

	<b>Item no</b>	
	Report no	
<b>Consultation on Site Options for the Replacement of Portobello High School and St John's Primary School</b>		
<b>Meeting of the Council</b>		
<b>21 December 2006</b>		

## **1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report advises the Executive of the responses to the consultation process that was undertaken in respect of proposals to replace Portobello High School and St John's Primary School. Recommendations are also made on how to proceed.

## **2.0 Summary**

- 1 The consultation on the various options brought a strong public response with over 440 comments received via letter and e-mail. Most residents, action groups and amenity organisations favoured a rebuild of Portobello High School on the existing site, with a request that brownfield options be reconsidered for St Johns. For many, it was felt that open space should not be sacrificed to provide land for new schools.**
- 2 Parents and most School Boards were strongly in favour of building on a new site in Portobello Park to take advantage of the larger site and to avoid the problems of a decant. It was also felt that the community recreational facilities that will be provided at the school will help compensate for land that is lost.**
- 3 Evaluation of the two sets of views and their benefits, timescales, cost and deliverability supports building a new Portobello High School in the park, with a site for St John's being reserved at the current High School site.**

## **3.0. Background**

- 3.1 Portobello High School has a current school roll of 1450 making it the largest in Edinburgh in terms of pupil numbers. Proposals to replace Portobello High School were first made in 2002 under the second round of Public Private Partnership funding, but were not taken forward at the time although the need for a new school was recognised.
- 3.2 The school occupies a restricted 2.9 hectare site that has no playing fields and pupils are bussed to nearby facilities. The central feature of the current school is a nine storey tower built in the 1960's which is now outdated and in a poor condition and unsuited to meeting modern teaching requirements. The Council is now consulting on potential sites for building a new school.
- 3.3 Linked to the proposal to build a new Portobello High School is the replacement of St John's Primary School which abuts the secondary school.

- 3.4 The primary school has a school roll of around 400 pupils and occupies a tight 0.6 hectare site. The building dates from 1926 and extra provision is delivered via temporary classrooms. Classrooms in the main block are too small and the school fails to meet prescribed standards.
- 3.5 Consultants appointed by the Council carried out an assessment of 15 potential sites for the two schools. This considered factors such as:
- Site size;
  - Accessibility from the school catchments;
  - Site assembly and ownership constraints; and
  - Technical and design issues.
- 3.6 A sifting process narrowed down the original selection and a report to the Council Executive on the 12th September sought approval to carry out statutory consultation on site preferences for the new schools.
- 3.7 Three site options were identified for the replacement of Portobello High School. These were:
- Option A New High School on existing site (incorporating St John's PS);
  - Option B New High School on Portobello Golf Course; and
  - Option C New High School on Portobello Park.
- 3.8 In respect of a replacement St John's Primary School, the same three sites were identified for consultation along with a fourth option – Option D, a new Primary School at Bingham Park. During the consultation process, Option D made no public impact and only passing reference is made to the site in the report. Other, better located options took precedence from a community perspective.

#### **4.0 Consultation Process**

- 4.1 The consultation was carried out in terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, as amended 1981, and the Regulations made thereunder. The requirement is to consult with:
- the parent of every pupil at the school and every child expected to be in attendance at the school within two years;
  - the School Board; and
  - any person authorised for the purpose by the church or denominational body in whose interest that school is conducted.
- 4.2 It was acknowledged that the wider community would like to make their views known in tandem with the statutory consultation and the consultation process was open to everyone to comment.
- 4.3 The consultation period ran from the start of September to Monday, 30 October 2006 and views were invited via letter or e-mail or by attending parents and public meetings.
- 4.4 Meetings were organised by the Council at the dates and venues shown below. Due to the wider issues around the replacement school sites, meetings were held to allow both parents and the wider community to express their views. Representatives from the Council were present to outline proposals, assist discussions and answer questions. Appendices 1, 2 and 3 contain the Minutes of these meetings.

Parents Meeting	Location	Minute of Meeting
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3 <sup>rd</sup> October, 2006	Portobello High School	Appendix 1
4 <sup>th</sup> October, 2006	St John's Primary School	Appendix 2
<b>Public Meeting</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Minute of Meeting</b>
11 October 2006	Portobello Town Hall	Appendix 3

### Consultation Responses

- 4.5 Over 440 responses have been recorded as part of the consultation and they are summarised in a separate report which will be made available in the Members Lounge. Copies of the report can be read online and copies will be supplied to the local Portobello libraries. Table 1 shows the breakdown of responses by category. Respondents were asked to identify if they were commenting as residents or parents. In many instances this information was not provided and this division was not possible.

**Table 1: Consultation Responses by Category**

Category	No of Replies	% Replies
School Board	5	1
Pressure / Interest Group	10	2
Parent	98	21
Resident	196	43
Parent or Resident	137	33
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>100</b>

- 4.6 Most responses channelled through the Council came from residents (43%). This was nearly twice the number given by parents (21%), although there was a large percentage that consisted of either a parent or resident (33%).
- 4.7 Five School Boards made representations, including the two School Boards directly affected by the process. Portobello High School provided a folder of information which included the results of a questionnaire completed by over 1,000 people (pupils, parents and teachers). Towerbank School Board canvassed the views of parents via a questionnaire on the three options for Portobello High School (completed by 43 parents). St John's School Board also issued a questionnaire to parents / carers and teachers seeking views on the four options for a new St Johns Primary School (responses have been treated as confidential).
- 4.8 A number of interest and pressure groups made responses. This included the views of the local golf clubs, amenity groups, a local pressure group opposed to development on open space and a pressure group which supports a greenfield solution.

### Consultation Responses – Main Issues

- 4.9 A number of themes emerged from the consultations. This included both support and objections to on-site re-development of Portobello High School. The issue of decanting and the implications for morale and teaching brought strong responses, as did objections to the use of recreational open space as site options. Other issues included funding arrangements, the design of the new schools and community use of the facilities and the impact of a new school on amenity and traffic.
- 4.10 These aspects are considered in greater detail further in the report, but there was a general consensus that Portobello High School should be replaced and for many, it was acknowledged as being long overdue.

