

Kirkliston school rejection expected

Plans to build a new high school in Kirkliston should be ruled out, Edinburgh Council officers are recommending, in favour of extending an existing school.

Officers had previously recommended against a developing a new Kirkliston high school rather than expanding Queensferry High School, over fears it would be struck down by Scottish ministers due to green belt legislation.

And they have again recommended councillors opt for an extension to the existing high school, saying it would also be a more cost-effective option for delivering secondary places in the area.

It is understood local residents want to see an entirely new school built, and Liberal Democrat group leader and local councillor Kevin Lang said he would be pushing back against the recommendation.

He told the Local Democracy Reporting Service: "Members of the Education Committee have a chance to right the wrong from their decision last September.

"Instead of pressing ahead with plans for a new school in Kirkliston, valuable time and officer resource was wasted by looking instead at extending Queensferry High School, the very thing people in both Queensferry and Kirkliston said they don't want.

“As a local councillor, I’ve long argued that Kirkliston needs and deserves its own high school. There is at least one landowner prepared to offer land for a new school without any agreement on new housing. Yes, the costs are more but building a new school was exactly what education officers recommended just a year ago.

“The committee needs to recognise it made the wrong decision back in September. It now has a chance to take the right long term decision for rural west Edinburgh and give Kirkliston its own new high school.”

A new high school has been proposed for Kirkliston for several years, as an option to help deal with increasing school rolls in the area.

But officers announced last year that they believe that the planned school site on the current location of Kirkliston Leisure Centre would be shot down by Scottish Government ministers due to its violation of the city’s local development plan.

A council report notes that Queensferry High School, which also serves Kirkliston, will be over its planned capacity of 1,200 students by 2027, requiring the construction of temporary facilities no matter what decision councillors take.

The report also noted that expanding Queensferry High School would cost £52 million pounds, while building a new Kirkliston high school would cost £91.65m.

It further said that the running costs of an expanded high school at Queensferry would be lower than that of a new school at Kirkliston due to the necessity for a new school to hire new administrative and other staff.

Officers drew up two different plans for building an annex to Queensferry High School to increase its capacity to 1,800 students, saying that building an extension to the school

would be impractical.

One option would build a four storey annex to the southwest of the current school, on the site of several existing sports pitches.

Council officers said this was the less contentious option, but would require the relocation of some sports pitches elsewhere in the site.

The other option would see a four storey annex built to the north of the school, on the site of the building's car park.

Officers said this option would be more contentious in planning terms due to its proximity to a conservation area, and require the school finding a new parking area.

A new Kirkliston high school meanwhile would support an initial 600 pupils, with plans to expand this to 1,200 if required.

Officers also reviewed several options for building bus loading areas at the school, due to a projected increased need for school bus capacity to Kirkliston.

By Joseph Sullivan Local Democracy Reporter