

PHS Parent Council Working Group Statement on new High School Building – 11 Feb 2023

Consultation:

Following the consultation events held on 2nd and 6th February, the Parent Council welcomes an improvement in dialogue between the wider community and SBC over plans for the new Peebles High School, and a willingness to make adjustments to the plans based on feedback from community stakeholders.

The consultation sessions in Peebles attracted very high numbers, despite being held at a time of day when many people were unable to attend. As a result, we recognise that many of those that did attend found it frustrating and difficult to access, while those that couldn't were also dissatisfied. The smaller sessions in West Linton and Innerleithen a few days later were more conducive to dialogue, and showed that some feedback from the Peebles events had been taken on board. We are seeking publication of the revised plans, and 3D models very quickly, so that everyone can see the changes being proposed. Ongoing and better consultation is still required to build confidence and support for the project.

Performance and Assembly Facilities:

We further welcome the revised plans for the Drama and Music zones, enabling the inclusion of a double height performance and assembly hall with a flexible tiered seating capacity of 350+. We understand the design will now be further revised so that this space can be fully enclosed, and to provide an improved stage area.

Open Plan Design and Acoustics:

A small increase in doors fitted to classrooms takes the number of non-practical classrooms with 4 walls and a door from 17 to 23, out of 41. This still leaves over 40% of classrooms open to ambient noise and distractions with no flexibility to remove it. A number of opportunities have been identified to add further doors and flexible partition walls, to support better learning environments, while retaining flexibility and access to breakout spaces. Significant design work is still needed to address the open-plan aspects of the design and their negative consequences.

Capacity:

We remain concerned that the design capacity matches the current pupil numbers. Although it may be technically possible to squeeze more pupils into the space, this will have detrimental consequences on curriculum, learning and teaching. At this stage in the project, the best mitigation for this would be to retain the Victorian building as part of the learning estate. Options for short-medium term use for tertiary education, vocational courses, and community education partnerships should be investigated, so that the building can offer the school additional space in future, while contributing to educational needs now.

Time:

We understand from the discussion with the project team that the design continues to be refined and there is time for further minor adaptations to the design. We therefore

appreciate ongoing dialogue regarding a number of other issues identified with the design, needing collaborative work towards a resolution:

- The design / capacity of social spaces
- The plans for toilet facilities
- What provision of lockers will be made for pupils and staff
- Ensuring sufficient staff work spaces will be available
- Commitment to the reinstatement and drainage/surface dressing improvements of the grass pitches at Craigerne to allow for year round use of these, and also to ensure that there are a sufficient number of sports pitches to meet SportsScotland guidance.

We are seeking parental/community representation on the project board, to address these and other ongoing issues as the project progresses, and we call on SBC to work in real partnership with parents and the community to ensure this significant investment of public funds results in outstanding High School facilities for Tweeddale.