

JGHS Parent Council – City Plan 2040 Call for Ideas

Educational Infrastructure & Future JGHS Education Estate

To be submitted on behalf of JGHS PC to

<https://consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk/sfc/cityplanideas/>

Closing Date September 30th 2026.

Idea 1 – Safeguard nearby sites and buildings for future education use

Question 1: Tell us your planning policy idea

Identify and safeguard specific sites and properties directly adjacent to or nearby the main James Gillespie's High School campus (centred on Warrender Park Road and Whitehouse Loan) for educational use.

City Plan 2040 should recognise the particular physical constraints of established urban school sites and identify opportunities to extend or support existing schools through land and buildings outside their current boundaries.

In the case of James Gillespie's High School (JGHS), the Plan should specifically identify and safeguard immediate contiguous assets, specifically the Children 1st offices on Whitehouse Loan and the Gillis Centre site, together with other adjacent or nearby land and buildings identified through the Council's recent accommodation review and discussions with the school community.

Where these sites have the potential to contribute to future education capacity, the Plan should safeguard them from commercial, residential, or other non-educational developments that could permanently prevent their future consideration for education purposes.

Safeguarding these sites ensures that land use decisions prioritise long-term educational value and allow the school to assemble a coherent, walkable estate rather than relying on fragmented, distant solutions. This should include potential provision for additional classroom and practical teaching space, social and study space, specialist facilities, and other accommodation needed to support the effective operation of the school.

The Plan should also recognise the potential value of assembling adjoining or nearby properties where a combination of sites could provide a more effective, contiguous long-term education solution than any individual site on its own.

The intention is not to require the immediate acquisition of any particular property or to determine its exact future use now. It is to protect specific opportunities so that they remain available to meet future education needs and support a unified campus footprint.

Question 2: Why are you putting this forward?

James Gillespie's High School is an established urban secondary school operating within a highly constrained site. The Parent Council has raised concerns about the adequacy of social and study space and the availability of appropriate practical accommodation for science and other subjects. The current school footprint cannot absorb required specialist spaces without expanding outwards.

While the Darroch Annexe provides essential, dedicated space for Gaelic Medium Education (GME) and broader secondary capacity, its distance from the Warrender Park site introduces daily logistical and transit challenges for staff and students moving between locations.

Immediate opportunities lie on the campus perimeter. The Council's accommodation review demonstrated that some vital options lie outside the current school boundary. The Children 1st offices on Whitehouse Loan are immediately adjacent to JGHS and were previously used by the school as additional accommodation. The Council reported that this arrangement worked well and that the accommodation suited the school's needs. Allowing adjacent sites like Whitehouse Loan to be redeveloped for non-educational uses permanently locks the school into a constrained footprint.

The review also considered other sites and facilities in the wider area, including the Gillis Centre. This demonstrates that the future education estate for JGHS cannot be considered solely within the existing school boundary.

The Parent Council believes that City Plan 2040 should therefore identify and protect potentially useful neighbouring and nearby assets before they are committed to other uses. This would provide the Council with a wider range of options for addressing future education requirements and allow the estate to be planned progressively and assembled cohesively rather than reactively.

Question 3: Would this policy be for all of Edinburgh or an area of Edinburgh?

All of Edinburgh.

Question 4: Which area of Edinburgh would it be for?

Primarily established urban school sites where the existing education estate is constrained and neighbouring or nearby land and buildings could provide opportunities for additional capacity.

For JGHS, particular consideration should be given to the main school campus and the adjacent and nearby properties and sites identified through the recent accommodation review, specifically along the Warrender Park Road and Whitehouse Loan corridor.

Question 5: Have you carried out any consultation or are you aware of any consultation to support this idea?

The JGHS Parent Council has undertaken sustained work on school capacity and accommodation through its Rising Rolls subgroup, including engagement with City of Edinburgh Council officers and councillors, deputations to Council committees, and consideration of the Council's accommodation review.