- 4.11 Most responses related to a replacement Portobello High School but many of the issues were common to both schools since the site options were similar.
- 4.12 On the matter of the preferred location for Portobello High School two conflicting views emerged. One view opposed loss of open space in Portobello and was supportive of solutions that protected the park and /or the golf course. Supporters of this view favoured rebuilding on site or on alternative brownfield locations. To assist with school playing field provision, options identified included using new or upgraded facilities at Portobello Park or at Figgate Park.
- 4.13 A second view emerged that opposed on site redevelopment of the High School, on the basis that the level of disruption to pupils and the subsequent constrained site would not provide a school fit for the 21st century. A new school with space to meet modern day educational standards was regarded as the overwhelming priority.

#### **Residents & Parent Views**

- 4.14 Residents who replied to the consultation were strongly in favour of on-site redevelopment (see Table 2). From 196 responses, two thirds (128) supported an on-site rebuild of Portobello High School. Residents were even stronger in their opposition to development on the golf course and /or park with well over 80% (171 and 162) objecting to development in one or either location.
- 4.15 Parents, by contrast, favoured off-site options. From 98 replies, only 22 supported a rebuild on site, whereas 37% and 56% respectively supported development on the golf course and the park.
- 4.16 Among the mixed resident and parents grouping the responses were more variable. Over 40% (58) favoured a rebuild of Portobello High School on its existing site, whereas 37% (55) considered the park a suitable option.
- 4.17 Supporters of keeping Portobello High School at its present site also tended to favour a brownfield option for St John's. Various sites were mentioned, most which have already undergone an evaluation by the Council and this is covered later in the report.

**Table 2: Consultation Responses from Parents and Residents**

Category	No	Support Proposal			Object to Proposal		
		Opt A (Rebuild)	Opt B (Golf C)	Opt C (Park)	Opt A (Rebuild)	Opt B (Golf C)	Opt C (Park)
Residents	196	128	7	10	7	171	162
Parents	98	22	36	55	29	30	28
Residents / Parents	137	58	40	55	9	67	68

Note: Respondents could support or object to various options – ie support both B and C and object to Option A.

- 4.18 For comparative purposes Table 3 summarises the results of the extensive consultation undertaken separately by Portobello School / School Board on the preferred options. There is support for the greenfield options, with less than a quarter favouring a rebuild on site. All three groups canvassed (pupils, parents and staff) rated a rebuild the least popular option.

**Table 3: Portobello High School Questionnaire Response**

Category	No	Support Proposal			Sup
		Opt A (Rebuild)	Opt B (Golf C)	Opt C (Park)	
Pupils	936	240	389	307	0
Parents	90	11	17	61	1
Staff	39	4	14	21	0
Total	1065	255	420	389	1
% Support	100%	24%	39%	37%	0

### School Board Views

- 4.19 The School Boards largely favoured options that best allowed the High School to meet modern day education needs without the constraints imposed by its currently restricted site – ie Options B or C. Table 4 summarises their responses, focusing on the educational factors behind their decisions.
- 4.20 Apart from St John’s, all the School Boards ruled out Option A. St John’s School Board favours an early rebuild of the primary school at Portobello Park, which would then free up the whole existing site for a new High School. The general preference is for a new school on site C (the primary school in the case of St John’s Board), although Towerbank School Board thinks Option B would provide a larger site and the Royal High favours a shared campus.

**Table 4: Comments made by School Boards**

School Board	Preferred Options	Comments
Portobello High School	Option C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The best, most appropriate, affordable and practical location</li> <li>Parkland setting, central to the catchment, with adjacent sports and formal activity areas</li> <li>Likely to deliver sooner than any other option</li> </ul> <p>Option A is rejected because it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repeats the mistakes of 40 years ago</li> <li>Would damage the educational prospects of pupils during re-building</li> <li>Would provide inadequate facilities for recreation</li> </ul>
St John’s	Option C for St	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>St John’s would benefit from a new building in as short a</li> </ul>

Primary School	John's PS Option A for PHS	<p>timeframe as possible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing fields at Portobello Park could be enhanced by floodlighting and new changing facilities</li> <li>• A primary school at Portobello Park should be less controversial in planning terms</li> <li>• Redevelopment of the High School could save costs by retaining the swimming pool and gym hall</li> </ul> <p>Main findings from the Questionnaire responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current St John's fails to satisfy fitness for purpose and an upgrade is urgently required</li> <li>• The majority of the St John's community do not favour co-location (pupil welfare and safety)</li> <li>• There is a wish to minimise loss of green space</li> </ul>
<b>School Board</b>	<b>Preferred Options</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Towerbank School Board	Option B for PHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Option C is workable but site is not big enough</li> <li>• Strong dislike of Option A</li> <li>• A decant would have disastrous educational and divisive social impact, and would crush staff and student morale</li> <li>• Portobello Park is seriously underused, lacks versatility, and is not always used appropriately</li> <li>• Replacing Portobello High School requires urgent attention</li> </ul> <p>The result of the parents consultation (43 replies) was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 support option A</li> <li>• 13 support option B</li> <li>• 25 support option C</li> <li>• 1 supports B or C</li> <li>• 1 objected to all options</li> </ul>
Parson's Green	Option C for PHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly support Option C</li> <li>• Option A should be ruled out as it involves a decant of two or three years</li> <li>• A new school is an opportunity to improve and upgrade Portobello Park</li> <li>• Road safety will be an issue</li> </ul>
Royal High	Co-location on Options B and C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Horrendous for children not to have access to on site facilities such as football pitches</li> <li>• Entirely unacceptable to consider a decant</li> <li>• Sad to see the golf course go, but when balanced against enhanced educational there is no contest</li> <li>• Main issues are delivery of best educational experience, quickest to deliver and best value for taxpayers</li> </ul>

**Interest Groups / Pressure Group Comments**

- 4.21 Several groups made comments during the consultation period and their comments are summarised below. The various Golf Clubs, amenity groups and Portobello Park Action Group all oppose building on open space and support Option A for Portobello High School, with a preference for St John's to locate to a brownfield site.
- 4.22 Portobello High School Management Team has a preference to build afresh on a larger site that offers greater educational opportunities and improved on-site facilities. A local action group (PFANS) also favours a greenfield site.

