



Balerno  
Community  
Council

From Richard M Henderson  
Chair, Balerno Community Council  
1 Greenfield Crescent  
Balerno  
EH14 7HD

Councillor Ian Perry,  
Convenor - Education, Children and Families Committee,  
City of Edinburgh Council,  
City Chambers,  
High Street,  
Edinburgh, EH1 1YJ.

19 December 2017

Dear Councillor Perry,

**Edinburgh West and South West Schools Review  
Preliminary comments by Balerno Community Council**

These preliminary comments are made by Balerno Community Council (BCC) in relation to the informal process concerning the above review which was launched on 24 November.

BCC appreciates that the current consultation is in relation to proposals on which no decisions have been taken, and that if the City Council were to proceed further with the proposals then a formal statutory process would be involved.

Balerno Community Council believes that schools are a key element in the development and cohesion of their communities; in many ways they are the heart of the community. This is true not only of Balerno High School, but also we believe of both Currie High School and of WHEC, and it is true for both secondary and primary schools. Secondary schools also address the educational needs of adults through education programmes, host clubs and societies which are part of the glue within all communities, and encourage vital cross generational activity. Closure of a secondary school will cause a shock to any community, which could be seriously detrimental to the welfare and to the interests of both young people and the community at large.

That is not to say that primary schools are not important as providing community glue; they are vital, and we are acutely aware of the importance of 'the school gates' and the work of all schools in the community. It is because of the importance of identifying with the 'home' community that we also believe that so far as possible primary school catchment area boundaries should reflect the community which the school principally serves. For that reason we have long suggested that Dean Park Primary School should cover at least the whole of the Balerno area.

The radical proposals as set out by the CEC would have serious and far-reaching impacts on the social cohesion and sustainability of the communities of the Upper Water of Leith Valley, and would threaten key social frameworks underpinning the present community of Currie. The threat of dismantling Currie High School and the distribution of its constituent parts will be widely regarded as social vandalism, impacting not only on the provision of education within the community but on the very viability and long-term well-being of the community itself. Balerno Council advises extreme caution in taking these proposals further insofar as they touch on secondary school location.

While Balerno Community Council would welcome the adjustment of primary school catchment areas to allow for Newmills and Cherry Tree, both substantially located within Balerno, to fall within the catchment area of Dean Park Primary School, we consider that any movement beyond that at this stage would be dangerous in terms of community



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cohesion. In arguing for a Catchment Area Review to consider the situation of Newmills and Cherry Tree we are conscious of the proposals for increase of the capacity of Currie Primary School to the extent that if proceeded with Currie PS would be the largest primary school in the City, and on a severely constricted site.

Balerno Community Council is also seriously concerned both about the effects on both students and staff and also separately, and more generally, on Balerno and its economy by the projected closure, albeit temporarily, of BHS for two years from 2022 to allow for refurbishment. On the economic impact we think there are serious risks that small businesses could suffer critical damage. On the effect on staff and students, we think that temporary closure could be disruptive of the education process, and will create uncertainties for both students and staff.

We appreciate there may be serious pressures which argue for the proposals, but we have to say that we have not so far been made aware of them.

We understand that CEC may be under pressure to have concluded proposals by May 2018 to allow for it to make necessary applications for funding to Scottish Government.

As noted above we have seen planning applications by CEC which would allow for significant expansion by way of an additional eight classrooms at Currie Primary School. While we realise that there may well be urgency for some expansion at Currie PS, we would be concerned if planning permission if granted were, to any extent, to pre-empt a Catchment Area Review in relation to Newmills and Cherry Tree.

Balerno Community Council would wish to know, therefore, as a matter of urgency,

- what the pressures are which require the actions proposed,
- what consideration may have been given to those pressures by CEC to date,
- what options for response to the pressures may have been considered by CEC, and what consideration may have been given to those options;
- what timetable CEC are working to for determination of the issues arising,
- what consideration is being given to effects on the local economy of affected communities arising from closure, including from temporary closures, and what steps CEC would take to mitigate those effects,
- what steps CEC will take to ensure that community facilities remain available in Balerno during any temporary closure of BHS for refurbishment,
- whether CEC have undertaken impact studies on social impacts on community cohesion and social, economic and environmental sustainability, and
- what steps CEC will now take to ensure the fullest possible consideration of all issues including by way of public consultation.

BCC will continue to monitor the situation and would appreciate the opportunity to be able to meet with you and with officials, and to receive a full briefing on all issues arising.

This letter is a copy of the on-line submissions made by BCC on 19 Dec ref – 7100747.

Yours sincerely,

Balerno Community Council  
19 December 2017

cc – Cllr Ricky Henderson, Cllr Neil Gardiner, Cllr Graeme Bruce