

REPORT TO: EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 11 MAY 2009

REPORT ON: SCHOOL ESTATE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE WEST END OF THE CITY - OUTCOME OF THE FORMAL CONSULTATION PROCESS

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPORT NO: 274 - 2009

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report details the representations made during the formal publication and consultation exercise on the above proposal and recommends that the Council proceeds with the proposal.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves the proposal to build 2 x 1 stream primary schools with 6 additional classrooms on a shared site on the site of the former Harris Academy Annexe to replace Park Place Primary School, Park Place Nursery and St Joseph's Primary School.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The financial implications are as set out in Report no 69-2009, "School Estate Improvements in the West End of the City".

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1.1 At its meeting of 26 January 2009, the Education Committee approved the report entitled "School Estate Improvements in the West End of the City" and agreed (inter alia) to remit the Director of Education to carry out the statutory consultation procedures in terms of the Education (Publication and Consultation etc) (Scotland) Regulations 1981 in respect of the proposal to build 2 x 1 stream primary schools with 6 additional classrooms on a shared site on the site of the former Harris Academy Annexe to replace Park Place Primary School, Park Place Nursery and St Joseph's Primary School and to report back to Committee in due course. (Report no 69-2009 refers).
- 4.1.2 The proposal was advertised in the "Evening Telegraph" on Friday 20 February 2009 and all the statutory consultees received a copy of the consultation document on that date.
- 4.1.3 A consultation meeting for parents/carers of pupils at St Joseph's Primary School, Park Place Primary School and Park Place Nursery was held on the evenings of Wednesday 18 March, Thursday 19 March and Thursday 26 March respectively. A meeting was also held for all staff at each school on those dates at the end of the school day. In addition all Parent Councils and Trade Union Representatives were consulted.
- 4.1.4 The Right Reverend Bishop Vincent Logan was formally consulted in respect of this proposal.
- 4.1.5 Copies of the notes of the meetings held during the consultation period are attached as Appendix 1.
- 4.1.6 A list of "Frequently asked questions" is attached as Appendix 2.
- 4.1.7 In accordance with the Council's procedures, copies of representations received have been passed to Group Leaders, The Lord Provost and the Depute Lord Provost.

5.0 APPROVAL OF THE PROPOSAL

- 5.1 With regard to St Joseph's Primary School, the proposal was enthusiastically supported by the staff and Parent Council. The vast majority of the parents/carers supported the proposal in principle. A clear majority supported the proposal as it was framed, including the proposed site. A small group of people expressed strong reservations about the site, including their view that it was too small. They also believed that the present St Joseph's site, with its proximity to St Joseph's RC Church, would be preferable.
- 5.2 With regard to Park Place Primary School, staff, Parent Council and parents/carers were all fully supportive of the proposal.
- 5.3 With regard to Park Place Nursery, staff and Parent Council fully supported the proposal. Those who attended the meeting of Park Place Nursery parents/carers were largely in favour of a new school while at the same time expressing reservations about the site. It should be noted that this meeting was also attended by parents/carers from St Joseph's Primary School.
- 5.4 The Right Reverend Bishop Vincent Logan has expressed his full support for the proposal.

6.0 CATCHMENT AREAS FOR THE NEW SCHOOLS

- 6.1 The catchment areas for St Joseph's and Park Place Primary Schools will remain as they are at present. The Director of Education will, as is normal practice across the City, keep these catchment areas under review.

7.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Assessment.
- 7.2 There are no major issues.

8.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Head of Finance were consulted in the preparation of this report.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 None.

JIM COLLINS
Director of Education

1 May 2009

St Joseph's Primary School

Staff Meeting - held at St Joseph's Primary School

Wednesday 18 March 2009 at 3.30pm

No of Staff in attendance: 24

The following questions were asked:-

- How do you design a building to cope with rolls that might fluctuate?
- Will children who are in this school as a result of a successful placing request have to leave when the new school is built?
- What happens if children presently in Blackness Primary School want to go to the new St Joseph's?
- How much say will the parents have in this proposal?
- If the parents are predominantly negative, what will happen?
- When would we get occupancy of the new building?
- What will happen to the present building?

The Director of Education and relevant Officers answered each of the questions and at the end of the meeting there was unanimous support for the proposal.

St Joseph's Primary School

Parent Council Meeting - held at St Joseph's Primary School

Wednesday 18 March 2009 at 6.00pm

No of members in attendance: 15

The following questions were asked:-

- Does the Council own the site?
- What is to happen to the present school site?
- Why was this site not chosen for the new schools?
- Will the new St Joseph's Primary School be big enough?
- Is there any contamination on the Logie Annexe site?
- Will class sizes increase?
- How will the Catholicity of this school be maintained on a shared site?
- Will consideration be given to safety issues relating to children going to and from school?
- Will the playground be shared?
- Will there be two gyms?

The Director of Education and relevant Officers answered each of the questions and at the end of the meeting the Parent Council was unanimously in favour of this proposal in principle – they felt confident that it would be a good thing for the children, the school community and the wider community.

St Joseph's Primary School

Parent/Carer Meeting - Held at St Joseph's Primary School

Wednesday 18 March 2009 at 7.00pm

No of Parent/Carers in attendance: 63

The following questions were asked:-

- Why has the site of the present St Joseph's not been considered?
- Why is the school being taken away from its close proximity to the Church?
- Have you carefully considered this site? – St Joseph's was not built here by accident – the Church is here.
- Are you aware that a lot of people who use Park Place Primary School are from Ninewells Hospital and the University?
- Is the proposal you are making the best option, or is this just about money?
- What would the capacity of the playground at Logie Annexe be? Is it sufficient for the number of pupils who will be on the site?
- Are there to be enough classrooms to facilitate smaller class sizes?
- Is there sufficient money in the budget to refurbish and retain this school on this site and build a new school to replace Park Place Primary School and Park Place Nursery on the Logie Annexe site?
- Is the playground area to be separated by a fence?
- Are you sure it is safe to build new schools on a site surrounded by tenements?
- Where can I get information about how to keep children safe and secure?
- Is it the case that we are being asked to give up our school on this site to finance new schools on the Logie Annexe site?
- Would it not be better to leave this Project Proposal "on hold" meantime as the Scottish Government will have to do something about the school estate eventually anyway?
- Why are you trying to put twice the number of people together in the same size of space as this site?
- Is it not true to say that this is really an estate's rationalisation and that we will lose all the intangible good things that make this school what it is?
- Why are you presenting us with only two real options – that is accept the proposal and go to the Logie Annexe site now, or wait and see what (if anything) may happen in the future?
- Are you aware that parents have little trust in the Council after the closure of Bellfield Nursery? Can we assume that if this Project does go ahead the consultation at all stages of it will be more transparent?
- Can anyone think of any argument in favour of separating the school and the Church?
- Do you realise that there is an electricity sub-station in close proximity to the proposed site? Will the Council underwrite anyone who gets sick?
- Will the catchment area change?
- Do you think that the new school will "empty" Blackness Primary School?

The Director of Education and relevant Officers answered each of the questions and at the end of the meeting the vast majority of those present were in favour of the proposal while a number of people expressed reservations about the site that has been chosen.

Park Place Primary School

Staff Meeting - held at Park Place Primary School

Thursday 19 March 2009 at 3.30pm

No of Staff in attendance: 12

The following questions were asked:-

- When will we be able to see the design for the new school?
- Do you anticipate any problems when the outcome of this Consultation is reported to the Education Committee?
- If the Education Committee doesn't approve the report on the outcome of this Consultation, what will happen to this school?
- Will there be enough outside play space at the new school?
- Will there be enough staff car parking spaces?
- Will one kitchen be big enough to cater for all the children from both schools?
- Will support for learning rooms be located on the ground floor?
- Will the school janitors still work in shift patterns?
- Would we move into the new school as soon as it was ready, or would we wait until the start of a new term?

The Director of Education and relevant Officers answered each of the questions and at the end of the meeting there was unanimous support from staff for this proposal.