**Table 5: Comments made by Interest & Pressure Groups**

Which group	Option Supported	Comments
Portobello Golf Club / Portobello Ladies Golf Club / St Philip's Ladies Golf Club	Option A  Brownfield site for St John's or move to Holyrood school site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oppose development of Park and Golf Course</li> <li>• Consultation ignores the question of funding</li> <li>• Consultation should address issues such as loss of amenity (golf course), loss of green space, traffic issues</li> <li>• Golf Course has been greatly improved in recent years</li> <li>• New school should not be at the expense of open space</li> <li>• Understanding that permanent provision of the golf course was agreed when Portobello became a city suburb</li> </ul>
Portobello Amenity Society	Option A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green space should be retained</li> <li>• Options should include brownfield sites for the primary school</li> <li>• No housing should be built on the park or golf course</li> <li>• Consultation should be undertaken at all stages of the decision making process</li> </ul>
PEDAL (Portobello Energy Descent and Land Reform Group)	Option A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building on green space is unsustainable</li> <li>• Brownfield sites should remain under consideration</li> <li>• New school should minimise energy use and waste</li> <li>• All options need to be adequately explored and costed</li> </ul>
Portobello Park Action Group	Option A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oppose development of Park and Golf Course</li> <li>• Believes that the park and golf course are common good land and this is supported by legal opinion</li> <li>• The Council has not addressed the potential loss of green space, loss of amenity, environmental issues and potential increase in traffic</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should consider brownfield options for St John's</li> </ul>
City of Edinburgh Basketball Club / Basketball Scotland	Support new school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predominant user of community facilities at High School outside school hours</li> <li>• Club requirements include two sports halls that can each accommodate a basketball court</li> <li>• Spectator seating for 200-300 people in one hall</li> </ul>
Senior Management Team of Portobello High School	Option C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support build on Greenfield site.</li> <li>• Majority preference for Portobello Park site</li> <li>• A school in the heart of the community.</li> <li>• Least expensive option to deliver-but offers cost effective investment</li> <li>• Shortest timescale for delivering the school</li> <li>• The education of the current school generation would not be disrupted.</li> <li>• Opportunities for enriched sports facilities</li> <li>• A decant would be too much disruption to the pupils</li> <li>• A rebuild on site would not provide a large enough footprint</li> <li>• Strong teacher / pupil support for greenfield option</li> </ul>
Support for Learning, Portobello High School	Option C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current building is unfit for purpose</li> <li>• Department is not accessible to physically disturbed pupils</li> <li>• Proposed accommodation in new school for Central Support is inadequate</li> </ul>
PFANS Portobello For New Schools	Option B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable school fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century which would benefit the community.</li> <li>• Opportunity for attractive, well designed school with ample open space for play and learning</li> <li>• Site is well by bus routes and offers safe walking routes</li> <li>• Park / Golf course not used to their full potential</li> <li>• Option A fails for educational reasons and the costs of a decant cannot be justified</li> <li>• It would be impossible to future proof such a cramped site</li> </ul>

## 5.0 Main report – Issues Raised During Consultation

5.1 The following section describes the main questions / issues raised during the consultation period. These have been categorised under the following headings and each is considered in turn.

### Main Issues / Questions

- Procedural Matters relating to the Consultation Process
- Funding / Timescale for the Schools
- New School on Existing Site (Option A)
- Policies on the Protection of Open Space



- Portobello Golf Course (Option B)
- Portobello Park (Option C)
- Alternative Site Options
- School Layout and Design
- Use of School Recreational Facilities
- School Catchment / School Rolls
- Traffic & Residential Amenity

## **6.0 Procedural Matters relating to the Consultation Process**

- 6.1 The consultation process has involved consulting the parents, school boards and residents on the various options. Everyone was free to make comments, irrespective of where they live or their age. For example former pupils, now living outside Edinburgh have made comments and existing pupils have also given their views.
- 6.2 Most people have made individual representations whereas others have signed a standard letter or have used a standard letter as a template. All have been recorded.
- 6.3 The replies from the School Boards are recorded as single entries, but represent a collation of a body of opinion from parents and pupils.
- 6.4 No specific scoring or weighting is attached to comments made. The consultation process was intended to help gauge volume of public opinion and identify the main issues. This would then help when making recommendations for going forward.
- 6.5 Given the number of options and the fact that some options for the secondary school and the primary school related to the same site (Portobello Park and the Golf Course), it was difficult to count views as discrete comments.
- 6.6 A number of respondents questioned the timing of the report to the Council on the outcome of the consultations. It had been advised during the consultation process that the report would go to the Council on the 21<sup>st</sup> December which is the same day that the Tramways is being discussed. However given that this commitment was made prior to the consultation period, the need to be consistent and adhere to the programme, commits the Council to this timetable.

## **7.0 Funding / Timescale for the Schools**

### **Comment**

- 7.1 Comments were made on lack of detail or confirmation of source of finance for the new schools. Without such information it was difficult to make measured comments. Other respondents focused on the long timescales before the schools could open and sought clarification on the delay. There was a suspicion that the golf course would be sold for housing to fund the schools and this has attracted numerous objections.

