

Portobello High School: why the park?

Portobello High School is an excellent school that has served our community for over 100 years. But 50 years ago a mistake was made when the largest school in Edinburgh was built on a site that was far too small.

The building is **fundamentally flawed, not fit for purpose, at the end of its useful life** and on a site too small to accommodate all the necessary facilities. This is an opportunity to rectify that.

Sites

There has been an exhaustive process, going back 10 years, looking at how to replace the school. In 2006 15 sites were evaluated but most were not viable; they were too small, badly located, not in Council ownership, too costly to develop etcetera.

Portobello Park stood out as the best possible site. It would finally establish the school on a site large enough to accommodate all the necessary facilities, and turn an underused space into a valued asset for the community.

To read more about the site options, please read [“A History of PHS Site Options” PDF](#)

What does the court ruling mean?

The shock ruling from the Court of Session now threatens the new school on the park but options *do* exist, both legal and legislative, to allow the school to proceed as planned. The timescales for these may be uncertain at the moment but there are **no quick alternatives**.

Why not look at other sites, even the existing one?

To find an alternative site and build a school on it – or even to build on the existing site - **would mean starting a process from scratch** and would take a minimum of 4-5 years to deliver.

Having gone through the process back in 2006, we know that suitable and viable site options are very limited and those that do exist are very poor in comparison to the Park site.

Re-building on the existing site is not a viable option. Neighbouring schools don't have the capacity to accommodate PHS pupils, so it would require the huge disruption of an extended decant (putting pupils into temporary accommodation, usually portable cabins) at a cost of over £7 million (the cost of a new primary school) and there is no suitable site for a decant in any case.

Even if it could be done we'd end up with a school still fundamentally flawed by being on a site that is far too small. It would also restrict the opportunities for St John's.

St John's is also a priority for capital investment and the Scottish Government recently awarded additional funds towards this. But the St John's site is also too small, and the plans for re-provisioning the building require Portobello High School to have vacated its site.

Whilst Portobello High School remains where it is, the plans for St John's can't be progressed.

So what's to be done?

Much importance has been placed by the Scottish Government on capital investment in schools. Here we have not one, but two schools in urgent need of replacement, one of which could start on site in a matter of weeks, but both are blocked.

It is ridiculous that our community is being denied the new schools it wants and needs because of an obscure and uncertain area of archaic law. **Our community has been let down by the courts.**

We call on our elected representatives, Councillors, MSPs and MPs, to rectify this situation as a matter of urgency. There are ways – legal and legislative - to ensure the school is built on the park, and they should be pursued vigorously.

Not to do so, would be to let down the children and young people in our community for generations to come.

We also call on the Council to invest in the existing school to make the experience of it the best it can be. Portobello High School is an excellent school, and it is a tribute to both staff and pupils how well the school performs despite their surroundings.

What can you do?

This is our position, if you agree with us please help us get a new school by speaking up.

- Write to or email scottish.ministers@scotland.gsi.gov.uk and make some of the points outlined above
- Write to or email the Leader of the Council, andrew.burns@edinburgh.gov.uk and your local councillors - maureen.child@edinburgh.gov.uk; michael.bridgman@edinburgh.gov.uk; stefan.tymkewycz@edinburgh.gov.uk; alex.lunn@edinburgh.gov.uk; joan.griffiths@edinburgh.gov.uk; davidwalker@edinburghlabour.com and Education Convenor, paul.godzik@edinburgh.gov.uk and make it clear what you think.

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and discussion here www.facebook.com/new.phs.park