

## Proposal Paper

### **Proposal to Relocate West Calder High School**



West Lothian Council  
Planning & Economic Development  
Civic Centre  
Howden South Road  
Livingston  
West Lothian  
EH54 6FF

**January 2015**

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# Proposal to re-locate West Calder High School.

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 West Lothian Council agreed, on 28 October 2014, to undertake a formal consultation on the re-location of West Calder High School. As it is not feasible to construct a new school on the current school site, due to constraints, it is necessary to identify a new site for the school.
- 1.2 In terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, any proposal to change the site of a school requires a formal consultation process. The consultation involves the parents/carers/children and staff of West Calder High School, as well as other key stakeholders associated with the school and statutory consultees.
- 1.3 Any views, or comments on the proposal should be sent by **23 February 2015**, in writing to Sharon McCawley, Forward Planning Officer, Education Services, West Lothian Civic Centre, Howden South Road, Livingston EH54 6FF, or by email to [schoolconsultation@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:schoolconsultation@westlothian.gov.uk). Any requests for further information should also be directed to Sharon McCawley.
- 1.4 Further copies of this consultation document are available in West Calder High School, at West Lothian Civic Centre, or they can be accessed on-line, using the link: <http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/education/schoolrelateditems/>

## 2 The present school and site

- 2.1 West Calder High School serves the community of the Calders and surrounding areas. The catchment area is shown in **Appendix A**. The roll is currently 863 pupils. The school has a design capacity for, and can accommodate, 1,100 pupils.
- 2.2 The school was constructed to provide new secondary school capacity around 50 years ago. The school opened in 1965, and while significant extensions and improvement works have been carried out to the building, it is one of the oldest main school buildings within the council's estate.
- 2.3 In addition, redevelopment of the site is constrained by an ethylene pipeline which crosses the site. This pipeline places constraints on the useable part of the site and, most significantly, would prevent the normal approach to rebuilding schools on existing sites where the new building is built on the playing field area with the playing fields being re-provisioned on the site of the former school building.
- 2.4 The current school site is on the edge of the village of Polbeth. As a result of the extensive catchment area for the school most pupils are bussed to the school.

### **3 The Need for Change**

- 3.1 Education authorities have statutory responsibilities to ensure sufficient school places, to improve the quality of school education provided, to raise standards of education and to secure best value in the use of available resources.
- 3.2 Prior to October 2014 the council had an existing approved capital project to deliver £12m of investment at West Calder High School. This was being jointly funded with council resources of £4 million and £8 million from phase 3 of Scotland's Schools for the Future programme.
- 3.3 The project sought to address both school condition and suitability issues and involved the provision of new physical education facilities, dedicated pupil support accommodation, improvements in dining facilities, vocational facilities, indoor social space and was being designed to facilitate community use of the school facilities.
- 3.4 However, as the refurbishment/extension project has been developed, a senior officer review of the project identified constraints relating to the present West Calder High School building and site that impinged on the educational benefit and requirements that could be achieved. In particular, the necessity to construct the proposed extension outwith the protection zone of the ethylene pipeline, which traverses to the west of the existing school building, resulted in a proposed layout which was built around the land available, rather than being based on an efficient and effective layout for the school. The constraints on the site would also have prohibited any further extension to raise capacity above 1,100 pupils, should that be necessary in the future. Given these issues, it was considered that the project did not represent full value for money, nor provide sufficient lifespan for the asset given the proposed level of investment. It was concluded that a new build project would represent a more appropriate solution. The education benefits to be gained from the relocation are set out in Section 5 of this consultation.
- 3.5 Confirmation has been received from Scottish Government that part funding would be provided to enable the new build solution for West Calder High School to be taken forward as a Non Profit Distributing (NPD) project under the Schools for the Future programme. The Scottish Government funds secondary school projects on a two thirds basis with the council contributing the remaining third. Although the current school roll is 863 pupils, the roll is projected to increase to the current capacity of 1,100 pupils as housing sites within the catchment area, are built out. Consequently, the project is based on a 1,100 school capacity requirement i.e. replacement of the current school.

### **4 Proposal**

- 4.1 Scottish Schools for the Future Funding requires the school to be built by March 2018. The project plan for delivery of the new school demonstrates that this is achievable and it is anticipated that phased opening of the school will commence after the Easter break in 2018, with the school becoming fully operational for the start of the 2018/19 school term in August 2018.
- 4.2 For the reasons set out paragraph 2.3 above, there is insufficient space on the existing site to build another school and another site, within the catchment area, is required.

