Proposal to relocate St Catherine’s RC Primary School

**QUESTION & ANSWER**

Due to the poor condition of St Catherine’s School funding has been agreed for a replacement school.

We want you to give us your views on what the solution should be.

For more information and to give us your views visit:

[**www.edinburgh.gov.uk/newstcatherines**](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/newstcatherines)

The sections that follow answer some of the questions we think you may have about the potential solutions we have suggested.

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**ST CATHERINE’S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Why is St Catherine’s School being replaced?**

Investigations in the summer of 2018 considering how best to upgrade St Catherine’s Primary School concluded that the building needed to be replaced rather than upgraded.

The school’s condition makes it a priority for replacement and since securing funding in 2019, repairs have continued to be undertaken where necessary, to allow the continued, safe, operation of the school.

On 5th September 2023 the Education, Children and Families Committee approved that a consultation be undertaken regarding the proposed relocation of St Catherine’s Roman Catholic Primary School to a new site.

**Where will the new school be built?**

The image below shows the site we are considering.



After considering various options in the vicinity of the existing site, it was considered that the South East Neighbourhood office and football pitches together offered the best opportunity to relocate the school. The proximity to other services and functions could provide additional opportunities to co-locate services, develop a community hub, share space, and potentially offer improvements to the public space.

Whilst the existing school site was considered, the existing St Catherine’s site is 0.6 hectares, smaller than the prescribed size for an 11-class primary school and challenging to fit a larger building. It was also felt that the disruption caused by decanting to a temporary site during demolition of the existing building and construction of the new school would be detrimental to the experience of pupils and staff.

**Has previous community engagement been considered?**

Key community priorities were identified in consultation with the Gracemount community in the ‘My Gracemount’ report. Priorities included access to affordable physical activities and connectivity of public space that supports walking and cycling. Playparks, bins, and improvement of the public space were also a priority.

The priorities identified in the report can be broadly grouped into eight themes:

* Affordability / Access to / Awareness of Services
* Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour
* Youth Services and Opportunities
* Community Hub
* Traffic and Parking
* Public Space
* Green Space
* Connectivity
* Transport

In the development of the St Catherine’s RC Primary School project a goal will be to identify how the investment made in this new community asset can address these community priorities and build on the work of the ‘My Gracemount’ consultation.

It is also recognised that there is demand within the local community for alternative uses of the St Catherine’s Roman Catholic Primary School site to be considered, should it no longer be required to serve as a primary school site. The Council will consider the impact alternative uses of the current site may have on the affordability of a new school and other Council budgets and make recommendations as part of the Outcomes of the Consultation Report to the Council meeting in January 2024.

**SCHOOL SIZE & ROLL PROJECTIONS**

**What size will the replacement school be?**

City of Edinburgh Council think that a school should provide a high-quality learning and teaching experience for all its pupils. The elements needed to achieve this in any school, irrespective of its size, are:

* the quality and flexibility of the learning and teaching environment;
* the quality of leadership available in the school;
* the level of parental engagement forthcoming for individual pupils; and
* the school’s overall ethos and culture.

St Catherine’s Roman Catholic Primary School currently has 7 classes. It is projected to be operating at capacity for the foreseeable future and significant new housing developments will mean that at some point the school will exceed its capacity. Accordingly, the replacement school is planned to provide an 11-class primary school with the ability to be extended to 14 classrooms in the future.

\*see [Scottish Government School Level Summary Statistics](https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2020/03/school-level-summary-statistics-2019/documents/school-level-summary-statistics-2021/school-level-summary-statistics-2021/govscot%3Adocument/School%2Blevel%2Bsummary%2Bstatistics%2B2021.xlsx)

**When will the current school exceed its capacity?**

Table 1 (below) shows the current capacity and roll data for St Catherine’s RC Primary School. However, it should be noted that generic capacity figures do not take account of a school’s capacity for team teaching arrangements; a practice which is increasingly commonplace across the Council’s primary school estate.

***Table 1: St Catherine’s RC Capacity, Roll Data for August 2022***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Notional Capacity** | **Roll (as of Sept 2022 census)** | **Estimated Occupancy Rate** |
| 7 Classes (210 Pupils) | 7 Classes (208 Pupils) | 99% |

Table 1 shows that St Catherine’s is currently operating within its available notional capacity. Figure 1 (below) shows that the roll has been relatively stable since 2010.

**** ***Figure 1: St Catherine’s RC Primary School Roll, 2007 to 2022***

As housing developments in the catchment area begin to mature it is anticipated that demand for catchment places will exceed the school’s capacity. Demand may be managed by restricting places to baptised Roman Catholic pupils only. Without this control, St Catherine’s could exceed its capacity by 2026. Table 2 (below) shows the primary school roll projections for St Catherine’s.

