



REPORT TO GARIOCH AREA COMMITTEE – 12 JANUARY 2016

CONSULTATION REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF WESTHILL NETWORK PRIMARY SCHOOL ZONES

1 Recommendations

The committee is recommended to:

- 1. consider the formal report on the consultation regarding the review of Westhill Network Primary School Zones;**
- 2. make a recommendation to the Education, Learning & Leisure Committee that the Council adopt the proposals.**

2 Background / Discussion

- 2.1 Reference is made to the Garioch Area Committee 18 September 2015 when the report regarding the review of the catchment areas within the Westhill Network was considered by elected members.
- 2.2 The above consultation was approved at the Education, Learning and Leisure Committee on 28 May 2015 and was launched on 14 August 2015. The consultation ran until Friday 9 October 2015.
- 2.3 The consultation proposed to amend the existing primary school catchment areas within the Westhill Network from 31 August 2016. This proposed rezoning tidies up rural parts of the catchments, ensuring they follow roads and postcode boundaries wherever possible, and also addresses capacity issues within the four schools.
- 2.4 No existing pupils will be forced to move to a different school. Siblings will continue to be able to attend the same school. The new zones will only come into effect for new children moving into the area, or for the new cohort of P1 pupils in August 2016.
- 2.5 At the end of the consultation period all written submissions, along with the minutes of the public meeting, were provided to Education Scotland. Both Education Scotland and Aberdeenshire Council Education & Children's Services have written a report on the consultation. The Education and Children's Services report is attached as Appendix 1. The Education Scotland report is contained within Appendix 2 as Appendix 3 to the consultation report.
- 2.6 A public meeting was held on Thursday 10 September 2015 at Crombie School. The minute of this meeting is available on the Aberdeenshire Council website: (<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/education-consultations/>).
- 2.7 Officers within Education & Children's Services have carefully considered all of the responses to the consultation and have made a recommendation in their report. The recommendation is that the Council should adopt the

proposed changes, but with some minor amendments to them. All of the Broadshade housing development should be zoned to Crombie School, ensuring Skene School keeps its rural identity. To compensate for the Westward expansion of Crombie School, the area around Morven Drive in Westhill should be rezoned to Westhill School. In addition, Crombie School may need to be extended to cope with all additional pupils, the cap at Elrick School can be lifted, and it may ultimately be possible to remove the temporary accommodation at Skene School.

- 2.8 These alterations to the original proposal take into account all feedback from the consultation. There was a strong feeling in the community that Skene School should remain small and parents within Broadshade wanted to attend Crombie School. These changes can be incorporated into the proposal, which addresses capacity issues within the network as shown in the tables below.

Table 1. School roll forecasts (2015).

School	Capacity	School Roll						
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Westhill Academy	970	800	809	791	762	764	758	776
Crombie	333	300	309	301	305	303	304	302
Elrick	442	408	398	389	380	358	353	347
Skene	71 (96 wrk)	60	110	119	116	125	131	135
Westhill	333	263	255	256	260	261	262	262

Table 2. School roll forecasts remodelled to align with the proposed rezoning.

School	Capacity	School Roll						
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Westhill Academy	970	800	809	791	762	764	758	776
Crombie	333	300	328	320	316	313	313	309
Elrick	442	408	420	425	425	411	413	515
Skene	71 (96 wrk)	60	70	69	69	71	70	67
Westhill	333	263	256	257	257	257	257	257

- 2.9 The recommendation and comments given by the Garioch Area Committee, will be included in a final report to the Education, Learning & Leisure Committee on 4 February 2016, in order for a final decision to be made on the proposals.
- 2.10 The Head of Finance and the Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted and have no comments to make.

3 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications

- 3.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out as part of the development of the proposals set out above. It has been updated following

the consultation process and no impact has been identified. The assessment is included as Appendix 2 to this report.

- 3.2 There are no anticipated financial implications for school transportation as an outcome of this proposal. Children currently receiving transport to their primary school would continue to do so.