### **Council Response**

- 7.2 Much of the debate during the consultation has arisen regarding concern that the open space at Portobello Park and/or Portobello Golf Course would be sold for housing development to assist funding for the two schools. However, it was stated during the public meetings that there is no intention to do so, and this stance is reconfirmed in this report.
- 7.3 With regard to current schools sites, surplus brownfield land may be released for housing to supplement any required funding for the proposals. It is envisaged that any

additional funding generated through these methods would be used to address the shortfall in schools' funding only.

- 7.4 Obtaining funding for the schools is a complex matter, which makes it difficult to predict timescales for the build but Table 7 below shows the various steps that are required, some of which may be able to run in tandem. Factors such as obtaining planning permission could take a long time, depending on the site and the level of objection. It is unlikely that a new secondary school could be completed before 2011 given the compulsory procedures the Council must go through; to appoint design teams and contractors, give proper consideration to the design of the school and undertake a two year build programme.

**Table 7: Actions for Building New Portobello High School and St John's Primary School**

Action
Council Selects preferred option
Funding bid to Scottish Executive
Funding agreed by Scottish Executive
Council assess shortfall and means of funding
Appoint Architects (require to tender)
Design school
Obtain Planning Permission
Appoint Contractors (require to tender)
Start building new school
Completion of Portobello High School

- 7.5 Should the Council reach a decision on site options for the two schools, the next stage will be to compile a business case for the funding for presentation to the Scottish Executive. It is proposed that the replacement of the two schools should form part of a larger project which could form the next wave of investment in the Edinburgh schools estate. The larger project could include investment in new or refurbished schools for Boroughmuir and James Gillespie's High Schools, St Crispin's Special School and addressing fitness for purpose issues at other primary schools.
- 7.6 It will be up to the Scottish Executive to determine what type of funding is available. This could involve a further round of Public Private Partnership investment, or other alternative mechanisms. A response from the Scottish Executive would not be anticipated until mid 2007 at the earliest.
- 7.7 Should partial or no funding be forthcoming from the Scottish Executive, the Council would have to consider how to make up the shortfall. The principal options lie with the Council's Capital Investment Programme; the Prudential Borrowing Scheme, which allows borrowing against potential revenue savings; and the generation of capital receipts through the disposal of Council assets.
- 7.8 Until the Scottish Executive responds to the business case, it is not possible to speculate on the funding mechanisms or the Council sources of funding that will be required.

## **8.0 New School on Existing Site (Option A)**

- 8.1 Option A relates to rebuilding either school within the boundaries of Portobello High School and St Johns Primary School. Implementing Option A for a new Portobello High School would require a decant, to an off site location such as Portobello Park. Option A

for St John's is based on the notion that Portobello High School is built off site, freeing up adjacent land for a new St John's.

#### **Comment**

- 8.2 There was strong support for and against a rebuild on site. Many respondents who favoured this option were strongly opposed to the loss of open space/ amenity space / recreation space. Such respondents tended to favour a brownfield site for St John's Primary School. Other respondents felt that facilities at Portobello Park or Figgate Park could be upgraded for school use in conjunction with on site development.
- 8.3 Some respondents recalled that an earlier PPP bid for Portobello High School was based on a rebuild within the existing footprint. Others felt the decant costs seemed excessively high, which prejudiced this option from going forward.
- 8.4 There was also considerable opposition from respondents to rebuilding on site due to the disruption a decant would cause to teaching and several advised that they would consider removing their children to another school. The problem of a constrained site was also mentioned, as was the fact that the school would continue to have inadequate playing fields. Many respondents felt there was an opportunity to create something much better than at present, and the best way to achieve this was to build anew on a larger site.
- 8.5 The prevailing view among those closely involved in education was to oppose a rebuild on site. This would perpetuate the current limitations of a constrained site to the long-term detriment of the pupils education and in the short term, a decant would disrupt the pupils education.

#### **Council Response**

- 8.6 At the time of the original PPP bid made for Portobello High School no other options had been assessed. While it was technically possible to rebuild on site, it would have caused considerable disruption during building works and the school site would still not have met desired size standards.
- 8.7 Rebuilding on the Portobello High School site removes the hurdle of finding a replacement High School site, but there are major knock on implications. The tight site boundary means the school will remain dependent on off-site playing fields (even if provided locally) on top of the general inconvenience.
- 8.8 However major issues arise from the need to relocate St Johns in advance of a rebuild and the disruption caused by a decant. This option requires St Johns to be replaced first. With funding still to be resolved, this brings greater uncertainty to the project because the two proposals are inter-dependent. It does not avoid the issue of loss of open space as a site would be required to reprovide this school.
- 8.9 The cost of the decant has been independently costed by consultants as being in the order of £5.8 million although this varies with options. Effectively the decant would mean setting up a temporary school in portacabins for two years or by using the vacated St Johns building linked to additional accommodation.
- 8.10 This option fares the poorest in terms of the resulting educational facilities that could be achieved through new build, disruption to education, timescale, and financial implications,. The advantage is that the school remains in its present location, is well placed to serve its catchment population and minimises (though not wholly avoids) the loss of open space.

## **9.0 Policies on the Protection of Open Space**

#### **Comment**

- 9.1 Many respondents objected to options that would result in the loss of open space to school development. They referred to National Guidance and Council policy on protecting open space. In addition, mention was made of the local plan that safeguards open space.
- 9.2 More specifically their concerns covered the following points:
- The golf course and playing fields are a valuable local resource and provide amenity space that helps define the neighbourhood and gives it an identity;
  - It is important to retain local recreation facilities. They improve health and well being of residents as well as providing relaxation and enjoyment for users; and
  - The replacement option mentioned for the golf course is on the edge of the city and would be less accessible to users.

