

Waterside Community Council
Public Meeting re Football Field School Proposal

1 May 2018

Chaired by Kathleen Lyons (in the absence of C. Whiteford, and at request of WCC)

Officials in attendance: Jacqui MacDonald (Chief Education Officer);

Fraser Robb (Capital Programme Manager – Assets);

Cllr. Susan Murray.

Apologies: Chair Janice Herriot; Vice-chair C. Whiteford; Cllr. John Jamieson.

7.40pm: Meeting opened with an entertaining 8-minute film by Edward Z Smith featuring a Waterside Old Crocks/Springwell Inn vs Redbrae football match of 1989 demonstrating how the football field is and has been used. There was much laughter.

SM opened proceedings, explaining that rumours doing the rounds on Facebook had led to our having this meeting as well as the one of 29 March to discuss consultation on and proposal concerning additional support needs (ASN) school provision.

There are insufficient places and cramped accommodation at Merkland and Campsie View schools, hence need for new school serving pupils with complex needs aged 3-18. 200 children need specialist provision. Some cannot be accommodated at all in a mainstream school. Some Merkland School pupils currently attend Gartconner or Kirkintilloch High School part of the week. Over the last two years there has been engagement with staff and parents to discuss a possible merger into one big school. A statutory consultation started last week. Consultation ends 8 June 2018.

Q (from mother of autistic child who currently takes her to play in football field): How can EDC justify taking away place local children need in order to provide new educational facilities? What about the kids who use it and need it?

Q: No one is opposed to a school being built. We wholeheartedly applaud the provision of a new school. However we need this space for our kids.

Q: (from parent with deaf son): My son can't play in garden even. I like the proposal to have an ASN school in Waterside.

Q: What was wrong with St Agatha's site?

A: Too small.

Q: This new school has to have been in the planning for a long time.

A: Outline plans only possible once there was a shortlist of sites.

I [FR] will confirm how sites were selected. There is a need to mitigate loss of playing fields and playground. Thirteen sites (within and outwith council ownership) considered. Big site (14,000m²) needed because children must be accommodated on one floor, though rooms can be on an upper floor. Roll: approx. 200. Much larger than standard primary school. Ranking/Evaluation of sites based on eight different criteria, including: size; planning risk; legal risk; ownership; accessibility; geography; viability for development...

The outcome of this process led to selection of Waterside as preferred site.

Advantages of site: proximity to schools; residential setting; location better than site on extreme edge of authority.

Cost of new amalgamated school: around £23.5 million, which will have major impact on capital programme.)

Constraints: very few suitable sites within East Dunbartonshire.

Q: Children are transported by road. Why does proximity to schools matter? Not really an issue, surely?

A: Site size and topography advantageous.

Q: How much green space are you going to take off us? There'll be nothing left.

Q: Are you aware there were three bus companies operating out of Waterside, meaning that 27 coaches travel along Bankhead Road four times daily (not counting normal public bus service)? I.e. more than 100 coaches a day. There's only one way in and out of the village, and it gets very congested at bus times.

Q: What happens if emergency services need to get into Waterside?

A: Development will require traffic impact assessment.

Q: If the football field is taken away, what do we get in its place?

A: Planning process is required to show how loss can be mitigated as part of development or else on neighbouring site. E.g. all-weather football area.

Q: There's a massive area beyond football field (cornfield) that could be used.

A: It's not within council ownership. The moment market aware of plan, land price would go up.

Q: Wouldn't the cost be offset by the proceeds of the sale of St Agatha's.

Q: Sport Scotland says legislation requires loss of sports facilities to be compensated for by building site of comparable or better standard. Where in Waterside is that possible?

Q: How many of the 13 sites considered were brownfield sites and how many were greenfield sites?

A: Brownfield: Broomhill depot considered; Hilton depot, Balmuirdy Rd. Greenfield: open-space and football field sites looked at in Milngavie, Bearsden, Bishopbriggs... Developing in open space has to have unique justification

Q: Consultation documents are all about benefits to pupils. Nothing about benefits for us. What are they?

Q: Why was Auchinairn discounted?

A: Main reason topography. Two different levels a problem for these children. Waterside actually more expensive to develop than Auchinairn since infrastructure/utilities required.

Q: Aren't there risks posed by additional traffic? Concern on behalf of 5-year-old son and children in general. It would be dangerous for them to have to cross Waterside Road on their own.

Q: Parents wouldn't want to allow children to go out of the village on their own. At the moment they are in a safe environment and can even go to the playing field unaccompanied, therefore growing in confidence and learning independence. This opportunity would disappear with the loss of the field.

Q: If children have no outside play area, they'll be indoors on their computers or else getting into mischief?

Q: Aren't we supposed to be supporting strategies to prevent obesity (especially in children)?

Exercise is a key means of doing this.

Q: What happened to 2018 being the Year of the Child?

Q: What about the following brownfield sites: new community centre in Auchinairn; Lairdsland; Tom Johnson House?

Q: What about Boghead Road, Lenzie? Or Waterside Rd at Holmfield? Or Wester Cleddans?

A: Some of these sites were considered but the process identified Waterside as the preferred site.

Q: Why was £100,000 invested 5 or 6 years ago? Should there be a public inquiry about why this was wasted? It was public money. According to the local development plan (authorized by Scottish ministers), this area is a greenfield site. Why do you have the arrogance to think you can overrule Scottish ministers? Open spaces to be protected from other uses. Statements say brownfield sites should be used in preference.

A: True. All these things need to be addressed. Watersiders will have an opportunity to have their say. A planning consultation will start at the end of the education consultation.

Q: This is a lovely village and it will go to waste if you take away such a key space.

A: Brownfield sites are prioritized, but there were no viable ones. We need to consider the footprint of such a school.

Q: I use football field for personal fitness and exercise. The presence of a school there will lower house prices and affect light in an already dark house.

A: Planning process will examine all issues.

Q: What measures will be put in place to prevent vermin infestation if building starts on football field?

Q: The impact on the community during construction would be massive. Was this taken into account?

Q: We've been working for two years towards the revival of Waterside's traditional Gala. You're about to take away the only site where this could happen. This is a way to kill our community and our culture.

Q: Did you know that Gartconner Primary uses the football field for cross-country practice as they have no grassed area to do this on?

A: There is a point system for evaluating the 13 sites.

Q: If the whole village is against it, as it seems to be pretty well, will it still go ahead?

A: The statutory consultation has various stages. It's a process. Views need to be taken into account. The consultation closes on 8 June. The whole report will be voted on in September. There has to be a preferred site. Information will be provided on why this site is the preferred one.

Q: Why isn't Cllr. MacDonald here?

Q: Difficulty of topography of some sites (e.g. Auchinairn) shouldn't be such an issue. Diggers can be used to level the ground. This all seems to be based on the preferences of builders. What about preferences of people? There's also a lot of information including meaningless numbers. Wouldn't there be a better way of consulting? We don't seem much further forward.

Q: How long has this process been going on? There's been the parents' consultation and the options appraisal.

A: I [FR] have only been aware of it since January 2018.

Q: In November I was told that there was going to be a new special school in Waterside. Your own documents show it's been going from at least August 2017.

Q: Rob Roy wanted to buy the football field and to give something back to the village. Within a matter of days of our talking to the community council about it in 2016, Cllr. MacDonald said it was not going to Waterside.

Meeting ended with thanks for coming at 8.55pm.

Account compiled from notes by Janice Whyte (secretary) and Cordy Lilly (website coordinator)