



Notes prepared by Neil Whyte for Gorebridge & District Community Council. These notes reflect the verbal discussion at the meeting, but do not represent an official written response from Midlothian Council.

Present from Midlothian Council:

- Fiona Robertson, Executive Director Children, Young People and Partnerships and Chief Education Officer
- Marc Bedwell, Executive Business Manager
- Andrew Souter, Resources; Building Services

Fiona set the scene by saying that it is still very early in the process for the school at Gorebridge. There are several projects already in-flight ahead of the queue - like new primary schools in new build estates, existing renovations, and the new Beeslack High School in Penicuik. However, the Council look forward to engaging positively with the community and will provide as detailed responses as possible at this early stage.

Planning/Building

Questions	Midlothian Council Responses
<p>1. What sites are proposed as possible locations for the new high school?</p> <p>a. Can you outline the criteria used to select suitable sites and outline the decision-making process that gets to a final choice?</p> <p>b. We had heard a site of 10 acres was required: is that correct, and if so does this required footprint decrease if the school is built on a number of levels instead?</p> <p>c. Is there an opportunity for the community to suggest sites for consideration?</p>	<p>No sites are proposed as yet.</p> <p>Need to look at land ownership, liaising with Planning on land allocated for other use. Then flat sites are preferred, plus transport connectivity options need to be considered. Impact to environment, ecology, noise, flooding etc. Ground conditions very important, especially around mining works.</p> <p>6.2 hectares is the minimum, but more like 8 hectares when other community facilities are included in the final design.</p> <p>Further comms to be made with the Community Council prior to selection. If we reveal there is a site, and it doesn't get there, that can cause disappointment. So better to be sure on the final site before it is made public.</p>
<p>2. What are the current high-level milestone dates for the project, including site selection, build start date, build complete date and planned opening?</p>	<p>Any decision to proceed with the school needs first to be made by the Council. A typical timescale might look like this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design = 12-18 months • Construction = 2 years <p>School roll projections inform when the school needs to be ready, and dates are worked back from that time. The next school roll projection review will take place at end November/beginning December.</p> <p>The replacement Beeslack school should provide a useful template for project design, timescales etc – though this would be adjusted for the needs of the Gorebridge area.</p>

Questions	Midlothian Council Responses
<p>3. What are the proposed facilities for the new school?</p> <p>a. Will it include re-locating existing community facilities e.g. Gorebridge Library and Gorebridge Leisure Centre?</p> <p>b. Will it include a swimming pool?</p> <p>c. What provision for outdoor education would be provided: outdoor pitches, athletics track etc?</p> <p>d. Is the expectation that any additional facilities be accessible by the public outside of any school use?</p>	<p>This will be ascertained as part of 'Place-based principles', which set out what the local community already has, what gaps in provision exist, and also engagement with the community to identify additional needs.</p> <p>As this is a new school build, it is subject to a statutory consultation lasting 13 weeks. During this consultation, the public will have a say on what facilities they would like to see within the build.</p> <p>No decision yet made. However, the priority would be education provision first and foremost. Community facilities would be considered secondary to this.</p> <p>No decision yet made.</p> <p>Outdoor education is a national priority, so would be included to some extent. No decision made on details. Guidance is issued by the Scottish Government to set expectations on provision.</p> <p>Shared facilities are already done in other schools. However, recent learnings from Covid may inform how this can be achieved better in future. For example, many facilities in schools remain inaccessible to the public because of Covid restrictions – what does that mean for future planning?</p>
<p>4. How will the new school be funded?</p> <p>a. Is funding already guaranteed and secured?</p> <p>b. Are there known risks to funding, for example adjustments due to ongoing Covid response in other areas?</p>	<p>There are three strands – ScotGov funding (50%), rest a combination of Council & Developer Contributions. A pot of Developer Contributions already exists from existing housebuilding: will follow up with amount.</p> <p>In plan, but no actual funding provided yet by Council or ScotGov. Not guaranteed. This is a "pipelined project", funding yet to be identified.</p> <p>Funding applications to ScotGov have all been successful. Statutory requirement to provide education provision, so if there is a demonstrable need obtaining funding is not expected to be an issue. It's when and how much, not if. We don't know what our ask is yet, so can't yet apply.</p> <p>Existing projects (e.g. Penicuik High Refurb, new Beeslack, Mayfield Campus) are bid for already. These projects were funded via the ScotGov Learning Estate Improvement Programme (LEIP), and it is expected Gorebridge will follow a similar route. LEIP is currently closed to new applications, but is expected to re-open again.</p> <p>Midlothian Council has made a commitment to build a school in Gorebridge as part of their long-term plan, between 2017 and 2047.</p>

