



## ***An Open Letter to Councillor Perry***

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

31<sup>st</sup> January 2018

Dear Councillor Perry,

### **Edinburgh West and South West Schools Review Comments by Balerno Village Trust**

The Village Trust welcomes the consultation of South West Schools provision but has serious concerns about some of the proposals currently on the table.

The concerns regarding the current proposals are not only to do with the lack of detail but more importantly with the fundamentals underlying the review which seem to be divisive, pitting Currie against Balerno, they seem to take no account of the centrality of a school to the wellbeing of its community nor do the proposals build on the educational successes of the last 40 years.

#### **The Impact on Community**

WHEC, CHS and BHS were all designated Community High Schools for a reason. It was recognised that they would more than '9-4' schools, that they would be assets to their communities and some provision was made to broaden their appeal and access to them.

It takes a considerable amount of time to build a cohesive community, buildings help but they are not enough by themselves. Demolishing, or closing for a lengthy period, any of these schools will destroy a great deal of community activity, some of it will relocate and restart but it will take a long time to rebuild what is very quickly lost. As well as the loss of amenity to the community from closing a school there is also the significant loss of trade for the few local shops.

#### **The Impact on Education**

The communities of Balerno, Currie and Juniper Green are all relatively affluent and as such many families can afford to send their children to one of the fee-paying schools, the fact that a large number don't is entirely due to the fact that BHS and CHS are both centres of excellence being regularly at or near the top of schools' performance tables. This excellence should be applauded and maintained. Closing them and starting again does not do that and it risks driving more to the private sector and so diminishing what is left for the others educationally as well as taking people out of the communities.

#### **Planning for the Future**

A great many houses have been built in the area since the CHS and BHS were built, many are in the process of being built and even more are expected in the future. Schooling provision both primary and secondary should expect to expand. It is hoped that the mistakes made relatively recently will not be repeated, eg closing a primary school in Currie and selling off the land only to discover that the school remaining is neither big enough nor does it have enough space for straightforward expansion. There is also the fact that all weather sports facilities have been provided at BHS and CHS and that CHS has very recently had a large array of solar panels installed suggesting longevity rather than demolition.

### **Catchment Areas**

There are inconsistencies in the current catchment areas which should be resolved. Neither Dean Park nor Balerno High currently have the whole of Balerno in their catchment areas which means that families living in Balerno have to apply to go to their local school, and sometimes get refused. This fragments rather than unites community.

### **Summary**

Balerno Village Trust welcomes the attention to planning educational requirements and the desire to consult with the communities however it believes the current proposals are fundamentally flawed as outlined above.

Of the various options outlined recently we strongly recommend retaining the three high schools as that provides the best solution for education and the community. If major rebuilding of part of a school is required it should be phased so as to avoid the temporary closure of the school.

One immediate action that would resolve a long-standing anomaly is changing the catchment areas of DPPS and BHS to include all of Balerno.

We are happy to discuss these issues in more depth and to answer any questions on the subject, please let us know.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Keith Taylor  
Chair of Balerno Village Trust

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martin Petty". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Martin Petty  
Secretary of Balerno Village Trust