

Implementing the Learning Estate Strategy - update on Lasswade Primary School

Report by Dr Mary Smith, Director of Education, Communities and Economy

1 Purpose of Report

Committed to the creation of a world-class education system, the Learning Estate Strategy was approved by Council in September 2017 where it was agreed to build a replacement Lasswade Primary School. The purpose of this report is to obtain governance from Council to replace Lasswade Primary School on its current site. This is in the context of decisions made by this Council regarding both the Learning Estate Strategy and the Midlothian Local Development Plan.

2.1 Background

Lasswade Primary School, built in 1977, is an open plan design with capacity for 13 primary classes (355 primary pupils) and a nursery with 34 places. The pupil roll of Lasswade is projected to rise as a result of housing development in Bonnyrigg, in particular the Broomieknowe, Dalhousie Mains and Dalhousie South developments. In August 2018 the school will have approximately 380 primary pupils which will require space for fifteen classes. Modular units are in the process of being installed to provide an additional two classrooms until such time as additional permanent capacity is built.

The Midlothian Local Development Plan provides for an extension to Lasswade Primary School, which would bring it up to be a three-stream school, with capacity for 630 primary pupils and 144 pre-school places. The school's catchment area would need to be extended to incorporate part of the catchment area of Bonnyrigg Primary School.

The Learning Estate Strategy presented to Council in September 2017 outlined the policy-led strategy for the school estate and Council agreed the short term strategy through to 2023 including action (8):

- Build a three stream replacement Lasswade Primary School on a new site, required for 2023.

Since then officers have been exploring the possibility of acquiring an alternative site and revisiting the feasibility of providing a three-stream school on its current location.

2.2 Alternative Site

The only suitable alternative site identified was the HS10 site at Dalhousie Mains (Please refer to Appendix A for the location of the HS10 site). This land is under the control of Grange Estates. Grange Estates have no legal obligation to provide land

to the Council for development of a school or to sell the Council a site for the building of a school. Grange Estates currently have an outline Consent for the Residential class use on the HS10 site.

Given that Grange Estates have no legal obligation to either provide or sell the site to the Council, this leaves the Council in a difficult negotiating position. The land has a residential consent which further compounds this issue on the basis that Grange are looking for a higher value for the sale of the land than initially anticipated.

Feedback from Grange Estates suggests that they are looking for £1.7 Million for the 2.2 Hectare site required to build a replacement 3 stream school. The Council's Estates officers believe they may be able to negotiate this price down to £1.3 Million at best. The land being under the control of a developer means that the Council would also be subject to a potentially long drawn out negotiation process, which may affect timescales for the delivery of the new school.

Estates officers carried out an exercise to establish whether the sale of the existing site for residential use would off-set the costs associated with the HS10 site.

As can be seen from Table 1 below when you apply a £1.5 Million capital receipt for the land sale of the existing site and a purchase price of £1.3 Million (the most optimistic purchase price) to the purchase of the HS10 site, the HS10 site would still cost an additional £695,000 to deliver a site capable of having a school built on it.

Table 1

Cost Headings	Lasswade PS	HS10 Site	Notes/Commentry
Estimated Value for residential	£1,500,000		Based on residual valuation
Negotiated Price		£1,300,000	Current offer £1.7m, this is our estimate of likely settlement price
ADDITIONAL COST APPLICABLE TO ACHIEVE A SCHOOL ON SITE			
Ground Remediation	£ 250,000	£ 100,000	Allowance based on advice received. The cost has been deducted from the Lasswade estimate but the Dalhousie deal is likely to be based on site as seen and purchase price would account for this
Access Requirements	already on site	£ 250,000	A7 Junction high - this would be required, however depending on the roads requirement could be significantly higher. A roundabout could cost up to £1.5M more if required.
Additional Safe Route to school	already on site	£ 175,000	New routes would have to be formed including an underpass below the cycleway
Utilities	already on site	£ 120,000	Estimate only, would depend on distance and capacity issues.
Net Land Value / Cost	£1,250,000	£1,945,000	
Estimated Saving using Lasswade site	£ 695,000		

2.3 Use of the existing site

Given the significant land value attributable to the HS10 site, officers revisited the existing Lasswade Primary School site to establish whether a 3 stream school could be delivered on that site at a lower cost. To that end officers began to review the use of the existing site (please refer to Appendix A for the location of the existing site) with a view to establishing the cost of remediating the existing land to allow it to be used for the building of the replacement school. Feedback from the geotechnical experts now suggests that the existing site can be remediated for between £175,000 and £250,000.