- 4.3 A site search exercise, focused on identifying a deliverable site within the existing catchment area, has been undertaken. The site search included consideration of both publically and privately owned sites which could allow delivery of the school within the strict timescales required to secure Scottish Schools for the Future funding support. Following the site search, it was not possible to identify a site, other than the proposed site, which would permit delivery of the project and completion of the development in line with funding requirements. In addition, it was not possible to identify an area of land sufficient to meet projects need, which would meet budgetary restrictions.
- 4.4 The proposed site is within the existing West Calder High School Catchment Area and the closest available and deliverable site to the existing school.
- 4.5 Following the site search exercise, a site at Parkhead, West Calder has been identified as the proposed location. This site is delineated on the aerial photograph at **Appendix C**.
- 4.6 The site identified extends to approximately 39ha. It is expected that less than half of the site will be required for the school infrastructure, including the main school building, sports facilities, servicing and parking. It is anticipated that the main school building will be located on the northern part of the site, but the actual location will be influenced by a number of factors including the design of the building, ground conditions, and the location of the access on the site.
- 4.7 The site can currently be accessed from the south. A new vehicular access road would have to be constructed from Harburn Road along the line of an existing track north of Burngrange Football Ground. This access is fully controlled by West Lothian Council and no third party agreements are necessary to implement this access. Vehicular access to the site could be direct from the A71, but this would require the redesign and improvement of one of the existing bridges over the railway line to the north of the site. This access solution will require the agreement of Network Rail, but could be facilitated by works required to the bridges in connection with the electrification of the railway line commencing in 2015. Given the need for third party agreement on the vehicular access direct from the A71, the consultation seeks views on the access from the south (Harburn Road) and from the north (A71).
- 4.8 Notwithstanding the vehicular access that is ultimately implemented, pedestrian and cycle access would be available from a number of points to the north of the site. These would include access via Harburn Road and via an improved footpath and cycle path from Polbeth to West Calder via the proposed school site. Improvements to the latter were planned in advance of the site being identified as a proposed school location and will be commenced in 2015.

## **5 Educational Benefit Statement**

- 5.1 The provision of a new school building for West Calder High School, rather than extension and refurbishment of the current school building, provides the opportunity to make available to pupils the most modern standard of school facilities and resources and support the delivery of the curriculum for excellence. The new facilities will offer flexible learning experiences which will contribute to the four contexts for learning:

- Ethos and life of the school;
  - Curriculum;
  - Inter-disciplinary learning; and
  - Personal achievement
- 5.2 The condition of the new school building will be a significant improvement on the current establishment. The new school will be fully accessible and equipped with modern Information Technology solutions to ensure the best learning opportunities are afforded to every child.
- 5.3 The proposal is designed around the needs of the students and the curriculum, both in relation to the Broad General Education (S1-S3), with a focus on core curricular areas, inter-disciplinary learning and also to enable the career and curricular interests and aspirations of young people to be met. With regard to the Senior Phase (S4-S6), the facilities will be established to reflect the development of vocational as well as academic education provision and meet the requirements of national certification.
- 5.4 The opportunity for a new school is a substantial enhancement on the original extension and refurbishment proposal. The design and layout of the new school will be informed by recent new school provision in Scotland, and elsewhere, thus providing an opportunity to learn from what has been successful, and what has been less successful, in terms of new design.
- 5.5 A particular benefit of the new school will be that access improvements will be made to support pupils with additional needs attending their local school. The current school is on several levels causing access difficulties for children with additional needs. There are currently a series of lifts in place, however, some areas of the school are unsuitable for access to children with specific additional needs. The new building will be designed to meet modern access requirements and support inclusion of pupils with additional learning needs.
- 5.6 The proposed site is adjacent to Parkhead Primary School but will be accessed separately to avoid congestion at the start and end of the school day. However, the close proximity of the primary school would facilitate greater access to the secondary resources and accommodation for planned activities through, for example, the use of the sports facilities, music rooms, science laboratories and home economics kitchens.
- 5.7 The new location for West Calder High School would enable greater community access to the very high standard of facilities, particularly physical education facilities for community use outwith core school hours.
- 5.8 West Calder High School is currently situated in the east of Polbeth village. The proposed location would be adjacent to the largest town in the west of the catchment area, West Calder. The effect of the relocation is that for existing pupils, and pupils expected to attend it, from the east of the catchment area, there will not be a material change in the distance travelled to the school. Those pupils in the west of the catchment area will be closer to the proposed school location. Those pupils living in the west side of the village of Polbeth will be closer to the proposed new school than the old school and only those living in the eastern part of Polbeth will have further to walk. However, those pupils within the eastern part of the village will still be within walking distance and walking routes will be improved to facilitate walking to school.

