
GALASHIELS COMMUNITY CAMPUS

Report by Service Director Assets & Infrastructure

AUDIT & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 January 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides a briefing and response to a petition dated 30 November 2020 in connection with the development of the Galashiels Community Campus and its impact on Scott Park.**
- 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. During the course of 2020, the project team were identifying that the preferred location for the new building would be on part of Scott Park.
- 1.4 As part of the normal project process to understand below ground risks, a site investigation survey work was undertaken in and around the existing Galashiels Academy.
- 1.5 This resulted in local and community based interest in this work, including an awareness of the likely impact on part of Scott Park from which the petition titled 'Save Scott Park – Galashiels' has been prepared and submitted to the Council.
- 1.6 A report to Council on 17 December 2020 identified the range of options considered to replace the existing Academy and recommended that a consultation process should commence. A recommendation within the report indicates that the Council has identified that the preferred location for the new building is on part of Scott Park.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Over the last 15 years or so, the Council has replaced 5 out of 9 secondary schools with more modern and fit for purpose facilities. All 5 of these replacement schools have been new builds on new sites, to allow the education provision at the existing school to be maintained with the minimum disruption to the learners as possible.
- 2.2 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 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.

- 2.3 It is noted that the School Premises (General Requirements and Standards) (Scotland) Regulations 1967 identifies that the site of 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 usable. It can be seen from this that there is little free space within the existing site.
- 2.4 The Capital Investment Plan in 2019 and 2020 has included budget to allow for early design development work to take place. During 2019 and 2020, a design team was appointed to develop a building design to accommodate the forecast roll of 1000 pupils.

3 OPTION APPRAISAL OF BUILDING LOCATION

- 3.1 The report to Council on 17 December 2020 identified that 5 locations for the new building and the associated external sports facilities had been developed. These 5 options were assessed as part of an options appraisal process where the advantages and disadvantages of each option was considered.
- 3.2 The project delivery team has 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.
- 3.3 Of the 5 locations considered, 4 of these were able to be constructed with minimal impact on the existing Academy building, with the fifth involving a significant temporary decant.
- 3.4 Option 3 within that appraisal required that the building portion of the overall replacement facility should be located on part of Scott Park. Following the completion of the new building, the existing building would be demolished and external sports facilities provided to complete the project.
- 3.5 The report identified that this option required building on part of Scott Park and acknowledged its Local Development Plan designation as key greenspace. A mitigation strategy was developed to provide for a replacement and enhancement of the loss of this key greenspace. A technical feasibility study and independent planning advice was included as an appendix to the report.
- 3.6 Overall, and following a review of all viable options, Officers considered that Option 3 provided for the most advantageous range of benefits and should be taken forward as the preferred way forward to the subsequent consultation stage. The report was approved by Council on 17 December 2020.
- 3.7 It is noted and acknowledged above that a ground investigation survey was prepared and undertaken so as to inform and finalise the option appraisal process. To take advantage of the school holiday period, the survey was completed in October 2020. A total of 18 trial pits and 19 boreholes were completed during that survey. 10 of these were within the existing Academy boundary and the remaining 27 were located within Scott Park.

4 COMMENTARY ON THE 'SAVE SCOTT PARK' PETITION

- 4.1 The petition as lodged on 30 November 2020 requests that the Council take

- steps to provide the new Community Campus without impacting on Scott Park.
- 4.2 Section 2 above identifies that the Council decision on 29 November 2018 resulted in the need to develop a proposal for the new Galashiels Community Campus while keeping the existing Academy operational. This would be referred to as a 'tandem build' arrangement. This was a key criteria of the options considered.
 - 4.3 Section 3 above identifies that the report to Council on 17 December 2020 describes the option appraisal process undertaken on 5 viable locations for the new Galashiels Community Campus. The report on 17 December 2020 concluded that the most advantageous option considered should be on Scott Park. The report acknowledged that this will have an impact on Scott Park and its key greenspace designation. Council approved the report on 17 December 2020.
 - 4.4 Considering this key greenspace designation, independent planning advice was obtained which identified that there would be prospects to promote a planning application for the new Community Campus. The planning advice identifies that, subject to justification, replacement greenspace adjacent to the development would be considered material to a planning application. The appendix to the report to Council on 17 December 2020 identified landscape proposals that re-provide and enhance Scott Park. These proposals will be developed in more detail as part of the ongoing design process to improve access, usability and the overall environment of the park.
 - 4.5 The report to Council on 17 December 2020, identified the range of options considered; identified a preference for Option 3; and agreed to take the project to public consultation. At the present time, public consultation material is being prepared with the intention of commencing early February 2021.
 - 4.6 The public consultation is intended to be structured under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. Within this legislation, the Council is required to consult on a 'relevant proposal'. While the consultation material will show and describe all options considered, it is intended that the 'relevant proposal' will be Option 3 as contained within the report to Council on 17 December 2020.
 - 4.7 It is relevant to note that the project will cover an area greater than 2 hectares and as such a 'Proposal of Application Notice' (PAN) will be required under planning legislation. This process will take place prior to a full planning application. This was discussed within section 5 of the report to Council on 17 December 2020.
 - 4.8 In preparation for the Audit & Scrutiny Committee meeting on 14 January, Officers have reviewed the requirements of the PAN and intend delaying this consultation process until after the consultation which is being prepared under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
 - 4.9 It should be noted that the Council has now been given confirmation from Scottish Government that the bid for funding support for Galashiels Community Campus and Peebles High School have been successful. It is expected that the funding conditions will require the Council to make demonstrable efforts to complete the projects as swiftly as possible.
 - 4.10 It is also noted that it is normal practice for building and infrastructure projects to undertake ground investigation works. This work ensures that

below ground risks that could affect the construction process are understood. This can have the advantage of increasing the cost certainty for projects. It is noted that the survey work was devised and prepared based on the Council's preferred option. Again, this is normal practice.

- 4.11 It is acknowledged that this survey work appears to have been the catalyst for local and community based opposition to a proposed development that impacts on Scott Park. Prior to the petition being received on 30 November 2020, Council Officers across a number of services have been dealing and addressing the issues being raised. Officers have taken steps to meet groups, including the nearby Scott Crescent residents, in an attempt to be proactive and engage with the community.

Approved by

John Curry

Service Director Assets & Infrastructure Signature

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Steven Renwick	Projects Manager – 01835 826687

Background Papers: Report to Council – 17 December 2020

Previous Minute Reference: Nil

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