

AHSS National Office  
Riddle's Court  
322 Lawnmarket  
Edinburgh  
EH1 2PG

0131 557 0019  
nationaloffice@ahss.org.uk  
www.ahss.org.uk



THE  
ARCHITECTURAL  
HERITAGE SOCIETY  
OF SCOTLAND

*For the study and  
protection of Scottish  
architecture*

---

HSS Strathclyde Group Office  
Tobacco Merchants House  
42 Miller Street  
Glasgow  
G1 1DT

0141 339 1205

21<sup>st</sup> October 2013

The Director of Planning,  
West Dunbartonshire Council,  
Council Offices,  
Rosebery Place,  
Clydebank,  
G81 1TG

Dear Sir,

## **HERITAGE CONSIDERATIONS RELATING TO THE OPTIONS FOR A NEW SITE FOR OUR LADY AND ST PATRICK'S SCHOOL**

---

We have inspected the options report prepared by JM Architects for the selection of a new site for Our Lady and St Patrick's School and wish to make the following comments. It is of great concern that we note that at its meeting on 11 September 2013, the Educational Services Committee of West Dunbartonshire Council had already agreed to build on the existing site or on Posties Park, so ignoring a full consultation process. The same document notes in item 7.17 that consultees are invited to only indicate whether they are in favour of constructing the school on the existing school site or on Posties Park. The consultation only ends on 13 November 2013 and thankfully at least presents all options in spite of this decision. We have therefore commented accordingly.

While it is appreciated that numerous other issues also need to be considered, we have limited our response to our built heritage or those issues indirectly related to the built heritage.

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Siting of schools in locations with historic buildings on them or nearby or even with historic connotations has great value in instilling appreciation of the development and origins of Dumbarton, the specific area and the community itself. This though, needs to be tied in with the education system which currently tends to ignore local history at high school level. It has even become common practice to avoid historical buildings and context in the development of new school buildings across Scotland with the emphasis being on rebuilding rather than upgrading and maintenance, even if the older building or sections of

them remain fit for purpose in other ways. The options here do not include proposals for the removal of any such buildings, concentrating on brownfield sites, but while including short historical setting descriptions, do not look at the built heritage in the broader sense. We wish to emphasise this as being an important consideration.

Built heritage naturally does not only include buildings themselves, but the spaces they create and the spaces demarcated for recreation and general amenity. These take on special significance with time and use by the community added to by the reasons and processes of the evolution of the town; no less important as historical features as listed buildings and proclaimed conservation areas. Such public areas cannot be removed or altered without community input and approval. As at least one site option being considered is on such public space, the considerations need to be balanced between the physical needs of the school and the long term greater community needs, of the community that actually owns the spaces.

### **OPTION ONE : REUSE OF THE EXISTING SITE**

There is no immediate impact on any buildings considered of historic significance. However there are potential benefits in those nearby.

The school has Catholic pupils and the proximity of St Michael's Church in Cardross Road is an obvious benefit. The church building, "B" listed, was designed by Gillespie, Kidd and Coia in 1951 and represents a fine example of modern architecture and as a standard to be aspired to in the new school building.

The adjoining site of the Dumbarton Joint Hospital to the west may also offer possibilities. It is noted that treatment facilities are changing and that the building complex is no longer ideal. However the buildings are of historical interest both in terms of their use and building type. They are not listed but the AHSS propose that they be listed "C" with focus on the main building facing Cardross Road. Even with some buildings so protected, the site could be seen as of long term added benefit.

The open area of Cunninghame Graham Memorial Park to the east, also known as the 'Mony', also offers great potential. In this case the available amenity to the overall area can be retained even through exchange and rearrangement of spaces. It is believed that it may belong to the National Trust for Scotland (or Historic Scotland), a circumstance that appears to have derived from the Cunninghame Graham family, although this is unconfirmed. The monument to him has been vandalised and so removed, but this could be reincorporated within the new overall design and his memory retained through naming of the facilities.

### **OPTION TWO : NOTRE DAME CONVENT CHAPEL**

The benefits of the proximity to the existing school site are obvious in that the community it serves are generally from the same area. The shape and profile of the site create access and layout problems. There is only one listed building on the site : Notre Dame Convent Chapel. This building, designed in 1933 by Reginald Fairlie is listed "B" and is on the Buildings at Risk Register.

The building is the only remnant of the convent complex and is in a very bad way. We note previous proposals to adapt it to new uses. None to date appear suitable. If included in the new school site, it would perhaps be easier to utilise eg as a chapel again or hall. We would welcome any proposals that are sensitive and retain its main features eg the carved pilaster capitals and the features over the door.

### **OPTION THREE : FORMER CARVILL SITE**

This site has great potential in re-instilling activity into central Dumbarton, in particular the High Street, which has become quite dormant. The options report recognises a rich historic context in proximity to the potential school site, something that can imbue the school itself with added significance and inculcate interest in the area's history. However access is problematic exacerbated by the predominant community that the school serves not being on this side of the river. Adding further vehicular traffic here would have a great impact even if partially resolved by a new road access to the south of the site. As school traffic creates its own peak flows, the secondary impact on the traffic in the town centre and Glasgow Road would be serious.