### **Council Response**

- 9.3 NPPG11 on Sport, Physical Recreation and Open Space sets out national policy. Robust planning policies are required to safeguard established open spaces and playing fields and Councils are expected to lead by example and generally resist development of land in their ownership.
- 9.4 The Scottish Executive is currently reviewing NPPG11 and revised guidelines are likely to be in place by mid 2007. The guidance will give stronger protection to retaining open space. Only where there is strong justification, and where replacement open space forms part of the proposal, should open space be developed for an unrelated use.
- 9.5 The revised guidance further advises that where a planning authority proposes to grant consent for development on land identified as open space in the development plan, the application must be notified to Scottish Ministers.
- 9.7 The Draft Edinburgh City Local Plan contains two policies relating to the options to build on the golf course and the playing field. In respect of open space, permission may be permitted if the development is for community purposes, the benefits to the local community outweigh the loss and alternative, equivalent provision is made locally.
- 9.8 The second policy applies to playing fields. Permission may be permitted if an alternative playing field is provided or existing provision is significantly improved to compensate for the loss.
- 9.9 Should open space be sought for a new school site, the proposals would be predicated on the case that the development of a new school is a community facility and that mitigating circumstances include the new school resulting in the provision of enhanced leisure facilities for use by the school and the wider community. Initial discussions have taken place with planners in the Council on these issues. The ultimate decision will lie with the Scottish Ministers who will have the option to call in any planning application for determination.
- 9.10 The Council has given a commitment at the public meetings held to discuss the proposals to make good any land lost to open space, but at present, the site and timescales have still to be resolved. Should a decision be made to build Portobello High School off site, there would still be surplus land on the existing site, even allowing for a rebuild of St John's. If this site were not required to supplement the funding for the schools, consideration could be given to redeveloping the site for open space, to replace any open space lost to the relocation of the school.

## **10.0 Portobello Golf Course (Option B)**

- 10.1 Option B lies in the south-west corner of the Portobello Golf Course. The site was selected because of its centrality, the land was in the ownership of the Council and it provided a site of 4.5 hectares to meet all the education requirements. However such an option meant the 9-hole golf course could not operate from the reduced site and a replacement site would be required.
- 10.2 Alternative provision has been mooted at Brunstane some two miles away on the edge of the city. It would take around two years to establish the course and allow for planting to mature. The site would have to be purchased, a layout designed and planning permission granted and this could add over £3 million to the costs.

### **Comment**

- 10.3 Among the respondents there was little enthusiasm for a new golf course. Golfers liked the local accessibility and felt that the course was part of the town. There was considerable opposition to the loss of the golf course for several reasons:
- The golf course is part of Portobello and its loss would be detrimental to the whole community;
  - The Golf Course is Common Good land and the Council does not have authority to build on the site;
  - The golf course is a valuable area of amenity open space;
  - The golf course is a popular and well used recreational facility;
  - There is a need to encourage recreational use and healthy lifestyles;
  - A replacement golf course would be less accessible to local residents;
  - The replacement golf course would be an edge of city facility rather than a green lung within the city;
  - Expectation that the remainder of the site not used for the school would eventually be sold off for housing; and
  - Development of the site would increase traffic flows in surrounding residential areas.
- 10.4 There was also a degree of support for locating the school on the site on the following basis:
- Educational needs are greater than golfing needs;
  - The location has the greatest scope to provide on site playing fields;
  - The school could be built in an attractive setting; and
  - The golf course is under utilised and could be put to a better community use for education and public open space.

### **Council Response**

- 10.5 Option B offers the greatest scope in terms of layout, design and space but the potential loss of such a long-standing recreational facility has resulted in a large number of objections. Although a new school in this location would be central to the catchment it would lead to the complete loss of the golf course. Access to the site is also poorer than Option C, which can be served from a main road.
- 10.6 A new golfing facility would be required and this would involve negotiations to purchase a suitable site within private ownership. A decision would also be required on what to do with the remainder of the site, but there is overwhelming opposition to housing. From a planning perspective, it is more difficult to justify the loss of such a major outdoor recreational facility when other options (Option C) are less disruptive in their overall impact.
- 10.7 The Council is of a view that the land currently occupied by the golf course and the football pitches is not Common Good land as this land was purchased by the Council by

way of a Feu Disposition and not gifted, as is the case for most land and property held on the Common Good Account. The land was originally subject to title conditions which restricted its use to that of a public park and recreation ground but the Council is of the opinion that these conditions are no longer enforceable, having been removed in 2004 by the reform of Scottish land law which came into effect at that time. However, in view of the Opinion given by Mr. R.L. Martin QC that the land should be regarded as land which is part of the common good of the Council, further investigations are ongoing with a view to the Council seeking its own advice from Queen's Counsel. The issue of whether or not a piece of land is part of the common good of a local authority is a matter of fact to be judged by the court.

## **11.0 Portobello Park (Option C)**

11.1 Portobello Park comprises a rectangular area of grass containing two football pitches and a changing pavilion. Within the park there is sufficient space to provide a site of 4.5 hectares which includes provision of a full sized, all weather pitch. The two football pitches (as relocated) would be in addition to this area. Building works could proceed without the need to relocate St Johns or decant pupils at Portobello High School.

### **Comment**

11.2 Many of the responses that objected to the loss of the golf course also opposed the partial loss of land at Portobello Park. The main reasons tended to cover the following issues:

- The park is Common Good land and the Council does not have authority to build on the site;
- Portobello Park is an important area of amenity space;
- It is the main park serving Portobello;
- It is a well used facility for exercising / walking the dog;
- It provides a place for the local children to play;
- Local facilities will be lost forever; and
- Development will be intrusive to local amenity and will cause traffic congestion around the school.

11.3 There was also considerable support for the option to build Portobello High School in the park. Reasons given for supporting this option included:

- Central location within the Portobello catchment and close to the existing school;
- The least expensive option and therefore has the greatest likelihood of proceeding;
- It can be delivered quicker than the other options and a new school is a priority;
- Site can meet current education requirements;
- Scope to utilise exiting football pitches if reconfigured;
- Opportunity to provide enriched community and leisure facilities;
- Football pitches are not heavily used;
- Better to build on the playing field as opposed to forcing the golf course to close;
- Deep dislike of Option A and prospective decant; and
- New school requirements will place greater emphasis on providing PE for pupils so improved on site facilities are needed.

