
GALASHIELS COMMUNITY CAMPUS – UPDATE REPORT

Report by Service Director Assets & Infrastructure

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

17 December 2020

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the progress with the new Galashiels Community Campus.**
- 1.2 The report to Council on 28 November 2018 recommended that individualised delivery plans should continue to be prepared for Galashiels, Hawick, Selkirk and Peebles HS. The report identified that the new secondary school for Galashiels should remain the Council's priority.
- 1.3 During 2019 and 2020, design progress has continued to be made within the capital budget allowance. The project delivery team have now examined all of the details of the possible locations for the new building and conclude that Option 3 provides the greatest benefits overall. This, however, has an impact on the adjacent Scott Park.
- 1.4 As a consequence, a statutory consultation in accordance with Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 legislation will be required.
- 1.5 In the continued presence of COVID-19, community consultation will have to rely on digital forms of communication. To assist with the next stages of the project, a stakeholder engagement organisation will join the delivery team.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **I recommend that the Council:-**
 - (a) Notes the contents of this report.**
 - (b) Agrees that Option 3 should be taken forward as the preferred option for public consultation for the new Galashiels Community Campus.**
 - (b) Approves that a statutory consultation in accordance with Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 is commenced.**
 - (c) Approves the appointment of engagement consultants to assist with a digital themed community consultation process.**
 - (d) Requests a follow on report as the project progresses.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The report to Council on 28 November 2018 identified that the preferred location for the replacement Galashiels Academy should be focused on the existing school site. It was agreed at that time noted that the secondary school in Galashiels should form the Council's priority education project. The report also included very early concept work for a school design at the existing Academy. It must be stressed that the images prepared at that time should be seen as at a concept level of detail only.
- 3.2 While the fire at Peebles HS has affected the priority sequence of the four remaining secondary schools to be replaced, Galashiels remains the priority. The Capital Investment Plan in 2019 and 2020 has included budget to allow for early design development work to take place.
- 3.3 During 2019 and 2020, a design team have been appointed to develop a building design to accommodate the forecast roll of 1000 pupils.
- 3.4 It is noted in this section of the report that the School Premises (General Requirements and Standards) (Scotland) Regulations 1967 identifies that a 1000 pupil school should not be less than approximately 6 hectares including associated roads and paths. The existing Galashiels Academy site is approximately 7.14 hectares of which 5.46 hectares is what would be referred to as usable. It can be seen from this that there is little free space within the existing site.

4 OPTION APPRAISAL OF BUILDING LOCATION

- 4.1 Following site survey work in terms of a topographic survey completed in October 2019 and more recently ground survey works in October 2020 an initial period of design work undertaken on the project has been drawn to a close during the Autumn period of 2020.
- 4.2 The project delivery team have analysed a range of different locations for the main replacement building and that of the associated external sports facilities and parking. The analysis has concentrated on the positive and negative elements of each option.
- 4.3 Overall, 5 locations were considered for the new campus building. Four of these were able to be constructed with minimal impact on the existing Academy building, with the fifth involving a significant temporary decant. A feasibility level report has been prepared for the options and this is contained within Appendix A to this report.

Option 1

- 4.4 It is possible to construct a new campus building on the site of the existing playing fields to the rear (or west) of the existing school. The project team consider that the building can be located and constructed while the existing school remains operational. The external sports pitches would be located in front of, or to the east of the new building. There would be a need to locate a grass pitch on Scott Park but generally all of the new facilities can be located within the existing Academy grounds with minimal impact on the existing and surrounding trees. The building would also maintain a good distance between surrounding residential properties.

- 4.5 On the negative side, the campus building would be set back to the most western part of the existing school site. This would present a building that would appear detached, separated and isolated from the town and local community and that the approach to the campus would be obscured by the fenced sports facilities diluting its civic presence. This option would also mean the loss of the existing playing fields during the construction process with an impact on the school curriculum.