- 5.9 Outwith West Calder and Polbeth the new location is insignificant in its impact on accessibility as most pupils are already outwith walking distance and are bussed to school. Pupils in West Calder who are currently bussed to the existing school will be able to walk to the proposed school.
- 5.10 It is recognised that the most easterly communities of East Calder and Mid Calder are some distance from the new school building but this would not be materially different from the current building. The council's development strategy, as set out in the West Lothian Local Plan, identifies that in the longer term, a new non-denominational secondary school is proposed for the East of the school catchment area and, therefore, the new school represents the first step in the implementation of a 2 non-denominational secondary school strategy for the Calder. Any new school at East Calder would, however, have to be subject of separate statutory consultation processes and is referred to here for information only
- 5.11 The proposed location will be more accessible to a greater number of pupils on foot meaning that fewer will have to be bussed to the school. The school will also be located close to West Calder Railway Station, which will offer some accessibility benefits from within the catchment area. Rail service improvements on the line are planned for implementation in 2016. Improvements to footpath and cycle access to the site are also being progressed.
- 5.12 It is widely acknowledged that the provision of a new school is a boost for both staff, pupils and the wider community and provides an opportunity to further raise the aspirations and achievements of the school community. The feedback from the school community at Armadale and Deans following the opening of their new schools supports this expectation and indeed is recognised more broadly through the national school investment programme. The West Calder High School community will want to capture all the benefits of the new school project to support improvements in attainment, achievement and positive destinations for all of the young people.

## **6 Summary**

- 6.1 A change of site will allow a replacement West Calder High School to be built. This will bring educational benefits to the pupils at the school and important benefits for the community of West Calder.

## 7 Consultation Procedures

- 7.1 In terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, the Education Authority is required to publish details of, and consult on, any proposal to change the site of any school.
- 7.2 West Lothian Council will not make any decision, or put any changes into effect, until the consultation period has been concluded in line with statutory requirements.
- 7.3 The consultation period will be a total of 47 days, which includes 32 school days. It begins on Thursday, 8 January 2015, and finishes on Monday, 23 February 2015.
- 7.4 The consultation will involve pupils, parents/carers, the Parent Council and staff of the school as well as other associated stakeholders and statutory consultees.
- 7.5 In addition to the statutory consultation requirements, MPs, MSPs, Lothian Health and other West Lothian Council Services will also be consulted.
- 7.6 Two public meeting will be held, the first at 7.00 pm on Monday 19 January 2015 at West Calder High School, and the second at 7.00 pm on Tuesday 20 January 2015 at St Paul's Primary School in East Calder.
- 7.7 Council officers will be present at the public meetings to discuss the proposal and there will be an opportunity to ask questions. It is appreciated, however, that there is a limited time at meetings to discuss everything fully and not everyone is comfortable with speaking at a public meeting. To make sure that all issues are covered, and everyone gets the opportunity to contribute to the discussion, advance notice of specific questions or issues to be raised will be accepted, in writing only, up to 2 days in advance of the meetings (see contact details at 7.11 below).
- 7.8 At the end of the consultation process, a report will be prepared for West Lothian Council detailing all responses received, summaries of their content and a statement from HMIE on the educational aspects of the proposal. An officer response to the issues raised through the consultation will also be incorporated in the report. Copies of the report will be available, prior to consideration by the council, in West Calder High School, West Calder Library and on-line at: <http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/education/schoolrelateditems/> It is envisaged that the report will be published on Wednesday 22 April 2015. The key dates are set out in **Appendix D**.
- 7.9 An on-line version of the documents and other items related to the consultation can be found on the West Lothian Council website using this link: <http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/education/schoolrelateditems/>
- 7.10 Further information on the proposal can be obtained by writing to Sharon McCawley, Forward Planning Officer, Education Services, West Lothian Civic Centre, Howden South Road, Livingston EH54 6FF, (Tel: 01506 281859), or by email to [schoolconsultation@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:schoolconsultation@westlothian.gov.uk)
- 7.11 All interested parties are invited to submit their comments on or before Monday 23 February 2015. This can be done by:



