

Record of Meeting

Proposal to Build a New non-denominational Primary School with Nursery and Early Years services in Hunter’s Hall Park, Craigmillar

Public Consultation Meeting held at 6.30 pm, Thursday 12 November 2023, Castleview School, Edinburgh

Present: 3 members of the public

In Attendance:

Tom Wood (Independent Chair);

Councillor James Dalglish (Convener of the Education, Children and Families Committee);

City of Edinburgh Council Officers: Robbie Crockatt (Strategic Asset Planning Manager), Gillian O’Rourke (Quality Improvement Manager – Early Years), Gui Martins (Learning Estate Planning Officer) and Ashley Lawson (Assistant Committee Officer).

1. Introduction

Tom Wood introduced himself and advised that he had been invited by the City of Edinburgh Council as an independent person to chair the public consultation meeting. Mr Wood thanked everyone for coming along and explained his role as well as introducing the key officers in attendance. It was explained that the consultation would continue until the 09 December 2025, and the public had the opportunity to feed in comments until then.

The Schools (Consultation Scotland) Act 2010 required the Council to conduct a public consultation. The public consultation would provide people with the opportunity to express their views and feed directly into the consultation process.

2. Presentation/Proposal

The presentation considered the building of a new primary school and Early Years at Hunter’s Hall Park, the closing and relocating of Greengables Nursery along with the associated proposals for catchments changes and removal of Common Good status. The presentation showed an artist’s impression of the proposed plan which depicted the joining of the existing community and sports centre, the creation of the combined

education buildings, the opening up of the park including improved surveillance and lighting along with the proposed competitive standard BMX track.

The consultation period is to remain open until 9 December 2025 and to date more than 5000 leaflets have been distributed to houses, local and partners organisation along with lampposts wraps, social media, television and press advertisements.

From the feedback received, Jack Kane's integral part in the local community was noted as was its current signs of degradation and room for improved facilities. Similarly, feedback in relation to Greengables Early Years and Castleview Primary School noted the degraded conditions of the buildings and need for improved facilities and increased spaces. The need to consider safety along with improved conditions in relation to Hunter's Park was also underlined.

The need for further community engagement prior to a planning application being lodged was noted. A further period of consultation and engagement would follow, likely to be after 19 April 2026.

It was noted that Castleview Primary School currently provides the community with the temporary capacity required while the catchment for Niddrie Mill Primary School currently exceeds the school capacity. The increased housing in the community along with the need to create capacity for the additional pupils this development will generate was underlined. The objectives of the proposals aim for a balanced capacity across the local primary school estate.

The Common Goods consultation is to remain ongoing for the 3 areas that have Common Good Status namely the Community, Sports and Education Centre, Landscape Play and Parking area and the cycling facilities. The Landscape Play and Parking area could return to Common Good status.

3. Questions/Comments

Question 1:

The presentation used words word like 'better areas' and 'better facilities' - who gets to define this. Who gets weight in determining what is a better or worse idea.

Answer: 1

Engagement with the local community has facilitated a space for ideas to be shared and that process addressed things such as sports and social facilities and the need for improved security, and we would look to reflect this feedback in the design process. Following the engagement process, Elected Members will then decide whether to accept the recommendations or not.

Question 2:

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I live in the flat that look onto the park and used to work in the Jack Kane Centre, and it has played a big part of my daily life. I believe it should be a listed building because it is such an integral part of the community. One of the strengths of the centre, and the reason many young people are drawn to it is because it is separate from the school. There are lots of examples of community centres being taken away and redesigned as schools or community hubs which can be beneficial however my concern is these new designs risk young people no longer using the centre. What will happen to the Jack Kane Community Centre?

Answer 2:

One of the reasons we are engaging so heavily with the community in relation to the Community Centre and Sports Centre specifically is to gain a clear understanding of how best to preserve the essence of the Jack Kane Centre into the new building. The need to retain the identity of the Community Centre and the Sports Centre as separate entities is recognised. Since Covid, the use of the Centre has dropped, and we want to see it's use increase and part of this is not to take away anything but to improve the facilities to bring more people to it as we recognise how valuable it is for a range of groups such as youth groups, parents and child groups.

In terms of bringing the school onto the site, it has been raised before how this may change the identity of the centre. We recognise this and central to our design is how to create this separation to maintain its identity. The feedback has been very clear that the Jack Kane Centre is not just bricks and mortar but an iconic building. However, the need for things like windows, a clear entrance to the front of the building, and concerns that it is not always obvious what the sports and community centres are and where the separate entrances are located have also been raised.

We want the facilities to work harder and bring more people to them whilst also maintaining their separate identities. Community Hubs can be subjective as they support a range of community functions, and we want to expand on this with our designs.

Question 3:

One of the main issues with the plan is that they are too vague, abstract and nebulous. How can the community agree to this if we don't even know what the proposal is. How can common good be revoked if we don't know what the proposal is?

Answer 3:

The current plans are just an outline, and everything is up for grabs however this makes the engagement process tricky as if we arrive with a complete design then the project runs the risk of being a 'fate complete' and people question what impact they can have whereas if we arrive with a blank slate, it feels too vague. To look at the design we need to know the parameters which is the reason for asking for the Common Good to be revoked so we can work within this area. You are correct to say the design

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if vague, but it is deliberately so otherwise the proposal to the community would be fixed.