Option 2

- 4.6 The second option considered would involve building to the north of the existing school building. The building, with all of the external sports pitches, could be built with only a marginal encroachment into Scott Park. The location of the campus building would allow strong links with the town and local community and provide for a strong civic presence. The new building would also present a good south facing aspect to one side.

- 4.7 The negative points would be that the building would be located on a part of the site that is constrained between the existing building and the trees to the north. A partial demolition of the existing school would be required and the new build construction works would have a detrimental impact on sensitive parts of the existing school, such as the additional and supported needs provisions within the school.

Option 3

- 4.8 The third option considered located the new building within the western edge of Scott Park. The benefits of this option are that the new building can be constructed while the existing Academy, including external sports facilities, remains fully operational. The building in this location presents a strong civic presence to the community and town setting and has a good aspect and orientation with respect to daylight. The place making agenda is strongest with this option in terms of the linkages with the building and the wider civic buildings in Galashiels such as the Great Tapestry of Scotland Visitor Centre. The external sports facilities built on the old school building location would be shielded from the town and neighbouring properties in terms of noise and light pollution.

- 4.9 For the negatives though, this option has an impact on Scott Park and its Local Development Plan designation as Greenspace (Policy EP11). This issues is discussed in more detail in section 5 of this report. This option will also require a statutory consultation under Schools consultation legislation and again, this is noted in section 6 of this report. It is also likely that the existing tennis courts will be partially affected.

Option 4

- 4.10 A new building located to the southeast of the existing building was considered. This option was closest to the initial concept image prepared for the report to Council on 28 November 2018. The positive aspects of this option are that the campus building and external sports facilities can be located entirely within the existing Academy boundary and with no impact on Scott Park. All existing access arrangements can also be retained.

- 4.11 However, there are several negative points associated with this option. Similar to option 2, the location of the building itself is constrained by the narrowness of the site and of the existing trees to the south. The access to the building would be remote from the main pedestrian links to the town centre and the building would appear to be tucked away and hidden from

view which would be contrary to the aims to provide an easily accessible community school. The ground in this area is less even and would give moderate challenges and the presence of a large number of trees with Tree Preservation Order designation would be affected leaving a significant impact on habit. The building itself would suffer from a reduced level of natural daylight when compared to the other options. This may have an impact on wellbeing and attainment. Finally, the location of the building in this part of the site provides for very limited opportunities for future consideration of co-located primary school facilities should this be seen as advantageous as part of any future learning estate review.

Option 5

- 4.12 A final option was considered where the new campus building would be located on the existing footprint of the school. Clearly this option would not encroach in to Scott Park as far as the building itself. The option would provide for a good level of daylight and aspect as Option 3.
- 4.13 However, there would need to be effectively an entire decant of the existing school to allow for the demolition and then construction phases of the new works. It would also be necessary to split the external sports provision for which a levelling of the ground on Scott Park would be necessary.

Outcome of Option Appraisal

- 4.15 Overall, and following a review of all viable options, Officers consider that Option 3 provides for the most advantageous range of benefits and should be taken forward as the preferred way forward to the subsequent consultation stage.

5 LAND AND PLANNING ISSUES

- 5.1 It can be seen that Option 3 involves constructing the new building on part of Scott Park. This land was acquired in 1939 by the former Burgh under the Public Parks (Scotland) Act 1878. The land was acquired by Feu contract at that time. The title, on the face it, restricts the use of the land but it is noted and stressed that all real burdens were removed from the title as part of the Abolition of Feudal Tenure (Scotland) Act 2000.
- 5.2 Scott Park is also covered by Greenspace designation under policy EP11 within the previous and current Local Development Plan 2020 approved by Council on 5 November 2020. Independent Planning advice has been obtained in relation to the impact of any development that extends in to Scott Park. Without prejudice to the role of the Council as Planning Authority for the following planning process, the independent planning advice notes that Policy EP11 can be seen to permit development on Greenspace subject to mitigation in the form of replacement greenspace to a similar level of provision. The independent planning advice is contained within the feasibility study report at Appendix A to this report.
- 5.3 It is noted that the overall development will exceed 2 hectares and as such will require a Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) process under planning legislation. This will be prior to a full planning application and is expected to take 4 months to complete.