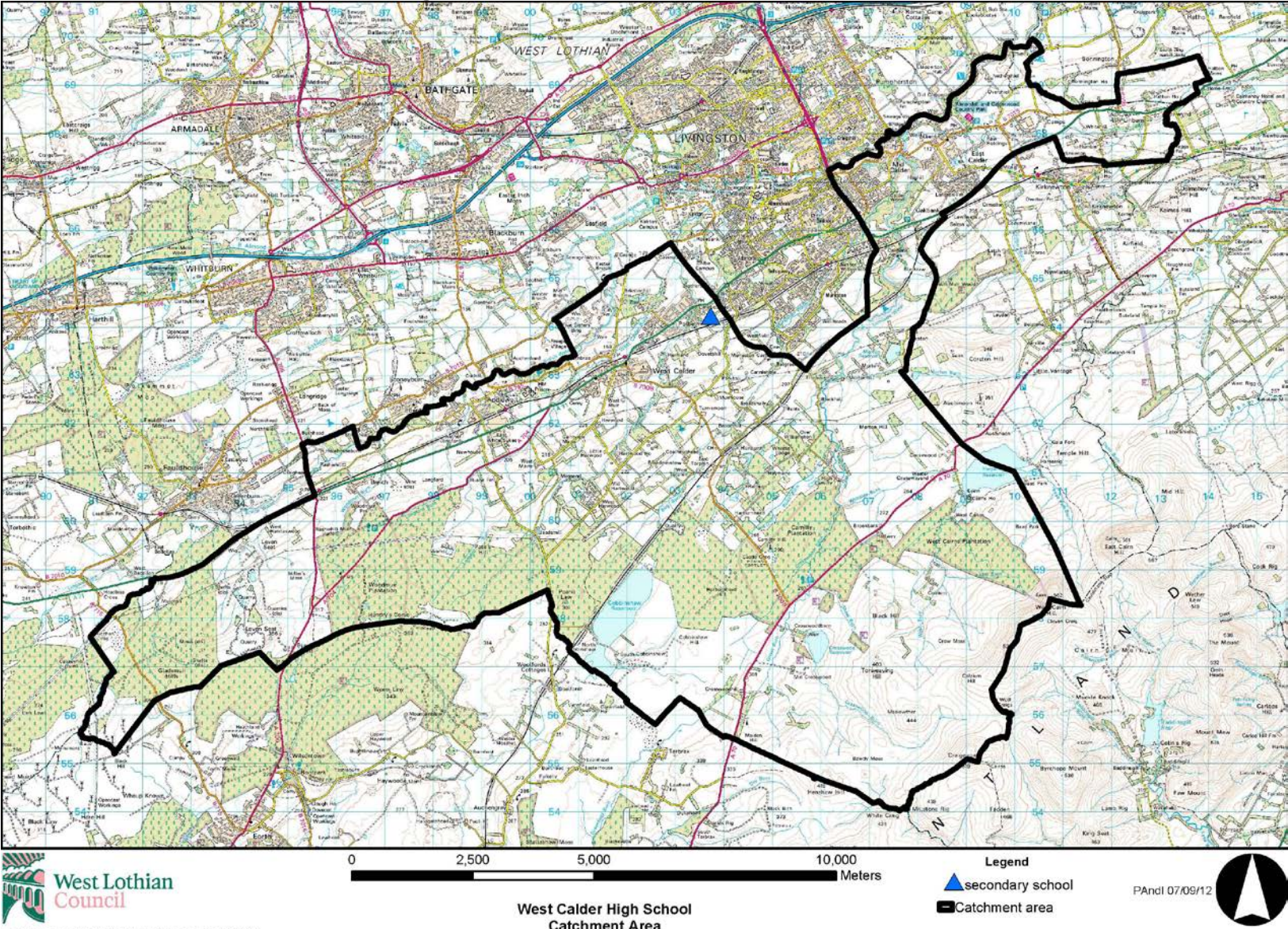
- writing to Sharon McCawley, Forward Planning Officer, Education Services, West Lothian Civic Centre, Howden South Road, Livingston EH54 6FF;
- sending an e-mail to [schoolconsultation@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:schoolconsultation@westlothian.gov.uk)

Representations received after Monday 23 February 2015 will not be taken in to account.

**Moira Niven**  
Depute Chief Executive  
West Lothian Civic Centre  
Howden South Road  
Livingston  
West Lothian  
EH54 6FF

January 2015

**Appendix A: Catchment area of West Calder High School.**



Appendix B: West Calder High School Site.



Appendix C: Proposed site.



## Appendix D Consultation dates.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
Tuesday 28 October 2014	West Lothian Council Executive
Thursday 4 December 2014	Pre consultation with parent council representatives – West Calder High School
Tuesday 9 December 2014	Pre consultation with community councils; community development trusts representatives and pupil council – West Calder High School
Thursday 8 January 2015	Start of Consultation
Monday 19 January 2015	Public Meeting -- West Calder High School
Tuesday 20 January 2015	Public Meeting -- St Paul's Primary School
Monday 23 February 2015	End of consultation period
Monday 2 March 2015	HMIE to produce report for the councils on the educational benefits of the proposals.
Wednesday 22 April 2015	Consultation report published and available on-line and in school.
May 2015 (Date of special Education Executive meeting to be confirmed)	West Lothian Council Education Executive consider report on consultation.
Process complete and consultees informed of decision.	

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If you wish a translator for the public meeting, please contact:

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