11.4 Often, there was support for both options B and C, but when a choice was made, it tended to favour development on the Portobello Park. Few respondents specifically supported the relocation of St Johns to the park site, although the St Johns School

Board favoured this option as a means of obtaining a new primary school in advance of rebuilding Portobello High School.

### **Council Response**

- 11.5 Building a new school on the playing field offers a significant opportunity for the school in that the fully required site size can be achieved and also allows the school to enjoy the significant benefit of being located alongside additional grass pitches. The site provides the most straightforward and most cost effective option, assuming that planning permission is granted. The site is in Council ownership and in terms of timescale it can proceed faster than the other options.
- 11.6 The two football pitches at Portobello are not heavily used, with the principal regular user being Thistle Youth Club. If this option is taken forward, discussions will take place to see if their needs can be better served via joint use of state of the art changing facilities within a new school.
- 11.7 A floodlit, all weather pitch is proposed within the school site and on the remainder of the park, the two football pitches can to be re-orientated and shifted further eastwards. Discussion would take place on the use of the playing fields to serve the school and the aim would be to open up the school to wider community use out of hours and at weekends.
- 11.8 There will still be an overall loss of open space for kickabouts and casual use but there would be improved recreational facilities within the park and it should be more intensively used than at present. The Council intend to provide replacement open space to compensate for this loss, although land is still to be identified.

## **12.0 Alternative Site Options**

### **Comment**

- 12.1 A number of respondents felt that other options and particularly brownfield sites had been discarded prematurely, especially in the case of St Johns Primary School where site requirements of 1.5 hectares were much lower than the 4.5 hectares sought for Portobello High School. Questions were raised why several sites were not considered such as:

#### **Brownfield Sites**

- Freightliner Terminal;
- Scottish Power Site;
- Powerleague Site;

#### **Greenfield Sites**

- Cavalry Park;
- Alongside Holyrood High School; and
- Figgate Park.

### **Council Response**

- 12.2 Consultants appointed by the Council have undertaken a detailed analysis of various site options. A multi-disciplinary team led Smith Scott Mullan Associates reported in August, 2006 on 15 sites in the Portobello area. This included both brownfield sites and greenfield sites. The sites mentioned above were discounted for the following reasons.

- **Freightliner Site**

The environment is not ideal for a primary school being bounded by the railway sidings to the south, a section of dual carriageway to the north and an Industrial Park to the

east. The site is currently subject to discussions for re-use and there is an expectation that the prospective developer will seek to buy or lease the site.

- **Scottish Power Site**

The site is in multiple ownership so there are significant cost and timescale issues in purchasing the site. The site is also likely to have soil contamination issues.

Engineers have advised that the site is covered with High and Low Voltage cables and they would have to be relocated which is costly and might not be allowed by Scottish Power. There is the option to build on the footprint of the existing building but that restricts the design of the Primary School.

- **Power League Site**

The Power League site is owned by the Council but is let on a very long lease. It would need to be re-located should agreement be reached on terminating the lease. The full site area includes an indoor bowling arena would have to be relocated to achieve the 1.5 hectares site requirement. There are accordingly significant risks and costs associated with the delivery of this site.

The site rests on the former outdoor swimming pool, and engineers have advised that it would be costly to properly level, as the fill material is unlikely to be good quality. In addition, the old power station once stood on an adjacent site. With the site underlain with sand and gravel and being near the sea engineers believe that contaminants may have leached on to the site.

- **Calvary Park / Holyrood High School**

Cavalry Park and the neighbouring site of Holyrood High School were discounted as having insurmountable planning issues. The greenbelt, nature conservation and designed landscape designations mean the only remaining developable area is being utilised for Holyrood High School. The sites are also poorly located to serve their catchments. Planning obstacles notwithstanding, it would also be undesirable to create a joint school campus of nearly 2,500 pupils.

- **Friggate Burn Park**

To create a sufficiently large area for a new primary school on the park would require a degree of drainage and earthworks and the clearing of mature planting. The park forms part of the wider flood prevention scheme and to build here would displace floodwaters to other properties. The pond area does not offer suitable ground conditions for building if drained. It was formed from an old clay pit and there are soil issues in terms of foundations. This proposal would also have the same issues regarding loss of open space as are associated with other sites.

## **13.0 School Layout and Design**

13.1 As part of the consultation process indicative layouts were shown for the schools. These layouts were generic and were based on a three storey building with four storey elements. At the actual design phase, detailed plans will be developed.

### **Comment**

13.2 A number of comments were made in relation to the design and layout of the schools and the poor condition of the existing High School. This included means of public involvement in the process and use of energy efficient systems and quality of materials. Other comments were made in respect of the design and layout on the existing site.



Others queried why the schools proposed for golf course and park were placed in corner locations – was it to allow for housing?

### **Council Response**

- 13.3** When the High School was built in the 1960's the construction systems used were new and over time their limitations became exposed. These issues are common to many buildings from this era. Modern construction methods are much better and far more flexible in their application and design life is 60 years plus for a new building.
- 13.4** With regard to the option of designing a new school for the existing site, the school would end up in a less-favoured, rear site if it were built around the existing building. Ongoing building of the replacement school would cause considerable disruption for pupils over a 2- 2½ year period and the layout and design would be restricted as a consequence. A decant of all pupils to another site (to study from portacabins) would probably be needed to allow building works to proceed unimpeded. In the interim, Portobello High School needs investment up to 2011 to keep the building in good order.
- 13.5** A greenfield site gives the opportunity for freedom of design and provides an opportunity to think about long-term aims, consider the best arrangements for the school and to learn from past mistakes.
- 13.6** The positioning of the schools on the park and golf course as shown in the Feasibility Reports were chosen to give them prominence and best pedestrian, vehicular and services access and minimise the amount of traffic being drawn through residential streets. The locations were also selected to minimise the impact on the open space. The actual school layouts are diagrammatical plans to illustrate how much land would be needed but are not detailed designs.
- 13.7** The layouts allow comparison between sites but more in-depth design work would be required for the preferred option. There will be extensive consultation further in the process over design, layout, massing, materials and the provision and location of the various components that make up the school building. The Council has an Sustainable Development Unit and an Energy Management Unit that promotes energy efficiency in the design, maintenance and management of the schools. Delivering school buildings that meet sustainability criteria will be high on the agenda, and indeed forms a key element of the Council's current programme of new building.