Park Place Primary School

Parent Council Meeting - held at Park Place Primary School

Thursday 19 March 2009 at 6.00pm

No of members in attendance: 2

No questions were asked.

Those present were fully supportive of the proposal.

Park Place Primary School

Parent/Carer Meeting - held at Park Place Primary School

Thursday 19 March 2009 at 7.00pm

No of Parent/Carers in attendance: 3

The following questions were asked:-

- How has the news of the proposal been communicated to the children?
- Is it desirable to move away from the proximity to the University?

- Was a proposal involving Park Place, Rosebank, Blackness and St Joseph's Primary Schools ever considered?
- How old is Blackness Primary School? Was it ever considered as part of this proposal in place of St Joseph's?
- Will the electricity sub-station close to the proposed site pose any issues?
- Do you think that there will be more cars around the proposed site as a result of University people being unable to walk their children to school?
- Will drop-off zones be provided?
- Why are 21 classrooms proposed?
- Will additional staff be appointed to manage shared areas?
- Will more administrators be appointed?
- Will more dedicated staff in the areas of the arts and drama be appointed?
- Is there sufficient outdoor/recreation space available at the new site?
- Will Balgay Park be used as a recreation facility?
- Are you concerned that the new site doesn't have a Church?
- How likely is the proposal to fail for funding reasons?
- Is a possible change in the composition of the Council going to affect this proposal?
- Could the credit crunch affect the funding?

The Director of Education and relevant Officers answered each of the questions and at the end of the meeting Park Place parents/carers were in favour of the proposal.

Park Place Nursery School

Staff Meeting - held at Park Place Nursery School

Thursday 26 March 2009 at 3.30pm

No of Staff in attendance: 12

The following questions were asked:-

- Are you aware that we may have 110 children in the building at any one time?
- Will the replacement Nursery be for 0-5 year olds or 3-5 year olds?
- Will the importance of outside play space be taken into consideration?
- Will the Nursery be all on one level?
- Will the Nursery have a dining room of its own? - The Care Commission stress the importance of this.
- Will the Nursery still offer full-time places?
- Is this a PPP Project?
- Will more staff be appointed?
- Will there be a shared gym?
- Will there be improved car parking and drop off arrangement?

The Director of Education and relevant Officers answered each of the questions and at the end of the meeting there was unanimous support from staff for this proposal.

Park Place Nursery School

Parent Council Meeting - held at Park Place Nursery School

Thursday 26 March 2009 at 6.00pm

No of members in attendance: 1

The following questions were asked:-

- What is going to happen to the St Joseph's building?
- Have you considered the likely level of traffic congestion at the new site?
- Will there be any resulting changes to secondary school catchments?
- What size will the new school be?
- Will there be enough classrooms?
- Is Park Place Primary School being designed to take pressure off Blackness Primary School?
- When will the build start?
- What will happen to the money from this site when the University buys it?
- Will there be a buggy park?
- Will there be adequate outdoor play space?

The Director of Education and relevant Officers answered each of the questions and at the end of the meeting the Parent Representative was in favour of the proposal.

Park Place Nursery School

Parent/Carer Meeting - held at Park Place Nursery School

Thursday 26 March 2009 at 7.00pm

No of Parent/Carers in attendance: 9

The following questions were asked:-

- Will there be a larger outdoor area with grass and flowers?
- Can you confirm that three schools will fit onto the proposed site? Does this meet Regulations?
- Will this be a PPP school?
- Will the school be on one level?
- Is the information on the size of the site available?
- To what extent is Craigowl presently over-full?
- Will you meet (or aspire to exceed) the minimum sq. m space per pupil?
- Will the classrooms be smaller than those in the PPP schools?
- Is the present school fit for purpose - I don't think staff morale is important?.
- What is the Council's view on close proximity to playing fields?
- Do you want to cram children in like sardines? If you use the proposed site you will not be complying with regulations on outdoor space requirements.
- Is there a guarantee that the floor space in the new Nursery will be greater than that at present?
- What opportunity will there be for parental input later on - will all parents have a say or will some representatives be chosen?
- Has the St Joseph's site been considered as an option?
- Is the Park Place Primary and Nursery site to be sold as well?
- How much are we getting from the sale?
- Do you own the Logie site?
- Have you looked at the impact of moving away from the University?
- How will you alleviate traffic problems around the Logie site?
- Have you got a map that shows the density of where parents work? Changing the site will impact on working people
- Is the Logie site in the centre of the catchment area?

