

Public consultation shows support for new secondary school in Midlothian

Two-thirds of people who took part in a public consultation over the plans for a new secondary school in Midlothian supported the plan, a new report has revealed.

Plans to relocate Beeslack Community High School from its current Penicuik location to new £120million facilities at Easter Bush, have now been given the backing of Education Scotland who say the plans have 'clear educational benefits'.

Midlothian councillors will be asked to approve the plans to move forward with the project at a meeting later this month.

They will be told that 388 people took part in a public consultation on the plans held earlier this year with 246 supporting the move.

The new high school which the council says will be a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Centre of Excellence has been hit by delays after the council had to increase its original capacity from 1200 pupils to 1600 pupils after delays during lockdown.

It will include a dedicated learning space for children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) and be built to energy-efficient Passivhaus standards meaning it will have very low carbon emissions, helping the council towards its goal of

becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

A report last summer to councillors sparked some concerns after the initial cost of £60million for the new school was revealed to have doubled.

The council's own officers asked elected members to consider dropping plans for the school to have its own swimming pool, sports pavilion and community facilities as well as the pledge to use Passivhaus 'green' standards to cut the costs.

Councillors refused to accept the recommendations with council leader Kelly Parry insisting the new school will be a "fantastic asset for all of Midlothian".

A report to councillors says Education Scotland has backed the plans but said more work will be needed within the local communities to address concerns which were raised about the changing of some school catchment areas and safe travel routes to the new school from some areas affected.

Councillors will be asked to approve the school relocation which aims to be carried out by August 2026 as well as new ASN units at the new facility and at Penicuik High School and changes to school catchment areas.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter