

Feedback from Parent Council Letter to parents dated 17th April Re Tain 3-18 Campus

Feedback 1

For the principal of the short listing of the sites I feel that it was a good idea to save both money and time and getting ourselves into more strategic position in a short space of time. Unfortunately I do have an issue as to how this was conducted, I feel that the site selection is the most important aspect of process and stakeholder group members should have been given all the information to take back to their respective groups in order to gauge the opinion of their groups before going back to vote on a short list. I personally feel that with technology etc this could have been quickly achieved. Nevertheless, I am hugely disappointed to see that the Tain Royal Academy site is back on the table, I always felt that this site was not fit for purpose given it's size. I was very much under the impression following the previous planning stage there was not a huge amount of play in this site and the plans that the Highland Council submitted were the best and fullest use of the site therefore there really is not much that they can change this time around! My preferred site would be the land at Craighill, I know that it is not without it's faults with poor site access but I am sure that architects could come up with a suitable solution. The site is considerably larger, it will provide much more playground space, the school could be positioned a lot better therefore allowing it to be built bigger reducing the possible need for expansion, and, the fact that the site is largely bare it will make any build safer and less disruptive which could also provide a faster build.

Feedback 2

My main concerns at the moment is the lack of toilet facilities, it is my understanding that by law there should be a certain amount of toilets available depending on numbers of girls and boys. I am pretty sure the school does not have the correct amount. TRACC or the swimming pool toilets would surely not be able to be counted due to the public usage of these areas. If they are then I wouldn't be happy with my teenage daughter being expected to use toilets that are available to the public. I know a site has to be decided on and my main concern for the TRA site is that having a building site/ big heavy machinery which will be noisy will be detrimental to the children's learning especially during exam and study times. I also feel as though it could be an accident waiting to happen, would the school grounds be sectioned off would the workers have PVG's if they were having regular access into the school grounds and working over such a long period? It certainly won't be conducive to their Health and Wellbeing having a building site as their learning domain. I know the plans were to be looked at again but creating smaller class rooms and packing in more children should NOT be an option. In Scotland there is a huge push on outdoor play provision and the impact on outdoor learning yet the site at TRA seems to only be providing an adequate amount of outdoor space not an area that would provide opportunities for outdoor learning that would encourage the children to use natural resources and loose parts to build on creativity, sharing and turn taking skills, negotiation with others and innovative working throughout the three schools-nursery, primary and academy. Would a two campus be an option? One for academy and one for pre-school and primaries or is it one huge building. I fear for the children of the future that being in one institute and not having to move or transition to another setting could be detrimental, there is no evidence yet that this will be beneficial to the children as those being built in rural areas are still at early stages and the children have not gone through the whole process yet, when it comes to moving to college/ uni or even getting a job as they are no longer in the safety net of their cocoon that they have been in since pre-school. Will there be enough space provided for children moving into the area and for the erection of more houses in and around Tain ASG? A big worry would be the younger children hearing and seeing inappropriate language and behaviour and that becoming their norm. Children who maybe haven't managed to have a great start in primary school or know it's time to move on are not going to have the opportunity of a fresh start. I wonder what studies show that a 3-18 campus would be beneficial to the children. I love the staff, parent council and our community and my concerns are certainly not about them in any way, I feel they are doing an amazing job with the terrible facilities and working conditions that they have been expected to teach our children in. I completely agree with having to have new facilities for our children in Tain and the surrounding areas

as the buildings are not fit for purpose, I am 100% behind whatever we get but wanted to respond to you with my concerns.

Feedback 3

I understand that Craighill is the larger site and if this is the case then this is my preferred choice. I feel that TRA is not big enough and would have no scope for expansion or adapting. I also like the idea that it is next to health centre. It also has better link to a9 for buses etc and does not involve clogging up town centre.

Feedback 4

I didn't feel the last site was correct as the school was too small. I understand that there are rules around classroom sizes (for example science classes) where pupils each have to have a certain amount of room (I'm sure it's a meter space for science) and the classrooms weren't big enough to accommodate this. My feeling is if they do it do it properly. Logically I suppose near the health centre. After seeing the site appraisals, Craighill would be my number one choice and the Knockbreck Rd site would be my number two.

