

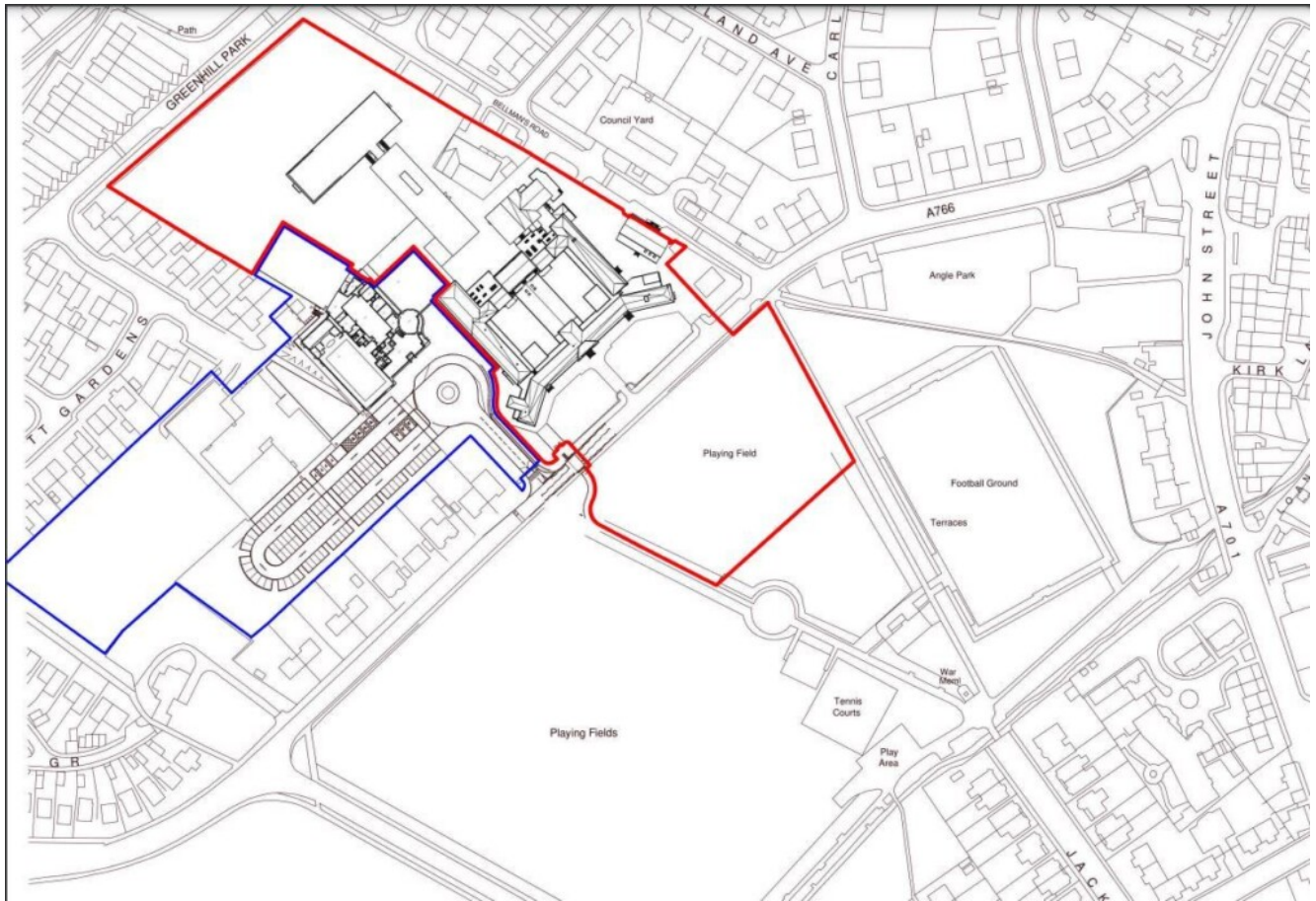
Concern over park inclusion in school extension plans

Concern over the inclusion of part of a popular park in plans to redevelop a high school have been raised after it was speculated it could be used to store construction materials.

Midlothian councillors were given their first chance to comment on the plans for Penicuik High School, which is facing a major refurbishment.

And while the proposals, put forward to planning by the council itself, were welcomed by elected members there was caution over part of Montgomery Park, in the town, being within the application boundary.

Councillor Willie McEwan, local member, questioned the inclusion of the playing field area after he said he understood plans for temporary accommodation for students during the work had been shelved.



Councillor McEwan said: "I am conscious that Penicuik's parade in the park is situated on that part of Montgomery Park, it is a well used park. I would not like to think there would be any long term prohibition for residents of Penicuik using that valuable piece of recreation land."

The council's planning adviser Peter Arnsdorf told the meeting he thought the addition of the land would give the council 'scope to decant' during the redevelopment with the possibility it would be used to store construction materials and vehicles, stressing the application, was still at the very early Pre-Application Notice (PAN) stage.

He said: "Once we get the details it might be worth another conversation at that point when we know exactly the plan for that part of the park, but I think the point is well made over the long term and short term need to retain that part of it."

A report on the PAN was presented to the council's planning committee on Tuesday this week for their views to be noted.

It proposes the “re-development of existing high school including erection of extensions, partial demolition of buildings, landscaping, formation of roads and sports pitches; and associated works.”

Councillor David Virgo welcomed the application saying it was ‘good to see some movement on improving the school”.

And Councillor Connor McManus, a former pupil of the school, also welcomed it.

Councillor McManus said: “There is a lot of community excitement around this so I am glad to see it coming to planning.

“I was a student at Penicuik High School and it (the work) was in very dire need at the time of I was there and all the students will be very pleased for this to be bashing on now.”

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter