

A new school approved for Wester Hailes

Work is set to begin to demolish an Edinburgh high school to make way for an energy-saving 'superblock' with allotments, an orchard and outdoor gym.

In a major milestone for the regeneration of Wester Hailes, plans for a state-of-the-art education facility in the area have been given the go-ahead.

Pupils will be able to enjoy new access to the Union Canal which it is hoped will add to the sports curriculum, and inside some of the features will include a top floor library overlooking the water and a wellbeing hub.

Local councillor Neil Gardiner said he was delighted to see the proposals approved after locals had "fought to secure investment" in the new school which he added would serve the community for "the next several generations".

Wester Hailes Education Centre (WHEC) which opened in the late 1970s and which was state of the art in its day will be demolished in phases to allow pupils to continue learning on site as work to build the new school progresses.

The on-site sports and community hub, which was recently refurbished and complimented with an all weather sports pitch, will be retained whilst the other four blocks will be replaced with one four-storey superblock which was determined as the "optimal solution to satisfy the requirements of the

educational brief and site constraints” according to plans

The 800 pupil-capacity building, which will be known as Wester Hailes High School, is central to council plans for a major regeneration of the area over the next decade, which will also look to deliver net zero carbon homes, better transport links to the rest of the city, improvements to public services and ‘canal-side development’.

It will be built to Passivhaus standard, meaning it will require low energy use and, according to plans, will have “no draughts or cold surfaces”.

Plans add: “The wider site includes further outdoor learning spaces, with shelters offering covered seating next to a large growing space and orchard which the pupils can have autonomy over the growing and harvesting of plants.

“An urban woodland not only mitigates for loss of trees along the canals bank but provides an overall enhancement to the sites provision of trees and will develop into an important habitat and learning resource, whilst also being an informal play space for younger pupils.

“An outdoor gym space is provided near to the sports facilities entrance to add to the new sports provision.”

Council planners said: “It will deliver a sustainable, well designed development on a brownfield site that minimises environmental impact.

“The design is high quality and will sit comfortably within its surroundings.

“The use will contribute to local living and is consistent with the six qualities of a successful place. The development will be sustainable by contributing to climate adaptation and mitigation and to active travel routes and the use of sustainable transport modes.”

Councillors on the Development Management Sub-Committee granted planning permission on Wednesday.

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter





WHEC sits on the banks of the canal PHOTO ©2014 The Edinburgh Reporter