Feedback 5

'Definitely not TRA site, too small.'

Parent concerned re young ones being in shared playground, very cramped conditions with older ones. Also concerned re what older pupils could be bringing to school. Overall parent was very positive about 3-18 campus concept but just not at TRA site.

Feedback 6

I'm against the TRA site. It is too small and I don't think the infrastructure around it is suitable. The disruption for the pupils during exams etc will be too noisy/disruptive etc. Craighill is better as there is more space. TBH my preference is for massive investment in the present 3 sites. I also think the community have a lot to say on this matter, which is fine and we have a teacher rep, but I know the rep doesn't represent my views or those of many other staff members. A staff questionnaire would be great, if possible?

Feedback 7

It's hard to know how to respond to what is an update. Which site is best? Neither is ideal for such a large project that's the problem. Personally I have no preference. If the new campus can be fit for purpose on one those sites then great. I feel the most important part of the consultation will come when the community can have some input into the actual project. This is really important going forward. I fully support you, Wendy and the other PTA chairs in acting as this important communication link. Let me know if I can do anything to aid you, having missed the first round of consultations as we only moved here in August I find the whole thing baffling.

Feedback 8

Space all the way. Craighill best. TRA too small. No playing field ridiculous for school in countryside with all the space. No room for expansion.. crazy. Bigger space to play with means that build will be easier and more options for architect planners etc. What would they do with all the students at TRA?? Impossible??? TRA is pretty grim building to me and will just end up with horrible extensions on it and far too small. Why oh why when struggling with obesity on rise would they build a superschool without adequate/generous exercising space? Madness as school will be used/enjoyed by whole communities. Easier to start from scratch with new site with adequate space than try and cobble something on cheap with existing building.

Feedback 9

I'd say it's vital we move forward on whatever site is deemed most viable, together as a community. It's difficult to choose one without seeing the proposals in detail (I realise they were available). However my feeling is to go with the Craighill site, based on size and access. And causing least disruption to those children sitting vital exams in the middle of a building site. I do wonder though if two schools would be a better fit...a new academy/community complex on its current site, and new bigger primary/ Nursery/SEN school on Craighill site? That would offer more room for expansion? Personally, I'm not overly keen on the idea of a 4 yr old sharing the same space (or within earshot of) an 18 yr old! Wishful thinking I guess given the money constraints., But don't want to find ourselves bursting at the seams in 10 years time.

Feedback 10

Firstly I'm not sure why TRA site is being considered again after it was deemed unsuitable last time for many reasons...I worry though if we make too much noise again we get nothing. But is that right or fair? The location is central in the town therefore the traffic issues could be a major problem, this is a built up housing area.... I also think to spend more money on investigating a site that was already looked at (and I can only imagine how much money was spent on this already) is crazy. What has actually changed to have this site in the running again?....I really don't know much about the Craighill site but I do believe access would be better and the site is possibly bigger than the TRA site.

Feedback 11

Having moved from London to Tain it is with dismay that I hear that the Highland Council is considering building the new SuperSchool on the TRAC campus. Using the playing fields for the extra building. Tory cuts are forcing many schools in London to sell off their exercise spaces with the consequent rise in obesity that is so well documented. That a Highland Council, with sites available that would give children space to play, would consider creating the same misery as the Tories have in London out of laziness and simple political expediency beggars belief.

Feedback 12

I agree that it's important to limit the consultation to as few options as possible as this should reduce 1)time used and 2)money spent. It's vital that the consultation should be wide reaching and include as many interested parties as possible. However, I know there will be plenty people with opinions but they will not actively engage with the process. Limiting the options to the two sites I believe is wise as there has already been some consultation about the TRA site. That being said I think the Craighill site is the better option as it leads to a wider community base including health centre/dentist, library, sports facilities etc in one area. I attended the Community council drop-in and felt that out of the 4 proposals they put forward there was nothing about the Asda/Kirkcaldy options that made me think they were better alternatives. Let's just go with the stakeholders proposals and move forward. Please!

Feedback 13

TRA site def not big enough for new school. To me Craighill is an ideal site. New school must be big enough to take into account expansion of Tain and surrounding areas. Must have lots of disabled access / lifts for students like my son. Plus a proper sized swim pool (25m length with decent depth to allow for diving off blocks).

