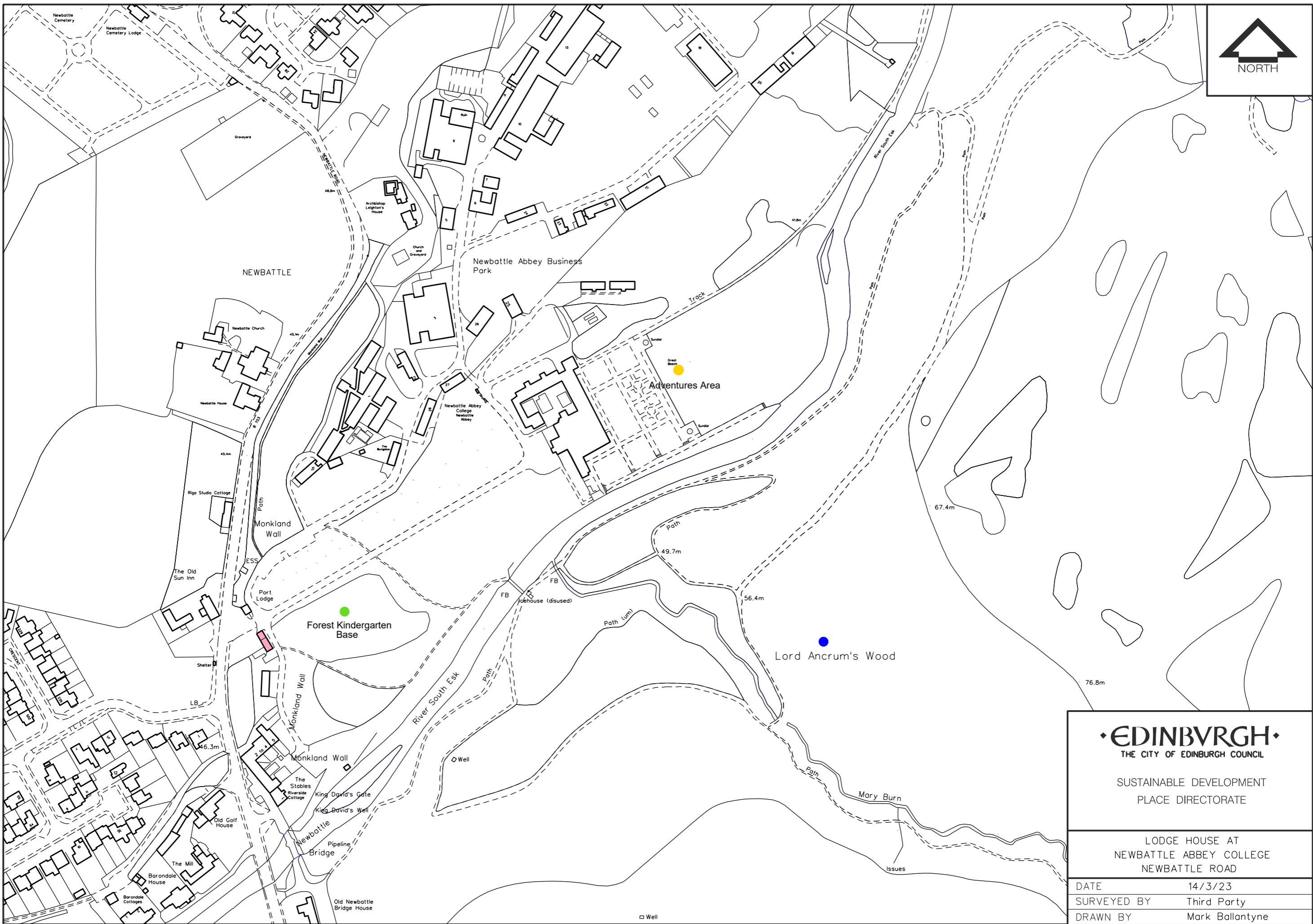
9.1 No adverse impacts have been identified.

10. Background reading/external references

10.1 [Scottish Government \(Policy\): Early Education and Care – Early Learning and Childcare Expansion](#)

11. Appendices

11.1 Appendix 1 – Location plan.



• EDINBURGH •
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
PLACE DIRECTORATE

LODGE HOUSE AT
NEWBATTLE ABBEY COLLEGE
NEWBATTLE ROAD

DATE	14/3/23
SURVEYED BY	Third Party
DRAWN BY	Mark Ballantyne
SCALE	1:2500 @ A3 SIZE
NEG. NO.	A3/2474a

LOCATION PLAN

SCALE 1:2500