

Notes from High School meeting 31st August 2021

The decision to finally move to the next stage of planning a new school depends on the result of a statistical examination of school roles and projections that will be completed in November.

Because this will be a completely new school there must be a thirteen week statutory consultation period. Before that there needs to be rough decisions on catchment, location and size. There might be an **informal** consultation on location before this.

The consultation will allow community input on the final location, whether or not it will include community facilities, swimming pool etc Outdoor education facilities are covered by national requirements.

A new school requires a site of 6.2 hectares, rising to 8 ha depending on the facilities included. A flat site is better and good transport links essential as well as considerations of noise, possible flooding, ecological impact....

Following the 13 week consultation there is then 12 - 18 months design process and 2 years construction.

The timescale at the moment is to complete the consultation process by 2025, so realistically it is possibly going to be 8 to 9 years before this school opens, unless there is pressure from the pupil role statistical exercise.

The new Beeslack HS, currently at the design stage will be a template for future builds.

At the moment no funding is in place. Usually Scottish Gov funds 50% and the remaining comes from Midlothian Council and developers contributions. There would need to be a new round of money coming from the Learning Estate Fund (Scot gov) before the required funds could be 'nailed down' At the moment the 'total ask' is unknown.

Questions on transport for pupils electing to stay at Newbattle were addressed.

We were told how the new school would have to be 'grown' This might mean the current P7 only becoming the new S1. More likely all pupils in the current S1 and S2 would be invited to move over to the new school to form an S2 and S3. (This would come into the consultation process) It was not envisaged that any pupils already in their senior years would move across and younger pupils with siblings in S4 - S6 might elect to go to Newbattle. All these pupils would continue to have transport to Newbattle. Any other pupils opting to go to Newbattle would not have transport.

Discussing if health provision might be part of the new school - the 'Total Place Approach' would welcome as many facilities being incorporated as the site would take, but again this would be part of the consultation process. The '20 minute neighbourhood' is also very much in the minds of planners.

Looking at School provision in Midlothian overall, the new Beeslack HS will balance out the increasing numbers at Lasswade HS. Any HS would require a balance of the socio-economic mix in its catchment.

LDP - Looking ahead to future development plans for Midlothian, the allocation of land for housing and the local education provision are considered together.

There was some discussion about some schools being centres of excellence with connections to local business and university - what was possible for Gorebridge?

Much was made of the fact that a centre of excellence contributed to the **whole** school estate, ideas being piloted in the school first. Discussions are ongoing about possible further centre of excellence schools.

Naming the school - this could come from a consultation with guidance given as to appropriate names

Sustainability and net-zero targets -this would be part of the design process. Midlothian adopts a 'passive House' policy on all new builds

Staffing issues It was not thought that staffing would be a problem. Midlothian is already building extra staff into schools using Newly Qualified Teachers, NQTs. The senior staff in the new school would be appointed 3 months ahead of opening.

In concluding her session with us Fiona Robertson was keen to keep the connection with the sub-group going and to respond to further questions as they arose.