Feedback 14

Before we moved to Tain we lived in Edinburgh near Broughton High School. We saw first hand the benefit of a new high school building replacing an aging one. We can also see the detrimental impact of the continuing delays in the decision making process for choosing the new site. This is most obvious in the conditions of the primary schools and high school where years of under investment in

the buildings have taken their toll. We have no strong feelings as to the site that is chosen just that one is chosen quickly.

Feedback 15

My only thoughts on the new school is that any site they pick in the town will be a total nightmare for dropping off and picking up. Somewhere on the very edge of town would be better for access and to give enough space to make sure the different stages (nursery, primary and secondary) can be separate with comfortable outdoor space for each. I don't know if my comments are relevant for the stage the process is in at the moment, but they're my initial concerns for if/when it goes ahead.

Feedback 16

I just wanted to write to support the PC's in their work trying to get Tain back on the agenda. I agree with the shortlisting by the stakeholder group, I am more than happy for the representatives to make decisions on my behalf as I am confident that everything is transparent. My own view is that the current TRA site is not suitable. I drive in daily with my daughter to tra and regularly have to stop at the top of scotsburn road to let buses out as the road isn't wide enough. With more traffic going to the centre of the town I can only see this getting worse. Several mornings I have seen young people almost being hit by cars on scotsburn road and I would be very concerned about an increase in traffic in this area. My main concern and area of interest though is what goes into the school and how this improves their education. The sooner we get a site agreed the sooner we can start discussing the important details.

Feedback 17

I'm the mother of an 11.5 yr old girl & 6.5 yr old boy both at Knockbreck. Regarding the new campus I'm totally against the TRA site as it's not a vacant site & quite central so think disruption could not be avoided if it were to be the site. I'm all for Craighill site.

Feedback 18

As a parent at TRA I wanted to let you know my views on the current situation. Firstly I am very happy for you to represent my views on the new campus and agree that a consultation should only be undertaken on the two most attractive sites. Too much time has been spent going around in circles and it now needs a decision and to move forwards. My own opinion is that the current TRA site in the middle of the town is not the right place for a new school. I drive my daughter to school from Fearn each morning and regularly find myself reversing back up Scotsburn road to allow the buses to leave. If a car is parked on Scotsburn road at this time in the morning the traffic comes to a complete standstill. The roads in Tain were built many years ago when cars and buses were smaller and less frequent. Unless significant investment is made into the road network with the assurances of a one way system through the town I cannot see that this will improve. However my main drive is to get the site selected quickly and concentrate on the facilities provision and what will go IN the school. It is as important if not more important to ensure that the finance is available to ensure the learning environment and sports facilities are of the best standard available - our children have put up with sub standard for too long and it simply isn't good enough in this competitive world we live in. Please select the site and lets get on with the business of designing the new school for the benefit of all.

Feedback 19

Craighill would be my preference- less disruption to education if that site was used and there's more room on the site for potential growth in the future. Also, it would mean having the doctor surgery close by and it would all be in one little community- library, pool, school, surgery etc. I think traffic flow would work better for that site also as no disruption to main streets.

Feedback 20

I wonder if it is worth revisiting the idea of a stand-alone Gaelic Medium school in the Knockbreck building. I have always favour this option, and there are some really strong advantages for the Gaelic-educated kids in a stand-alone environment. My understanding is that the GME unit is currently growing in pupil numbers and is expected to continue to do so in coming years, requiring additional classroom space (which would reduce playground space) and may well pull in extra children from out with the Tain area. (I'm aware of kids currently travelling from the catchment areas of Dornoch, Bonar Bridge, Fearn, Hilton and Invergordon primaries to GME at Craighill). I understand not all current GME parents currently see the benefits of a stand-alone Gaelic language school, but I think it could be a really strong thing for the kids and for Tain to have this school, and I am making my preference known at this point because I think adopting a Gaelic school in the Knockbreck building will ease the lack of space/number of kids/classroom footprint at the TRA site. I understand the Highland Council has given this option consideration in the past, and I would fully support it if they looked at it again.