### **14.0 Use of School Recreational Facilities**

#### **Comment**

- 14.1** A number of respondents sought clarification on whether the wider community would be able to use the school facilities. There was also concern raised at the lack of outdoor facilities at the existing school and many questioned if new outdoor facilities would be provided alongside a new school. There was also a question on whether the sports hall and swimming pool at the current Portobello High School would be retained for use by a replacement St John's.

#### **Council Response**

- 14.2 The Council aspire to a site offering adequate space for the provision of quality sports and recreation facilities. The lack of playing fields is a major disadvantage for the existing High School site and the preference is to provide such facilities on site.
- 14.3 Out of hours community use of schools is Council policy and existing clubs such as Portobello Basketball Club will be welcomed at a new school. It is proposed that a full sized, all weather pitch will be built within the new or extended school grounds and the school will have indoor sports facilities which will at least match the existing ones. Wherever possible, wider community use of the facilities will be encouraged. St Johns Primary School would also be provided with a new all weather pitch. Accordingly these developments would provide two new all weather pitches for the Portobello area. This would be a considerable enhancement both for the schools and also to the community on the basis of the pitches being available for wider use outwith school hours.
- 14.4 The after use of the current Portobello High School sports hall and swimming pool is an issue still to be considered if a greenfield option proceeded, but the cost of running a pool, on top of the pool provided at a new High School would almost certainly rule out this option. The existing sports hall was built around ten years ago and potentially could be reused linked to a new primary school, but this would be a matter for further discussion and assessment.

## **15.0 School Catchment / School Rolls**

- 15.1 Whereas Portobello High School has a current roll of some 1450 pupils, it is proposed to plan a new school with a catchment population of 1,200 on the basis of falling school rolls.

### **Comment**

- 15.2 A number of respondents, including Portobello High School Board and Senior Management Team questioned this proposed drop in the school capacity. It would mean having to turn pupils away and reduce the education on offer at the school. At present around 17% of pupils come from outside the catchment area and it is likely that a new school will generate additional demand. Other respondents asked if a catchment review would be undertaken as part of the process.

### **Council Response**

- 15.3 The original work on Portobello High School was based on an estimated school population of 1,400 but recent population projections and a close study of the intakes of the feeder primaries show a falling school roll in line with the City wide trend of falling secondary school rolls. It is now proposed to build a new school with a 1,200 pupil capacity, with a corresponding S1 intake limit of 220 pupils.**
- 15.4 It is proposed that in the interim, the intake limit is reduced in successive years to reach a roll of 1200 pupils for the opening of the new school. It is proposed that an initial intake limit of 260 places is applied for the 2007/8 session. This interim measure will also respond to the school's current accommodation pressures, where the roll is presently in excess of the current school capacity.**
- 15.5 There is no intention to review catchment areas as part of this proposal. The Council considers the optimum size for a secondary school to be either 900 or 1200 pupils. It is felt that a school roll of 1,200 is the upper size limit for optimum efficiency and provision of educational needs.**
- 15.6 Based on a school roll of 1,200, the Council still expect to be in a position to guarantee places for all within catchment pupils with a strong possibility of some non-catchment placings continuing.

## **16.0 Traffic & Residential Amenity**

### **Comment**

- 16.1 Many favoured rebuilding the High School on the existing site as the impact on traffic and residential amenity is already established. Others commented that building a new school on the Golf Course or the Park would be disruptive, be intrusive on residential amenity around the golf course and the park and would bring traffic into residential areas or onto an already very busy main road. Milton Road is proposed to become a bus priority street, which will reduce traffic to one lane each way – this could result in chaos.
- 16.2 Questions were asked as to what measures would be undertaken for traffic management and to ensure pupil safety when going to school.

### **Council Response**

- 16.3 Whatever site is chosen will impact on traffic in the immediate area and it will be important to ensure there is adequate pupil movement management. The Council has built a number of new schools over the recent years and has experience of the issues that arise and what action to take.
- 16.4 Once funding is secured for the school, the next step is to have further consultation on matters such as planning, traffic and school design. This will involve the City Development Department and will require a traffic impact analysis, which includes all routes etc that could be used. Further consultation will be undertaken with parents, residents, pupils and School Boards on these matters.
- 16.5 The Council is also committed to developing its “Safer Routes to Schools” which promotes walking, cycling, use of public transport and car-sharing on the journey to school. Protective measures include traffic calming, no-parking areas near schools, new pedestrian crossings and full or part time 20 mph speed limits
- 16.6 School Travel Co-ordinators now work with schools to help create School Travel Plans, which promote healthier lifestyles and a cleaner environment. Alongside this, schools are encouraged to include cycling and road safety awareness in their curriculum.

## **17 Conclusions**

- 17.1 The consultation process has revealed a split in the community’s views between those who support a rebuild of Portobello High School on a larger site, in a parkland setting and those who oppose the loss of open space and feel that a rebuild on the existing site is the best option.
- 17.2 Views on the preferred option for the High School have influenced preferences for St John’s Primary School. For those favouring a new site, this allows a rebuild of a primary school on the vacated site. For supporters of a rebuild, a site for St John’s is a further issue. Most prefer a brownfield site or keeping both schools in situ.
- 17.3 There was a general absence of support to build St John’s on open space, (apart from St John’s School Board). Option C - to build a new secondary school in Portobello Park was the preferred greenfield option of most School Boards, parents and residents. It has a number of advantages over Option B – (to build on the golf course). These include:
- Keeps the golf course intact as a recreational facility and valued amenity space within the heart of Portobello;

- Avoids the problem of finding and buying land to establish a replacement golf course;
- Site B is more difficult to reach than Site C and would have a greater traffic impact on the surrounding residential area;
- The lightly used football pitches could be shared with Thistle Youth Club and there would also be scope for the school changing facilities to serve both users; and
- The floodlit, full-sized, all weather pitch at the school would serve the wider community at weekends and evenings, thereby increasing recreational provision within the area.