Questions	Midlothian Council Responses
<p>5. What opportunities will exist for the community to be involved in shaping the school?</p> <p>a. Can you outline how any statutory consultations integrate into the planning process?</p> <p>b. Is there a desire from Midlothian Council to go beyond the statutory minimum when it comes to community consultation?</p> <p>c. How does Midlothian Council aim to integrate the requirements of the Participation Request, part of the Community Empowerment Act and granted to Gorebridge Community Cares in August 2017, as part of ongoing consultations?</p>	<p>There will be multiple opportunities: some formal, some informal.</p> <p>As this is a new school, a 13-week statutory consultation period is required. This allows community feedback on catchment area, outlines education benefits, sibling policy etc.</p> <p>This has been done on previous projects. Minimum is one face-to-face meeting, but virtual drop-ins during the day and evening (to catch workers) and held two virtual public meetings. Expect a similar level for Gorebridge.</p> <p>Mayfield Campus is likely to proceed before Gorebridge, so that would prove a useful example of what to expect in a consultation process.</p> <p>Health will be consulted directly, asking if additional facilities to complement existing facilities would be beneficial. Again, worth noting that priority will be given to the education aspects of the new building first.</p> <p>There is lots of experience on other schools with integration of health facilities working alongside partners. Admittedly sometimes these have not been well-aligned, but the expectation is that Covid will help reframe that discussion and the Council see this as an opportunity for closer working.</p>
<p>6. What is the proposed capacity of the high school at opening?</p> <p>a. Given increasing school rolls in nearby high schools (Newbattle and Lasswade), what options for future expansion would be considered?</p>	<p>This is very difficult to predict accurately. Part of the statutory consultation will outline the strategy to fill the school. There are typically two approaches used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take P7 intake only (i.e. start with just S1), then grow school that way. Bertha Park (in Perth & Kinross) took this approach. • Others have taken existing S1 & S2 students across alongside P7 intake, starting with S1 – S3. <p>The approach chosen depends on the result of the consultation process. It would be highly unusual to suggest students move during exam years (S4 – S6). In all cases, a leadership team (Head, Depute & PTs) would all be recruited at least 3 months prior to school opening to allow a smooth transition.</p> <p>Further discussion on transport and sibling policy is part of Question 11.</p> <p>Newbattle is nowhere near full currently. School projections are reviewed regularly, and this will guide what expansion options the proposed design would provide.</p>

Integration

Questions	Midlothian Council Responses
<p>7. What provisions are likely to exist for drop off/pick up zones, parking, links to public transport and safe/active travel connections?</p> <p>a. Are there any targets or requirements on how 'central' a new school needs to be for the communities it serves, for example as part of a "20-minute neighbourhood"?</p>	<p>Derek Oliver (Place Directorate) would work on safer routes to school and would provide further analysis. Example at Wallyford being looked at, would be covered in consultation period. The work itself is done soon after site identified.</p>
<p>8. What other changes to high school provision are planned in Midlothian, and how likely is that to affect what happens in Gorebridge?</p>	<p>In terms of High school provision, replacement Beeslack is first on list, but won't impact on Gorebridge. It will impact on Lasswade HS (1600 capacity) by looking to address balance between the two areas.</p> <p>Once Beeslack done, there is connected work with Penicuik HS refurbishment. The plan is for Penicuik HS to move into the new Beeslack while work goes on Penicuik HS. There is no other major work planned at this time.</p>

