

One Parent's Comments about what was discussed at the Local Development Group Meeting 1.12.11

The main part of the evening was the two architects from the company with the brief for the school, who came along and gave us both a presentation of their plans and a guided tour of the school to talk through the good points, the bad points and how each part of the school would be dealt with. There were also various council officials present including Colin McCredie the programme manager and John McLaughlin, Education Officer.

They then went through plans for the decant and how that would be managed as well as the consultation process and their communication plan.

They spent a lot of time dispelling myths about the re-building and re-modelling work that are apparently doing the rounds, namely:

- They will be keeping the pool, upgrading it to a very high spec and maintaining it
- The sports block will be upgraded and will provide more facilities and space than are currently available by creating a mezzanine level for teaching and fitness, allowing all the ground floor space to be made over for sports halls and gyms which will have sprung floors for dance, gymnastics, etc. as well as the halls for volleyball, basketball, etc.
- There will be no building further north than the current road around the back of the pagoda building, i.e. the sports fields will not be built on at all, although they will be developed to provide new facilities, which haven't been specified yet, but will be done in conjunction with the school and Sport Scotland
- There will be a sort of bus lane like a bus station, which will allow buses to reverse out and return along Scooniehill Road if that is where they are heading, rather than having to come down Priestden Place and along Lamond Drive
- There will be no increase in the number of buses coming to the school as they all currently come to Kilymont anyway, dropping off some children, and then heading up to South Street to drop off the rest.
- In terms of sustainability and carbon footprint, the building work will be done to BREEAM standards of Excellent at least, if not Outstanding – BREEAM is the industry standard apparently – and the architects involved produced the first school awarded Excellent level and have a school, yet to be confirmed, that is likely to be the first Outstanding level school in the UK
- They will create the additional space required to house all the pupils by taking down the link area between the South Block and the Pagoda Block, where the reception is, and building a new glass roofed atrium, social space, catering facilities, toilet facilities and teaching space across the whole space of the back car park right up to and including the all-weather pitch, linking all buildings including the sports hall, so children won't have to go outside to get to any part of the school
- A new full size all weather pitch will be built to the east of where the current one is
- The playground area next to Scooniehill Road will remain as outdoor space but all outdoor space will be re-landscaped and re-modelled.
- The existing car parking areas next to Scooniehill Road will be levelled and re-laid and will have enough space for all potential parking needs
- Community Use will definitely carry on throughout the whole process, using alternative accommodation

They also had some really good plans for those areas that they can't touch, like the Pagoda Block itself and the existing South Block, both of which need to retain their external form, but can be re-finished with new fascias, windows, roof, etc. as well as the insides being ripped out where

necessary and completely re-built inside – they are planning on keeping the internal curved, wooden lined ceilings in the cafeteria and kitchen area, but using these double height spaces with the full length windows out towards Greyfriars, for Art and Drama studios.

In terms of the decant, there is currently enough free space in the existing buildings at South Street to take the whole of S3, so they only need temporary accommodation for the equivalent of S1 and S2. These temporary buildings would be sited at the back of the South Street building and will provide both teaching accommodation and toilet facilities equal to, and in most cases far better than, those currently available at the South Street site. Temporary buildings will be clustered in sensible groupings such as departments.

The plan would be that the Kilrymont site will be moved up to South Street to have the whole school on a single site in 18 months time, i.e. for the start of academic year 2013/14. The school will then be on the South Street campus for 2 academic years, and they will then all move into the re-built Kilrymont site in August 2015, so the present P4 class will be the first class to start their secondary school in the new school.

In terms of community use they confirmed that it will continue completely throughout the whole rebuilding process, using the South Street site, and other sites around town, including primary schools. Andy Herd, who is the head of the Community Use was part of the group doing the demonstration and guided tour, and was incredibly enthusiastic about the whole process, so he seems very happy and on-board with the process, so there seems no issue with Community Use remaining. He is clearly right behind the whole project.

They are doing several public meetings next week and in January which will go over the plans and the process in the same detail and have also said they will come out to communities and feeder primary schools if people want that to happen. I would really encourage everyone to go to one of the meetings as I am much more informed now and much happier about the whole process. The mood of the meeting was very positive and although lots of issues were raised, they had clearly thought of every one and had a solution or a reason for each one. Everyone seemed to be persuaded of the possibilities that this build could achieve, which I think had been missing before and we all highlighted that the school and council need to spend as much time working on providing solutions and comfort to people around the decant as they have on the architectural plans, which were fantastic and will clearly deliver an excellent school and facilities for the pupils.

They have some of the plans and images on their website, though I think they are the ones they had at the last meeting in November, and they had newer ones today. They are apparently being sent to all primary schools for displaying as well – I don't know if they have arrived yet, but all parents should be encouraged to look at them if that is the case. They will also be at the public meetings along with council officials for questions.

I know I sound a bit excited by all this, but they did a very good job of presenting their case and providing solutions to all of the issues that were raised, so I do believe this will be great option for future pupils, i.e. P4 and lower and an improved option for all pupils currently in S2 or lower, who will get some benefit when the building is finished but will suffer no detriment during the period of decant, along with pupils currently in S3 and S4, who will complete their schooling during the building phase. The guarantee of no detriment was made by both council officials and the rector.

John McGloughlin confirmed that if there is an overwhelming “no” response to the consultation then the Education Services Committee will certainly take that into consideration, but this consultation is not offering any alternatives, it is just a question of are you in favour of the proposal, or not. I think

that if they take the message they had today out to the wider community, and the plan is to have proposals and plans at libraries, on the council and school websites and at the public meetings, and they address the real concerns of space and the decant, both of which were well addressed today, then people will become more positive about the plans and the process. They are also working with staff on their teaching needs, and with the pupils asking for what they want out of the building.