17.4 Of the greenfield options, the park provides the best and most popular site and is chosen for evaluation against Option A – an on-site rebuild of Portobello High School. The advantages of Option A include:

- The High School would remain on an established location, well placed to serve the catchment;
- There is widespread support from local residents for a rebuild;
- Scope for re-development on an expanded site to build a modern school facility;
- Potential to retain the existing modern sports hall that serves the school;
- Brownfield development of the High School avoids the loss of recreational facilities and amenity open space; and
- Nearby parkland sites could provide playing fields.

17.5 The disadvantages of Option A relate mainly to educational, funding and phasing considerations. This includes:

- A displaced St John's would need to be relocated in advance of work on a new Portobello High School;
- There are no locally available brownfield sites, that are free of major constraints to locate St John's thus the loss of open space remains an issue for this option;
- A decant of Portobello High School would last 2-3 years to allow demolition and rebuild of a new High School;
- A decant of so many pupils to a temporary site such as Portobello Park would not provide the best facilities for teaching and for learning;
- Several School Boards, the Senior Management Team of Portobello High School and many parents oppose option A because of the perceived detriment to the pupils' education;
- A rebuild of the High School would provide an all weather pitch but no playing fields. Pupils would still need to travel to off-site facilities; and
- A rebuild is the most expensive and most complex option due to the high decant costs and the need to finance a new primary school in advance of Portobello High.

17.6 Compared to a rebuild, a new school at Portobello Park is a simpler, more cost effective alternative that will provide a higher standard of school facilities in one location. A particular attraction is the ability to provide the high school all its outdoor sporting facilities within one location, making this solution the best educational solution. In terms of funding, and deliverability of the project, new build on the park is the most straightforward option and demolition of the existing High School would provide a brownfield replacement site for St John's.

It is accepted that redeveloping St John's on the site of the existing schools will prolong the timescales associated with re-providing this school. The choice of this site however does not compromise the level of provision for the primary school in the way that its size

would do for the high school. This site is attractive in its ability to minimise the loss of open space in the area.

17.7 There are environmental and amenity costs related with building on Portobello Park. It would result in the loss of an informal grassed play area and many residents feel the land has "common good" status and that recreational use should be protected in perpetuity. The advice of the City Development Department is that there is no impediment to building on this site, and indeed the location of a school here represents the development of a facility which will be an enhancement to the community. The Council has given a public commitment to make good the loss of open space should Portobello Park be developed but land has still to be identified for this purpose.

17.8 In conclusion, it is considered that best option is a new Portobello High School on part of Portobello Park. This would free up land for the rebuild of St John's Primary School. Selection of these brownfield and greenfield options will provide larger, well located sites for both new schools and produce the right setting to deliver a high quality education in Portobello.

## **18.0 Financial Implications**

18.1 **Should the Council approve a preferred option, it is proposed that an initial funding bid is made to the Scottish Executive early in 2007. This would form part of a wider application involving other schools including Boroughmuir and James Gillespie's High Schools, St Crispin's Special School and potentially other primary schools. The outcome of this bid, the funding shortfall and possible means of finance will be reported to the Council in due course.**

18.2 **This report recommends that Option C is pursued for Portobello High School and Option A for St Johns Primary School. This would see the Council potentially tendering for the High School project in 2009 (for completion in 2011) and the primary school in 2011 (for completion in 2012). Based on BCIS forecasts, it is anticipated that there could be an uplift in prices to 2009 of 17% and to 2011 of 29%. Accordingly the cost of the project at the time of tender is estimated to be £37.7m for the replacement of Portobello High School, and £11m for the replacement of St Johns Primary School. The upgrade of the remaining grass pitches at the park, which would be an essential element of the project, would require a further £0.6m.**

18.3 **It should be noted that there are risks associated with achieving the timescales outlined above, which would be dependant on the length of time that is required to secure planning permission. A slip in the timescales would result in an increase in the project costs. The chosen procurement route may also impact on project costs.**

## **19 Recommendations**

The Council is recommended to:

19.1 Approve the selection of Option C (Portobello Park) as the preferred location for a new Portobello High School subject to confirmation, through the courts if necessary, to the land being useable for this purpose;

19.2 Approve the selection of Option A (rebuild within the Portobello High School site) as the preferred location for a new St John's Primary School;

19.3 Delegate authority to the Directors of Children and Families and Finance to

- develop a funding strategy for the delivery of these schools
- submit an initial case to the Scottish Executive in January 2007 in advance of submission of a full business case
- and explore, with the Scottish Executive, possible delivery mechanisms for the Portobello High School and St. John's Primary School rebuild programmes

19.4 Approve the size of the new school as 1200 places with a corresponding S1 intake limit of 220 pupils. Approve an interim intake limit of 260 pupils for the 2007/8 start of session.

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<b>Appendices</b>			
<b>Contact/tel</b>		Lindsay Glasgow 0131 469 3366	
<b>Wards affected</b>		35 Meadowbank; 36 Mountcastle; 39 Portobello; 40 Milton; 57 Craigmillar; 58 Duddingston	
<b>Background Papers</b>		Feasibility Report – St Johns Primary School, August 06 Feasibility Report – Portobello High School, August 06 Decant Strategy for Portobello High School, August 06  Scottish Executive: Consultation On Scottish Planning Policy 11: Physical Activity And Open Space Edinburgh City Draft Local Plan, March 2006	