Question 4:

Is it correct to say the crux of the matter is the capacity in schools hence why you are having to use Common Good land to increase the capacity in schools?

Answer 4:

Capacity is falling in this area as new houses are pushing up the population figures. Developmental plans have proposed a new school in this area for many years, but we are now at the point where this is a necessity. Given the requirements of the Jake Kane Centre, it makes sense to join the projects up by bringing the school and Community Centre together to form a synergy. Partly, there are capacity issues, but this is not the reason for choosing to invest in the Jack Kane Centre which is a structurally sound building but requires investment to bring the mechanics, engineering and electrics up to modern standards. Consideration is also being given to retrofitting the building to reduce its carbon output and footprint.

Question 5:

It feels like a paradox to talk about the Community Centre's carbon footprint when we are building more housing. Is talk about Net Zero just window dressing?

Answer 5:

No, Net Zero is one of the issues but it's also about a comfort standard and the condition and suitability of the building - we want the Jake Kane Centre to be an attractive environment but if the building is cold or it overheats then people are less inclined to go. Additionally, RAC is a ticking timebomb with enormous consequences.

Question 6:

Gillian, would you like to share your thoughts about the educational opportunities?

Answer 6:

Having a purpose build environment allows for creativity and an exciting learning space. Similarly, an outdoor space helps promote outdoor learning and this project could offer a fabulous outdoor space. Combining Early Years into the project offers a high-quality support transition to school which is a great benefit to children.

Question 7:

What I'm hearing is 'I think I think', but how do you know for certain? How do we know this is not just your opinion and you are acting in accordance with the benefactors of community. Have you considered AI implementation?

Answer 7:

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Young people are entitled to come to school for a set period, and these proposals increase entitlement for Early Years and appropriate environments.

Question 8:

Given that we are transitioning into a new economy should schools not evolve with work life architecture where people are working from home on their own schedules. Should schools not catch up and reflect this change and use of AI interfaces to reflect this transition.

Answer 8:

The curriculum is being modernised and with that schools are also embracing digital technologies however research shows that children need teachers and need to be in school to socialise and engage with learning. It is also important that learners are actively involved with highly skilled practitioners. There are a wide range of opportunities that young people would not get at home using AI.

Question 9:

We don't need to extract children entirely; I'm talking about slowly condensing of timetables with a few periods per week. Not an 'either or', with no engagement in school but not a 9-4/5 schedule either but instead a slow gradual deleveraging with AI interfacing to supplement learning, where young people still go to school and engage with tutors.

Answer 9:

This will happen naturally

Question 10:

I can see the benefits as it's a great location and one of the reasons why the Jack Kane Centre works so well. I want to mention that the Jack Kane has been quieter since covid not because no one wanted to come but due to funding. For example, a group I worked with ran out of funding and Jack Kane Centre kept going for as long as they could for the 13 young people every week, but it ultimately had to close due to a lack of funding and it's important to highlight that.

Answer 10:

One of things JK community management community have said is that during covid the Community Centre shut and groups that had used the space then went to other facilities such as church halls or into Midlothian etc and unfortunately these groups have never returned. What we want to do is provide an environment that attracts people back to the Jack Kane Centre.

Question 11:

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I think a big part of why the Jack Kane Centre and other community centres are quieter is due to a lack of investment. As previously noted, when I worked at the Jack Kane centre the group was at capacity, but we could not continue due to funding restraints. I want to highlight this and the fact we have been developing schools since 20025 and it's concerning that in that time a school could have been build where houses have been built. I can't help but question why are we only building a school now after the houses have been built? It feels like a lack of forward planning and cost cutting.

Answer 11:

The relationship between new housing developments and the amenities needed to go with it is an interesting point in terms of to what extent building developers must contribute to statutory infrastructure such as GP surgeries, transport and education. It is important to note that housing is not always sequential for example, the Newcraighall housing development did not materialise post financial crash. In terms of infrastructure, the risk is do we wait to build before or after the schools are unable to absorb the pressure from increased housing. We are now reaching this point. Scottish Government policy is to build the infrastructure first but sometimes the reality makes this a challenge to deliver because housing does not come forward at the right time and developers appeal with their need to fund infrastructure. I understand your frustration, and it is shared with the panel. The City Plan approach is not always helpful as we go through the frameworks, but we must make sure the housing will arrive.

Question 12:

I don't think the school should be waiting when private building is taking place. What are your thoughts on this?

Answer 12:

I don't know the details of the site and the needs of the area however if the school is needed, we will look at alternatives. The council are consulting on the next local delivery plan and if you are interested in principle, it is worth looking and contributing as this is a live consultation and will impact how the city is planned.

Question 13:

I work in this area and see examples all the time of the infrastructure point being reached. I understand the need to build houses and for land to be sold but the onus is on the developers to contribute to the infrastructure, which is seriously lacking, and this has been recognised for a long time. If you are ever on Niddrie Mains Road in the morning you will see how busy the roads are.

Answer 13

Yes, these same issues exist in the West side of the city, too unfortunately.

5. Conclusion

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Mr Wood brought questions to a close and thanked everyone for all their contributions which were extremely valuable. Mr Wood reminded everyone that they had until the 09 December 2025 to make any further contributions on the website or in writing.

Mr Wood thanked everyone for coming and for their contributions.