The subgroup has also examined the use of teaching spaces at JGHS and gathered pupil feedback on the availability of space for learning, eating, and socialising.

This work supports the need to consider accommodation opportunities beyond the existing school boundary. The proposal does not seek to allocate any individual property for a predetermined use, but to ensure that potentially useful sites remain available for proper consideration as part of future education planning.

Idea 2 – Develop a long-term spatial plan for the JGHS education estate

Question 1: Tell us your planning policy idea

Develop a long-term spatial plan for the James Gillespie's education estate, centred on the Warrender Park Road hub and supporting the effective operational relationship with key facilities including the Darroch site.

While sites like the Darroch Annexe provide vital, dedicated accommodation for Gaelic Medium Education (GME) and wider school provision, spatial planning must address the operational friction of multi-site working - specifically transit time between sites, road safety across busy urban thoroughfares, lost social and instructional time for travelling staff and pupils, and administrative overhead. The plan should seek to optimise day-to-day operations and campus connectivity across a walkable perimeter to ensure all students and staff benefit from a cohesive, well-integrated educational experience.

This spatial plan must assess how existing buildings, nearby contiguous sites, and potential expansion opportunities can work together as a flexible, tightly clustered estate. It should evaluate accommodation across the full curriculum and school experience including general classrooms, specialist science and practical spaces, creative arts, physical education, dining, social space, and senior study provision.

The ultimate objective must be to address the suitability, distribution, safety, and overall operational effectiveness of the estate, rather than relying solely on nominal pupil headcounts or accepting permanently fragmented provision across distant sites.

Question 2: Why are you putting this forward?

The JGHS Parent Council has been raising concerns about the impact of rising pupil numbers on the school's accommodation and the experience of pupils and staff.

The Parent Council's Rising Rolls work has identified severe pressures across the school estate, including teaching rooms, practical curriculum facilities, senior study provision, dining, and social space. Pupil feedback gathered by the Parent Council has highlighted the direct impact of available space on learning and the wider school experience.

Relying on piecemeal accommodation fixes or dispersed sites without a unified spatial strategy creates operational friction. When students and teachers must travel between dispersed locations during the school day, learning time is lost and safety risks across urban roads increase.

The Council has already undertaken work to identify potential accommodation options, including the use of additional space at the neighbouring primary school and the reconfiguration of existing buildings. These measures demonstrate the value of considering the estate as a whole, but also the need for a coherent, longer-term spatial strategy.

A spatial plan centred on the Warrender Park corridor would allow the Council to consider how different buildings and sites could contribute to the school's requirements while actively minimising travel between sites. It provides an opportunity to consider the educational value of the wider area rather than treating each building or site in isolation.

A planned approach would help ensure that future capital investment, land-use decisions, and development opportunities support a unified, sustainable urban campus that delivers the full curriculum efficiently.

Question 3: Would this policy be for all of Edinburgh or an area of Edinburgh?

All of Edinburgh.

Question 4: Which area of Edinburgh would it be for?

Primarily the central and south Edinburgh area around James Gillespie's High School at Warrender Park Road and Whitehouse Loan, including Darroch and other nearby sites and properties that could contribute to the future education estate.

The wider principle would also apply to other established urban schools where accommodation pressures require consideration of a broader, cohesive estate.

Question 5: Have you carried out any consultation or are you aware of any consultation to support this idea?

The JGHS Parent Council has undertaken sustained work through its Rising Rolls subgroup, including deputations to the City of Edinburgh Council's Education and Children and Families

committees, engagement with councillors and Council officers, and consideration of the Council's accommodation review.

The Parent Council has also obtained information about the use of teaching spaces at JGHS and undertaken a pupil survey on space for learning, eating, and socialising, receiving over 300 responses from pupils across S1–S6.

The Parent Council's work has considered both immediate accommodation pressures and the need for a sustainable longer-term response.

This proposal builds on that work by seeking a coherent spatial plan for the education estate that prioritises campus cohesion and minimises travel friction, rather than relying on a series of isolated accommodation decisions.