Operation

Questions	Midlothian Council Responses
<p>9. What is the proposed catchment area and feeder primary schools for the new high school?</p>	<p>This is subject to statutory consultation. Obviously guided by schools in the area, but the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation also needs to be consulted to ensure there is no imbalance in the school catchment area which biases the school roll at one end of the scale.</p>
<p>10. Newbattle High School is a centre of excellence for digital technology, the replacement Beeslack is becoming a centre of excellence for STEM – what centre of excellence vision does Midlothian Council have for Gorebridge?</p>	<p>Under discussion. Midlothian Council has made £10.5m commitment that all children can benefit from digital excellence, so it doesn't really matter where the centre is located as this more defines where the staff are based to support the county as a whole. In Newbattle's case, it just means digital technology may be piloted there prior to a comprehensive roll-out.</p> <p>Covid has taught the education system a lot about virtual learning, and there could be lessons there to enable this more regularly to expand the curriculum available to students at a given school. For some senior years, students may travel to other education centres for certain subjects – but can that be done a smarter way using the tools developed during Covid?</p> <p>Centres of Excellence for Expressive Arts and Engineering have been considered across the school network, but no decisions made yet. Assigning a speciality does not reflect what is available in the direct community, it's about identifying key skills required by all Midlothian Council students to succeed in the future workplace.</p> <p>From floor: "Would a Centre of Excellence form part of the statutory consultations?"</p> <p>Response: It may do, but it does not need to. These are more strategically assigned across Midlothian.</p> <p>From floor: "Gorebridge can't count on business and industry to provide experience, since we don't have much around here (compared to Penicuik etc). It is vital the school is proactive here."</p> <p>Response: Example given of Newbattle HS, in a similar position. They used to lose 20% of S1 to transfers to other schools, but that doesn't happen now. Positive destinations are improved, attainment is improved.</p> <p>From floor: "It seems we have lots of industry around in house-building, and they are crying out for trades. Should we look at how we take advantage of this via apprenticeships?"</p> <p>Response: A Midlothian Construction Centre already exists, tied to apprenticeships.</p>
<p>11. If a student is already enrolled at another high school – for example Newbattle – would they be guaranteed the option of choosing whether to continue their studies at their existing school or transferring to the new school when it opens?</p>	<p>This would be covered in the statutory consultation, as it is complicated by sibling and transport policy. No decision is yet made, and several options are possible depending on what the Council wish to propose. In all cases, it would be highly unlikely senior-year students (those currently in S3 and up, in exam years) would be forced to move.</p> <p>If the new school starts with S1-S3, then S4-6 Newbattle students would be guaranteed transport provision to existing school. If an S1-S3 student opts to stay at Newbattle, there is no guarantee of transport provision. If the new school starts with S1 only, then all existing students at Newbattle would retain transport provision.</p> <p>Siblings policy can influence transport provision too. Usually there is a cut-off – for example, the cut-off might be siblings in P7 of pupils in S4 have option of continuing at existing school (and retaining transport provision). An example table from another consultation will be provided to illustrate this, which makes it very clear.</p>

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12. How will the building and running of the school integrate with existing Midlothian Council policies regarding sustainability and net-zero targets?	<p>This will be considered as part of design development, in-line with industry best practice. The “passive house” idea [where a building is designed for high efficiency and so requires little in the way of active heating and cooling] is currently popular and may be appropriate.</p> <p>The 2030 net-zero target applies for both existing and new-builds. It is site-specific – both during construction and during operation.</p>
13. What is the intended name of the school?	This again forms part of the statutory consultation, and names may be suggested (within guidelines provided e.g. to avoid Schooly McSchoolface).

Additional Notes

Various potential timescales were mentioned, but all are subject to school roll projections indicating when a school would be required for. Currently, not planning to complete consultation until 2025, and it would be two years after that at least before opening.

Timelines are fluid, and may be amended. If the need for a school can be demonstrated earlier, then it will be built earlier. The link between Midlothian Council’s Place Directorate and Children & Youth Partnership is critical when it comes to estimating the impact of housing on education provision. There is a tendency to underestimate actual population via certain measures.

MLDP can project, but doesn’t include how quickly developers will build the houses, nor how quickly they will sell. Needs constant review for up-to-date numbers. A Gorebridge High School was projected, but at the same the recommendation did say that it might not be required in the fullness of time. Due diligence on the projected school roll is necessary to confirm this one way or another.

Q: Will the Council earmark and keep any sites available for a new school and ensure that this land is not used for any other purpose? Are the original sites previously identified and discussed at the Gorebridge Futures meeting (Gore Glen, Barleyknowe and Redheugh) still relevant?

A: Site ID is yet to begin. Previous sites were very initial works and they need to be refreshed. Ground conditions at forefront of initial assessment, and that is still to happen.

Q: If there were a site identified, can they protect the site?

A: If Council owns site, yes they can.