 ***Table 2: St Catherine’s RC Primary School Roll projections, 2024-2033***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **School Capacity** | **2024** | **2025** | **2026** | **2027** | **2028** | **2029** | **2030** | **2031** | **2032** | **2033** |
| 210 | 209 | 207 | 218 | 220 | 220 | 222 | 223 | 227 | 230 | 223 |

Accordingly, it is proposed that the new school be built as an 11-class school with the option of expansion to a double stream school (14 classes) at a future stage.

**Are the Council’s School Roll Projections reliable?**

This depends on how they are used and interpreted.

A projection is a snapshot from a point in time. They are based on rolling forward known historic data such as catchment populations, patterns of attendance and birth trends. We also add in estimates of the pupils we think will be generated by known housing developments.

A single projection cannot take account of changes in trends such as that within the birth rate because it is simply projecting forward what has happened in the past. Projections are also susceptible to future changes in patterns of attendance which may be driven by a high number of factors. For these reasons we update our projections annually to ensure they are produced based on the best available information.

As is the case with any population or financial market projection, the Council’s school roll projections can only provide a guide to future school pressures. They, along with capacity figures, are an early warning system which are designed to prompt closer investigation of a potential accommodation issue. We use school roll projections as an informative tool but do not solely rely on School Roll Projections when assessing future demand.

You can find our latest projections and more information about our methodology here:

<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/school-places/school-roll-projections/1>

**REPLACING ST CATHERINE’S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**When will the new school be built?**

The timescales for the delivery of the new St Catherine’s Roman Catholic Primary School are entirely dependent upon the necessary funding being approved and provided to deliver the project.

Table 3 (below) sets out the indicative construction timescales which would apply based on an assumed date of initiation following conclusion of the consultation and Council approval to progress being granted at the full Council Meeting in January 2024.

***Table 3: Indicative Construction Timescales***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| Conclusion of consultation and approval of Option to be progressed | January 2024 |
| Design Team appointments and Early Engagement | +3 months  |
| Feasibility  | +4 months |
| Design Development to RIBA Stage 2 | +3 months |
| Design Development to RIBA Stage 3 (submit for Planning) | +3 months |
| Design Development to RIBA Stage 4 and completion of planning | +4 months |
| Enabling works on existing site | Concurrent |
| Complete construction contract tender process and award contract | +4 months |
| Construction Completion | +18 months |
| **Estimated Opening Date** | **August 2027** |

**What facilities could a new school provide?**

The proximity to other services and functions could provide additional opportunities to co-locate services, develop a community hub, share space, and potentially offer improvements to the public space.

The design of the new building would be informed by ongoing community engagement, including a working group which would meet at regular intervals, engagement with local service providers and community groups. A significant element of the engagement process will be engaging with pupils and staff at the school in terms of the design of the school and identifying any additional support that will be required for the move.

**What measures would be put in place to help with travel?**

The site will be designed and developed to create safe paths of travel along new and existing access routes. The potential to create an access to the new school site from the existing school site will be explored.

The frequent bus services along Captain’s Road, mean that public transport routes will be more convenient for the new school. An existing bus stop is located on each side of the road in front of the proposed site. Additional bus services are available 5 minutes walk east on Lasswade road and 10 minutes walk west on Howdenhall road.

The size of the existing school catchment area means that the distances travelled are all within acceptable travel limits. If this proposal is progressed, the Road Safety team will be engaged to ensure that St Catherine’s Roman Catholic Primary School’s Green Travel Plan and the Safer Routes analysis is updated to reflect the change.

**How much would a new St Catherine’s School cost?**

Estimated capital costs for building a new school are up to £32m. However, this will vary according to the extent to which existing buildings may be incorporated in the design which would also assist in reducing the impact of embodied carbon. Further feasibility work will be required to identify the best value solution, and this will be progressed as part of a wider engagement.

**How would a replacement school be funded?**

A budget of £12.802m was secured for St Catherine’s replacement in the Council’s Capital Investment Programme in February 2019. This was increased to £20.3m in April 2023 to reflect updated cost estimates.

**Would there be a loss of pitch provision?**

The pitch provision will be made more accessible and desirable for use. Any loss in pitch provision will be offset potentially by land gained from the existing site or through sharing resources with nearby schools. The site is also close to a substantial area of parkland at Birdie House Burn.

**What will happen to the existing site?**

Re-locating the school would also free up land for alternative uses. These uses would be developed through engagement with other Council services and the wider community.

**Will it be a new building?**

The largest proportion of the school will be formed from a new building however reusing the South Neighbourhood Office as part of the new school’s accommodation could reduce the carbon footprint of the project. The opportunity to save carbon and reuse spaces in well-designed accommodation that feel like a completely new environment would be assessed as part of the design feasibility process.

**Will the new school be environmentally friendly?**

The council has set a default requirement to deliver new build properties to Certified Passivhaus Standard. This ensures that schools are designed to a high level of energy efficiency. The Passivhaus approach also accommodated the addition of low carbon heating plant which will ensure the school supports net zero targets.

Any existing building used as part of the school will be retrofitted, with a forcus on improved thermal insulation, airtightness, and ventilation to significantly reduce energy demand.

**St Catherine’s Consultation QR Code**

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