6 STATUTORY CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Following a review of the guidance associated with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 it is noted that parts of the new campus extend beyond the existing school boundary. While there is a degree of interpretation of the guidance, regarding school relocations, given that the new Campus is predominantly making use of the existing site, Officers consider that it would be prudent to undertake a Statutory Consultation on the overall proposals in accordance with the provisions of the consultation legislation. This is expected to take in the order of 4 months to complete and will commence in January 2021. This consultation will require virtual public meetings and input from Education Scotland, who will review the proposal and prepare a report. This report along with all the comments, representations and officer responses to the comments made during the consultation will be incorporated into a Consultation Report, which will then be published for a further three week consultation period. A further report will be made to Council regarding the outcome of this process.
- 6.2 The Statutory Consultation is intended to run concurrently with the PAN process.

7 COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- 7.1 As a consequence of the site survey works, local interest has been expressed in relation to any development on Scott Park. It would be normal to undertake the next public consultation stages of the project, both the education and planning elements through direct engagement at meetings and presentations. Given the continued COVID-19 difficulties, this approach will be a significant challenge.
- 7.2 In response to this, it is proposed to supplement the existing technical Architect team with a specialist Architect with a particular focus and experience in digital engagement. The role of this specialist will be to devise and implement a digitally themed consultation process to ensure that full community and stakeholder engagement can take place to connect people to the decision making process.
- 7.3 It is planned that both the PAN and Statutory Consultation will commence in January 2021 and take 4-6 months to complete. The specialist digital engagement consultant will support both. The scope of the engagement consultant will focus on creating a project specific website, prepare and facilitate a series of digital workshops with local stakeholders, clubs and groups – including the secondary school pupils. Consideration will also be given to a real presentation in a local town setting, subject to current restrictions.

8 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Financial

- (a) The Capital project budget for the construction of the Galashiels Community Campus as contained within the 2020/21 Capital Investment Plan is as below.

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
1,500	2,500	23,400	23,400	£50,800

- (b) It is noted that a bid to the Scottish Government's Learning Estate Investment Programme has been made in relation to the Galashiels Community Campus. At the time of writing this report, Officers are not aware of the outcome of this bid. Subject to approval of this bid, the project will qualify for revenue based financial support based on a range of criteria.
- (c) It is also noted that updated cost projections for the project to allow for the inclusion of the public swimming pool and additional games hall facilities will be considered as part of the 2021/22 capital planning process.

8.2 Risk and Mitigations

- (a) It is noted that it would be expected that there will be opposition to the planning process based on the impact on the existing Scott Park. The project delivery team have mitigated this through the independent planning advice and the way that implementation of a re-provision of Scott Park can be undertaken. The proposals seek to reimagine Scott Park as an extension/amenity linked to the community campus, providing a variety of different outdoor spaces, through soft and hard landscaping, that seek to increase the use of the park and enhance its character.
- (b) The current Capital Investment Plan identifies the project being completed in 2023/24 financial year. While it is still early in the delivery stages of the project, the overall programme will be reviewed periodically allowing for monitoring and reporting of the delivery dates to Members.

8.3 Equalities

- (a) An Integrated Impact Assessment has not been carried out on this report.
- (b) It is anticipated that there are no adverse impact due to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religion/belief arising from the proposals in this report.

8.4 Acting Sustainably

The preferred option will have a positive impact on energy consumption when compared to the existing building.

8.5 Carbon Management

It would be planned that the new building will seek to minimise the use of fossil fuels.

8.6 Rural Proofing

This report does not relate to new or amended policy or strategy and as a result rural proofing is not an applicable consideration.

8.7 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no changes to be made to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals contained in this report.

9 CONSULTATION

9.1 The Executive Director (Finance & Regulatory), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

John Curry

Service Director Assets & Infrastructure Signature

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Background Papers: Report to Executive – 27 August 2019

Previous Minute Reference: Nil

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