



East Dunbartonshire Council Primary School Improvement Programme Consultation on the Provision of a New Build Primary School in Lenzie Response from Lenzie Community Council

Introduction

The inputs to this response are based on four areas of information viz. PSIP documents on the EDC website, 13 emails received via LCC website, informal discussions between LCC members and others in the community and finally, discussion at the formal Community Council meeting on 19th June.

It is not known if the emails were all from Lenzie residents, but they have been forwarded to the PSIP Lead Officer, Simon Mair. He greatly assisted the discussion on 19th June and was given a number of questions beforehand, most of which had been submitted through the LCC website. Many thanks are accorded to Mr Mair for his attendance and input.

For the record, LCC had no inputs from the public during the earlier informal consultation period. Our understanding of the statutory process is that Community Councils are statutory consultees and are expected to respond on behalf of the community in relation to “wider issues”. This has been taken to mean any issues other than ones which clearly relate to the educational provision. Both kinds of issues have been raised in emails from members of the community, however it is not known which are statutory consultees and therefore able to respond directly themselves.

Wider issues

Traffic – The most frequently raised issue was the problem of vehicular traffic on Myrtle Avenue and Moss Road. This is judged by many to be unacceptable and possibly dangerous at present and the potential increase in traffic generated by a new, much larger school is a major negative point for the proposal.

Currently, there are traffic congestion problems at Fern Avenue for Lenzie Primary and presumably this traffic would tend to transfer to the Lenzie Moss site if Lenzie Primary were closed. The Community Council has no information on the origins of the traffic to both schools and whether or not there could realistically be a shift to other modes, such as walking or cycling. From the figures quoted for pupil placements from outwith East Dunbartonshire, it does not seem that a major proportion of the current traffic is related to this intake. The practical effects of the congestion are to some extent on residents local to the school and on through traffic from Kirkintilloch Road to Boghead Road, but the greater concern is for the safety of pupils and parents. LCC will make a request for a copy of the Traffic Consultants report, in order to have closer understanding of this problem.

There is a related issue of off-road paths to school. There is good access from Oak Drive on the North side but LCC has no information on how well or otherwise this is working since the completion of new housing between Oak Drive and Boghead Road. Lenzie Moss paths have not been included in the traffic consultant’s study and, although these are used to a limited extent by children and parents at present (from both schools) they are not all-weather and have no lighting. There would also be questions relating to land ownership and the Local Nature Reserve if the Lenzie Moss paths were included in the thinking.

PSIP Response from Lenzie Community Council cont'd

Traffic cont'd - The draft design for the new school includes pick-up/drop-off areas and a bus route, but it is not clear that this will be adequate, as much of the congestion and risk arises currently during the pick-up period when parents arrive early and park. In addition, the entrance to the site is narrow and on a bend.

Our conclusion is that the potential traffic problem is a major issue and EDC will need to address it on a number of fronts, and be seen to be doing so, to gain acceptability for the concept of a large school in this location.

Potential adverse effects on shops and businesses at Queen's Buildings - several residents who have contacted LCC believe that the closure of Lenzie Primary will have a negative effect on shops and other businesses in the centre of Lenzie, related to reducing footfall. The health of these businesses is important to LCC, although we believe that the major adverse factor for them at present is a lack of short-term parking. We determined that EDC has made no studies of this factor and indeed it would be difficult to investigate this aspect objectively. Casual observation suggests that the number of parents walking children to and from school, who then go on to shop in the central area, is probably fairly small. There is a certain amount of meeting and socialising of parents in one or other of the two café establishments but there is no reason to think that this would diminish as a result of Lenzie Primary closure. The other factor which might affect footfall is the use to which the Lenzie Primary building and space is put. If it became a residential space, footfall might increase in the longer term.

LCC concluded that there is no real evidence on this point and the likely effect of closure cannot be determined.

Building history and heritage – several residents expressed sadness at the possibility of losing a historic and attractive building near the centre of the community and there was speculation as to its listed status. As far as we know from our review of information available on the Historic Scotland website, the building is not listed. However it is within a conservation area which should give it some protection from casual demolition. No investigation has been carried out on the feasibility of conversion to residential flats in a manner that would preserve the best features of the building. However, the pressures on EDC to encourage building of affordable housing are well known and there is a lack of single person accommodation in Lenzie which might be met in this way. The Community Council acknowledges that these are issues that would be considered in more depth during the planning process, should the proposals for Lenzie Primary and Lenzie Moss Primary go ahead.

LCC concluded that EDC should, as a minimum, ensure that the building is not allowed to deteriorate through lack of action and should actively encourage the preservation of the building fabric and its potential use for residential purposes.

Links with Lenzie Union Parish Church – One correspondent raised the point that Lenzie Primary is the only one of the local schools to hold its services in the church and suggested that closure might affect the church. In fact Lenzie Union has active and fruitful links with both schools, by invitation, and there is no reason to think that such links might not be formed with a new school. Some Lenzie Academy events are also held in Lenzie Union Church. The Church has not contacted LCC in relation to the PSIP proposal.

Effect on Neighbouring Properties - LCC is aware that residents who live in properties adjacent to Lenzie Moss Primary School do not form part of the statutory consultation process, however we have been contacted by one such resident who has grave concerns about the impact on access/traffic of the proposals and who notes the noise and nuisance factor created by the existing school, including that created by those attending activities at the school in the evening. LCC would like these concerns to be noted and would expect that the design of the new school will seek to mitigate factors such as these.

PSIP Response from Lenzie Community Council cont'd

"Education" Queries - As noted in the introduction to this representation, LCC has sought to focus its comments on the wider issues arising from the proposals. Nevertheless, we have been contacted by residents who are not statutory consultees, but do have comments and concerns about the proposed new school. These are summarised below. LCC does not feel qualified to comment on these issues, but would like them to be considered:

- (1) That the new school will not have sufficient capacity to accommodate the number of primary school age children who are expected to move into new housing in Lenzie, given that the catchment area of all local schools has effectively been increased by this new housing.
- (2) That the size of the two existing schools engenders a sense of belonging and community, with pupils well known to teachers and staff alike, that may not be replicated in a larger school. Correspondents fear that the new school will be impersonal and that the educational benefits they feel are derived from a smaller learning establishment will be lost.
- (3) That the open plan elements incorporated with the design of the new school may impact on the pupils' ability to concentrate.

Queries from the Community

The following queries were raised in email correspondence to LCC and clarified in discussion at our formal Community Council meeting with Simon Mair. Again, these queries are noted for consideration:

- (1) Is the budget cost of £9.2million for the new school based on current figures or is this a projected figure for when the work, if it were to go ahead, is anticipated to start?
- (2) Has East Dunbartonshire Council assessed the cost of improving the existing Lenzie Moss and Lenzie Primary schools, rather than building a new school?
- (3) Has the building fabric of Lenzie Primary and Lenzie Moss Primary been maintained effectively with all available "maintenance budget" funding spent?
- (4) One resident notes that "Primary 1 intakes have been rising in the last few years" - this statement was queried by LCC.

Conclusion

Lenzie Community Council has examined the Proposal in some detail and has also considered views communicated by residents on both educational and 'wider' issues. We conclude that LCC has fulfilled the statutory requirements, but would be willing to provide further clarification of these points.