
GALASHIELS COMMUNITY CAMPUS – UPDATE REPORT

Report by Service Director Assets & Infrastructure

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

13 May 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the progress with the new Galashiels Community Campus following the informal community consultation.**
- 1.2 The report to Council on 17 December 2020 identified that a range of options had been considered for the location of the new Galashiels Community Campus and approved that an informal community based consultation exercise should take place.
- 1.3 Consultation material was prepared and a launch of the informal consultation took place on 18 March 2021. The consultation was digital based given the restrictions in place at that time but were supplemented with an unstaffed exhibition located within the town.
- 1.4 The informal consultation has now closed allowing for this report to Council on the outcome.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 I recommend that the Council:-

- (a) Notes the outcome of the informal consultation and that Option 3 remains as the preferred option for the new Galashiels Community Campus.**
- (b) Agrees that the project should proceed to the statutory procedures in accordance with Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.**
- (c) Implement the formation of a visioning working group with representation from the community to participate in the further design of Scott Park.**
- (d) Request the preparation of a business case to support and underpin proposals for Sports Facilities.**
- (e) 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.
- 3.2 The report to Council on 17 December 2020 identified five options for the location of the new facility and outlined advantages and disadvantages of each option. The report proposed a preference for Option 3, a new Galashiels Community Campus built largely within the existing boundary of the Academy and a portion of Scott Park.
- 3.3 The report identified that Scott Park is a Key Greenspace within the Local Development Plan 2020. A mitigation strategy to provide for replacement and additional land to replace that lost by the development was proposed.
- 3.4 The report identified that community based opposition had been expressed over the preferred option and that all five options should be presented within an informal consultation that was digital themed given the movement restrictions in place.

4 INFORMAL COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

- 4.1 To facilitate an online digital themed community consultation, a third party website was used. The design of the website intended to replicate the appearance of a conventional face to face forum in a public venue. It contained a series of hotspots that activated a video presentation or a series of information boards/drawings to present the consultation. The videos and boards contained the same general principles of the five options identified within the December 2020 report to Council but in a more developed and enhanced presentational style. In this way, the project delivery team consider that a full and robust consultation would take place.
- 4.2 In addition, a short film was made with messages from the Senior staff and a selection of young learners at the Academy. This film captures their vision and purpose and provides for a strong key sense of engagement for the Community Campus.
- 4.3 The website was launched on 18 March 2021 and media release information was issued to highlight the start of the informal consultation. The host website contained a comment and feedback hotspot to allow for a record of the views of the community.
- 4.4 The comments part of the informal consultation was closed on 26 April 2021. The website remains open and all of the production material of videos, drawings and display information remains in public view.
- 4.5 The third party host gathered anonymous data during the consultation period as visitors accessed the web site. This data allowed information to be gathered on the total number of visits, the dwell time and overall duration of activity on the website. The host company also gathered information such as the browser and operating system to ensure that their service was capable of being viewed on a full variety of devices and systems.
- 4.6 Overall, the analytics shows a total of over 1400 sessions with a total activity duration of 27 days and an average session duration of 25 minutes. It is clear that the online activity reached a much wider audience, at a scale

and duration that would not normally be seen for a project of this nature when compared with more traditional consultation approach. This demonstrates that there has been a significant opportunity for the community to participate in the consultation and scrutinise the proposals.

- 4.7 In addition to the website, the key presentation plans were mounted on display boards and set up within the Galashiels Transport Interchange. These display boards were left in an unstaffed set up meaning it was not possible to gather information on the visits to these boards.
- 4.8 Finally, a series of separate online meetings were set up and held with a selection of identified groups and organisations. This enabled the project delivery team to explain presentation material and importantly respond to questions to help clarify proposals. Within all of these consultation elements, the project delivery team have been able to demonstrate that all of the five options were technically capable of being built but when the advantages and disadvantages are considered, the Council's preferred option is seen as the most viable.

Energise Galashiels	22/03/2021
Save Scott Park	22/03/2021
TD1 Youth Club	22/03/2021
Club Sports Borders	23/03/2021
Gala Policies Group	23/03/2021
Community Council	23/03/2021
Focus Community Centre	23/03/2021
Galashiels Rugby Football Club	24/03/2021
Stow Community Development Trust	25/03/2021
Tennis Borders	25/03/2021
Live Borders	25/03/2021
Works +	25/03/2021
Eildon Area Partnership	25/03/2021
Heriot Community Council	26/03/2021
Gala Swimming Club	09/04/2021

- 4.9 The informal consultation is a voluntary activity that precedes the statutory consultation stages associated with the education and planning legislation.