- Surely the percentage of pupils who attend from outwith the catchment is less important than where people work?
- What is the catchment area for Blackness Primary School and how will it impact on this proposal?
- What is a one stream school?
- As class sizes are reduced will there be enough classrooms to accommodate them?
- Could you confirm what the design capacity of a one stream school is?
- Are you aware that the proposed site is 4 1/2 thousand square metres short to provide a playing field?
- How are you going to fit everything onto the site?
- Can you clarify how you communicated the date of this meeting to parents who may wish to use this nursery in the next two years?
- What provisions do you make for Muslim and other faiths?
- Will the Council look after the fact that they have sex offenders and drug addicts living nearby? There are three tenement blocks in Peddie Street used to house sex offenders when they come out of prison.
- Most people here are PHD students. What are you going to do about the new site when it is raining? I come from Egypt and don't have a car.
- Is there an unmet demand for places at Park Place Nursery at present?
- What is the Council required to provide by way of nursery places across the city?
- Is a child entitled to a nursery place after his/her third birthday?
- When would the new school be ready?
- What will happen if the Planners don't like what you are proposing?
- What happens if the sale of the Logie site falls through?
- Is it true that if you can't develop the Logie site then you won't be able to do anything for the West End at all?
- Will Blackness Primary School get any improvements out of this?
- Are there any restrictions on using Balgay Park?
- Is it economics that makes you put three schools on one site as one building? In 30 years time they will become one school.
- Will children who attend this new Nursery be assured of a place at the two new schools (i.e. St Joseph's PS and Park Place PS)
- Will the enhanced provision at St Joseph's be moving to the new school? Will this expertise be made available to children at the Nursery and at Park Place Primary School?
- If you have a funding disaster, will this proposal be abandoned?
- Are there other sites available?

The Director of Education and relevant Officers answered each of the questions and at the end of the meeting 1 member of the audience fully supported the proposal, 1 member of the audience had serious reservations about the Council's ability to deliver the proposal on the site and adhere to Regulations, and 7 members of the audience expressed reservations about the site.

Overall those present were largely in favour of providing a new school while at the same time expressing reservations about the site.

School Estate Improvement in the West End of the City - Formal Consultation

Frequently asked questions:-

Is the site big enough and will there be adequate recreational/outdoor space?

Yes. This has been confirmed by the Scottish Government.

Does the Council own the site?

The Council is in the process of acquiring this land.

Can we have sight of the architect's drawings for the new schools?

Not yet. No design work will be undertaken until it is confirmed that the proposal will proceed to the design stage. To date the work undertaken has been to ensure that everything that requires to be accommodated on the site can be accommodated on the site.

Are you aware that there is contamination on the Logie site?

Yes. This is not unusual in an urban setting where land has previously been designated for industrial use. There is evidence of coal ash and old wire, containing traces of arsenic and lead, which previously lay beneath Harris Academy Annexe. These contaminants are not mobile and can be addressed by the type of foundations and ground coverings.

What will the "shared" facilities be?

Discussions on this subject are still on-going, but likely areas include dining and assembly facilities, gymnasium and library.

Will the playground be shared?

Yes. All schools involved fully support the idea, and a similar arrangement has existed at Ardler and St Fergus Primary Schools for many years now.

Will there be adequate car parking and drop off zones around the schools?

Yes, this will be determined by the Council's Department of Planning and Transportation in accordance with existing policies on these matters.

Will the electricity sub-station close to the proposed site pose any issues?

There is no evidence to suggest that this will be the case.

Will children who are already in these schools on a placing request have to leave when the new schools are built?

No. Once a pupil is placed on the roll of a school, then that pupil remains there.

Does this proposal have the approval of the Catholic Church?

Yes, the Right Reverend Bishop Vincent Logan is fully supportive of the proposal.