The impact on the historic environment will in turn be through the loss of amenity suitable for this area, principally by traffic levels, in particular in such pivotal points as the Riverside Parish Church - a drop off point even if the main vehicular access is rerouted around it.

The former Ballantine's tower buildings is of little historic significance in itself although it represents a very prominent past industry. The remaining ship building basin is seen as very important both historically as a public amenity and, as previous local efforts show, must be protected from being infilled.

### **OPTION FOUR : HAVOC PITCH SITE**

There are no built heritage issues related to this site. There are however features that are indirectly related such as Notre Dame Convent Chapel as discussed above and Havoc Hole on the site. The latter is associated with Bruce and other lore.

(<http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/1054823>).

### **OPTION FIVE : POSTIES PARK**

From a school's point of view, this site has the advantages of being in a very pleasant environment complete with existing sports fields and a park. The options report also briefly notes the immediate built historic environment. The ruins of the medieval Chapel of St Serf is within Levensgrove Park at which is the Historic Scotland memorial to Robert the Bruce, the remains of whose viscera is interred there. There are two sandstone houses of note along Woodyard Road, pleasant sandstone tenements near the entrance to the park and grand houses immediately to the west. Keil School used to be in the area. (This had a much smaller number of pupils as proposed here).

If a school was built here Woodyard Road would have to be upgraded and the additional traffic would negatively impact on the tenemented area at the junction of junctions of Woodyard Road, Veir Terrace, Clydeshire Road and Bridge Street. This in turn would impact on the living conditions here and potentially degrade them.

So while the school may get an attractive site, the current amenity of the whole area will be negatively affected.

The area is absolutely unique and Dumbarton's greatest asset and it needs to be seen holistically. It comprises a single extraordinary green space at the meeting of the River Leven with the River Clyde – within which are identifiable zones for sport and general relaxation and enjoyment. These also serve as facilities for major outdoor events. To one side is the boatyard and the other beautiful old houses, some historical.

A recent WDC survey dealt with the future of Levensgrove Park, a worthwhile exercise, but one which focussed on only one of the zones within this multifaceted area. Any major development must be seen within the greater context and subject to a local plan incorporating the two rivers, the boatyard, the surrounding houses and the combined green spaces of the open space next to the River Leven, Posties Park and Levensgrove Park.

Posties Park is the formal sport and event counterpoise to the calmer space of Levensgrove Park, both of which are bound by the two rivers and the open space against the River Leven. These need to symbiotically relate to each other. If a school is built here complete this will to some extent exchange facilities, converting publicly accessible sports fields to school specific sport fields. There is a benefit in security, but this would be greatly negated by the restriction of public access. Historically, as a gift to the people of Dumbarton, it is essential that the overall ambience of Levensgrove Park together with Posties Park be maintained. The combined park area is the venue for large events such the piping championships, fireworks and breathing space for sport. These will suffer if the existing sports fields are removed. It may even be necessary to relocate the piping championships away from Dumbarton altogether.

If the school is relocated here, there is likely to be renewed efforts to build residential units in the old area occupied by the boatyard and this in turn will create issues of even higher traffic levels and conflicts across the whole area. It is also noted that the boatyard itself has expanded beyond its historical physical boundaries into the River Leven and the Clyde through infilling, creating an unnatural land use situation in the area that must not allowed to give the impression that this area is available for almost any type of development. The impact of this is clearly visible in aerial photographs. But so too is the need to ensure the best future for this important town asset this area represents.

Dealt with correctly, the whole combined Levensgrove Park / Posties Park and boatyard area together with the two rivers can become an even greater attraction for the town, attracting even more important events. A school here would be able to contribute some facilities, but these appear to be outweighed by the negative aspects such as reduced freely available areas for sport and events, restriction due to boundary fences, added traffic etc. (Traffic created by occasional large events is dealt with quite differently to a daily twice daily peak flow).

It is therefore imperative for the future of the town, that the combined green open spaces here be retained intact and are seen holistically within the overall unique environment. The spaces may not be currently fully utilised, but this should not distract from seeing their full potential over time.

### **OPTION SIX : ARGYLL PARK SITE**

The proximity to the historical Argyll Motor Works building is noted. There are no immediate concerns about this site from a built heritage point of view.

### **OPTION SEVEN : JAMESTOWN SITE**

The proximity to the historical Jamestown Parish Church and school is noted. There are no immediate concerns about this site from a built heritage point of view.

### **OPTION EIGHT : BELLSMYRE**

This further option has no issues relating to the built heritage.

We trust that these points are of use in consideration of the site for the new school. In summary it is evident that the Option 5 : Posties Park is the most disruptive and least suitable.

Yours faithfully,

(Mrs) Audrey R Gardner,  
Chairman. Cases Panel. Strathclyde Group.