5 ANALYSIS OF CONSULTATION REPLIES

- 5.1 In addition to the 1400 visits to the website, the comments section has seen 135 (10%) individual comments sent in. These have been reviewed and assessed in terms of their support or objection to the proposals.
- 5.2 There does not appear to be any community based support for options 2, 4 and 5 detailed in the 17 December 2020 Council report. This leaves a very clear choice of either Option 1 or 3.
- 5.3 Option 1 involved constructing the new campus building to the rear of the

- existing Academy when viewed from the town. The external synthetic sports facilities would be located in front of the new building after the demolition of the existing academy there would be a need to regularise and improve part of Scott Park to allow for a more formal grass playing field.
- 5.4 Option 3 involves constructing the campus building in front of the existing Academy on a portion of Scott Park with the synthetic sports facilities constructed within the grounds of the existing Academy after it is demolished. In this way, the external sports facilities would sit behind the new campus building when viewed from the town.
- 5.5 The report to Council on 17 December 2020 identified Option 3 as the preferred way forward.
- 5.6 During the period from 18 March to 26 April, there have been 72 (5% of total visits to website) negative comments received in relation to the Council's preferred Option 3. Generally, the comments are against any impact on Scott Park with a strong desire to see it remain as a public open space. Many of those 72 negative comments identify a preference for Option 1, or an alternative variation to this as promoted by the Save Scott Park campaign.
- 5.7 There have been 55 (4% of total visits to website) positive comments received during the consultation period. 30 of which relate to the potential for an enhanced tennis provision to be provided as part of the overall proposal. This leaves 25 supportive comments on the proposal and therefore of the Council's preference for Option 3.
- 5.8 To provide a summary of the overall consultation process, the website has been viewed on over 1400 separate sessions. While some of this may be repeat visits, it represents significant community interest and participation in the proposals.
- 5.9 From this large number of visits, the number of negative comments to the proposals has remained relatively low in overall number terms.
- 5.10 There is a small but passionate group in the community who have opposed the Council's preferred option as set out in the community consultation. This group has been vocal in its opposition to the project. The Council is confident however that there is widespread support amongst the school community and the wider silent majority for the project. There have unfortunately been cases where those who have publicly voiced support for Option 3 and contributors to the website (including school children) have been subject to unnecessary and inappropriate personal criticism. This is deeply regretted and as we move forward with the statutory consultation phase of the project we would ask all people, both those in favour of the Council's proposals and those against, to remain respectful of others views and their right to express them in a free democratic society. To act otherwise is simply a form of unacceptable bullying on social media.
- 5.11 The number of visitors to the website who have either left no comment or a positive comment far outweigh the negative comments. The views and suggestions of the opposition group have not changed the overall option appraisal process in terms of the preference for option 3.
- 5.12 Galashiels Community Council have participated in the online consultation process. A meeting was held with the Community Council on 23 March 2021 at the commencement of the consultation process. As the consultation process closed on 26 April, the Community Council has considered the overall proposals. At the meeting on 5 May 2021, the Community Council voted to support Option 3 by 10 votes to 1 abstention.

The abstention was from a member at their first Community Council meeting.

- 5.13 The Project Delivery team were asked to develop the online process to ensure that a robust voluntary consultation would take place where it was felt that there was overwhelming community based opposition to the proposals. However, the number of negative comments received suggest that this opposition is not as widespread within the community as suggested. On this basis, the Project Delivery team intend proceeding with Option 3 to the next statutory consultation stages. This will be the publication of the Proposal of Application Notice under planning legislation and a statutory consultation under Education legislation.
- 5.12 A wide variation of comments received during the consultation were in connection with the re-providing and enhancing Scott Park. It is proposed that the overall design of this part of the project takes place with community representation in the form of a visioning working group. This approach has worked well as part of the design of the Hawick Flood Protection Scheme where community participation has helped shape the design of the walking and cycling network that sits behind the flood defences. Officers and Ward Councillors will review the composition of this working group within the community to ensure that a broad spectrum of views and opinions can be seen to influence the final design. The Community Council have expressed a desire to participate in this.
- 5.13 The consultation has also identified a range of views within the community relating to sports facilities within the Campus. The Project Delivery team will work with Live Borders to review a cross Borders strategy for sports facilities including, swimming, tennis, indoor and outdoor sports which will help strengthen up the Community Campus brief. A business case approach will support and underpin this review and form the basis of further reporting.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

- (a) The Capital project budget for the construction of the Galashiels Community Campus as contained within the 2021/22 Capital Investment Plan is as below. This budget has seen an increase from that presented within the 2020/21 plan to allow for the inclusion of the swimming pool.

2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Total
£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
891	14,128	20,000	16,360	3,630	£55,049

- (b) It is noted within Section 6 of this report that there are potential enhancements to the community facilities within the project. The cost for these and impact on the overall budget is not known at this stage pending further design and costing work. At the time that this position is more clear, further reporting can be made.

6.2 Risk and Mitigations

- (a) It is noted that the report to Council on 17 December 2020 identified

a significant risk associated with the preferred Option 3 and its impact on Scott Park. This risk has been mitigated by the informal community consultation. While there remains a small opposition to this, it can be seen that there is not overwhelming local opposition.

- (b) There is a risk that the design of the re-provided and reimagined Scott Park is not supported by the community. This risk is intended to be mitigated by the formation of a visioning working group with community participation and representation.

6.3 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.

6.4 Acting Sustainably

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

6.5 Carbon Management

It would be planned that the new building will seek to minimise the use of fossil fuels. This is a funding condition from the Scottish Government.

6.6 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.

6.7 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.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Service Director Strategy and Policy, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Chief Officer HR, the Clerk to the Council and Communications have been consulted and their comments have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

John Curry

Service Director Assets & Infrastructure Signature

Author(s)

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Background Papers: Report to Executive – 17 December 2020

Previous Minute Reference: Nil

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