The existing site equates to 2.086 Hectares. The land required to accommodate a 3 stream school is slightly greater at 2.162 Hectares. In order to provide the necessary play space for the children we would be required to deliver a two storey school on the site. Two storey schools have been delivered successfully recently within Midlothian with the most recent example being Paradykes Primary School.

A new building on the existing school site would be built on the vacant area of grounds to the west of the existing building. The existing access will be used for construction traffic with a temporary car park being formed on the school land at Pendreich View to enable staff to park and access the site from this side of the building. An indicative plan demonstrating the site set up arrangements / temporary car park locations can be seen in Appendix B. This plan is subject to consultation with staff and residents. This temporary arrangement would be in place for the duration of the build which is estimated to be in the region of 12 – 16 months. A pedestrian access for children will be maintained at the current school entrance and the contractor would have traffic restrictions placed on them to prevent deliveries being made at times when the children are accessing / egressing the site. A fully secured hoarding line would be established along the boundary line between the construction site and the remaining school for safety.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Resource

The resource implications of the two sites are as follows:-

Existing site:-

1. Ground Remediation £175,000 to £250,000 (Final figures to be confirmed following completion of the site investigation)

HS10 Site:-

1. Purchase Price **£1,300,000 to £1,700,000** (Subject to negotiation with Grange Estates)
2. Ground Remediation **£100,000** (Estimated value)
3. Access requirements from A7 **£250,000** (Estimated value subject to design)
4. New safe routes to school **£175,000** (Estimated value subject to design)
5. Utility costs due to existing site being green field **£120,000** (Estimated value subject to design)
6. Total to take HS10 to a point where a school could be built **£1,945,000**

3.2 Risk

There is a risk that the Council will not have a place for every pupil at their catchment school which is mitigated by the application of limits on pupil intake and the proposal to put in place additional capacity at Lasswade Primary School.

The Existing Lasswade Primary School Site

1. The site is adjacent to the existing school which is a risk that has been appropriately managed by officers and contractors on previous builds such as Lasswade High School and Roslin Primary School. At this stage officers have looked at this in sufficient detail to understand that the risk can be controlled.
2. The design of the new building will be subject to planning consent.
3. The site area is slightly under the area required for a 3 stream school. This can be addressed by building a two storey model which will allow the play areas to achieve the areas required for a 3 stream model.

HS10 Site

The following risks apply to the HS10 Site:-

1. The site is not within the Council's control and therefore the negotiation period could be protracted and impact upon the Council's ability to meet its statutory obligations.
2. The sale price is subject to negotiation.
3. The site abnormalities are not yet understood and the figures presented are a best estimate based on the limited information which officers currently have.

3.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- Community safety
- Adult health, care and housing
- Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- Sustainable growth
- Business transformation and Best Value
- None of the above

3.4 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The aim of this paper supports the priority to reduce the inequalities in learning outcomes by improving the quality of learning and teaching, leading to raised levels of achievement and attainment, by providing every child with the opportunity to attend school in their local community.

3.5 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The Council's approach to pupil placement adopts a preventative approach by maximising the opportunities for pupils to attend school in their local community.

3.6 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Officers will engage with the school and local community following this Council meeting regarding plans for the expansion of the school. A statutory consultation will be undertaken in due course on the extension of the school's catchment area to incorporate other parts of Bonnyrigg's catchment so that the pupil population is distributed between the Bonnyrigg schools in line with their capacities.

3.7 Ensuring Equalities

This paper asks Council to approve the site for one of the short term strategy items presented in the Learning Estate Strategy for which an Equality Impact Assessment was carried out and made available in the Members' Library along with the Learning Estate Strategy.

3.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

The sustainability issues relating to this report relate to the sufficiency of schools places particularly in areas of housing development, the provision of additional capacity as proposed in this report supports the objective of sustainable development.

3.9 IT Issues

There are no IT issues arising directly as a result of this report. The IT requirements arising in order to put in place the additional capacity for the new school building will be identified as part of the development of the project specifications.

4 Recommendations

Council is recommended to:

1. Approve the replacement of Lasswade Primary School on its current site.

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Appendices

Appendix A Existing site
Appendix B Site logistics

Background Papers:

Learning Estate Strategy 2017-2047, Midlothian Council 26 September 2017

Appendix A



Appendix B

Route 2 Site Logistics