Maria Walker
Director of Education and Children's Services

Report prepared by Matthew Burke, Research and Analysis Officer
Date: December 2015

Appendix 1



EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

PROPOSAL TO REZONE WESTHILL PRIMARY NETWORK

CONSULTATION REPORT

DECEMBER 2015

**This Consultation Report has been issued by Education &
Children's Services of Aberdeenshire Council in accordance with
the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**

- Contents -

1. THE PROPOSAL
 - 1.2 Educational Benefits Statement
2. THE PUBLIC MEETINGS
 - 2.2 Discussions with Pupils
3. WRITTEN RESPONSES
 - 3.1 SURVEY MONKEY RESPONSES – shown as a percentage for each school.
4. ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED ZONING OPTIONS
5. EDUCATION AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO WRITTEN AND ORAL REPRESENTATIONS
 - 5.1 Educational Benefits
 - 5.2 The Broadshade Development
 - 5.3 The area around Morven Drive
 - 5.4 Mason Lodge
 - 5.5 Extension of Crombie rather than Skene School
 - 5.6 School Roll Forecasting
 - 5.7 Transport & Safe Routes to School
 - 5.8 Teaching Provision & Support
 - 5.9 Out of School Provision
- 6 EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT
7. RURAL SCHOOLS – COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 11A - 13 OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010
 - 7.2 Viable Alternatives to Rezoning
 - 7.3 Effect on the Local Community
 - 7.4 Travelling Arrangements
 - 7.5 Financial Implications
8. COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 9(1) OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010 AND CONCLUSIONS
 - 8.2 Conclusions and Recommendation

- Appendices -

- Appendix 1 Map of the proposed changes to the catchment areas in the Westhill Network incorporating recommendations of this report
- Appendix 2 Pupil consultation responses
- Appendix 3 Education Scotland Report
- Appendix 4 Consultation proposal

1. THE PROPOSAL

- 1.1 Aberdeenshire Council's Education, Learning & Leisure Committee at its meeting on 28th May 2015 gave officers permission to consult on rezoning the Westhill network. The Proposal Document was issued in August 2015 to those individuals and bodies listed under Distribution within the document. The Proposal Document was also published on the Council website: <http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/education-consultations/>. The Proposal Document made clear to consultees that the consultation period would run from Friday 14th August 2015 - Friday 9th October 2015 – a period of 41 school days in total.

The proposal on which consultation took place was that:

The existing primary school catchment areas within the Westhill network be amended with effect from August 2016. New pupils joining schools within the Westhill Network should be educated at their newly zoned school with effect from August 2016. Existing primary pupils within the Westhill Network should remain at their current primary school for the duration of their primary education and siblings of existing primary pupils in the Westhill network could also attend the currently zoned primary school, so that families are not split between different primary schools.

- 1.1.1 The proposal document (Appendix 4) provided a new option for each of the 4 schools in the Westhill Network.

1.2 Educational Benefits Statement

The Proposal Document contained an Educational Benefit Statement, which highlighted an imbalance in the capacity of schools across the network. Some schools are operating close to or above maximum capacity, and so have less space available for pupils, restricting delivery of the curriculum. In contrast, other schools are operating well below capacity. The proposed changes will largely address the capacity issues across the network and over time will ensure that all pupils are given the same opportunities and access to resources. Furthermore, these proposed changes will consolidate what is happening in practice at a number of schools through out of zone placing requests.

2. THE PUBLIC MEETINGS

- 2.1 In May 2015 informal engagement sessions were held to discuss potential zoning options. These were very well attended and feedback helped to develop the proposal that was consulted upon. During the statutory consultation a public meeting was held in Crombie School on Thursday 10th September 2015. The meeting was reasonably well attended, with around 22 parents, staff, elected members, press, Education Scotland representatives, and members of the community present. A full note of the meeting is available on the Council website at the link provided in §1.1. There were several comments and questions raised concerning:

- A number of parents raised concerns about the proposed rezoning around the Broadshade housing development. They would favour all of

this development being zoned to Crombie School, rather than some of it remaining within the Skene School catchment.

- Questions and concerns raised about roll forecasting. In particular that the Skene School roll will remain over working capacity even after the rezone. Parents do not want the Skene roll to rise and questioned whether further rezoning and/or a new school will be needed in the future.
- Further concerns about rising rolls across the network, associated staffing issues, problems with recruiting teachers, and support for existing staff.
- Concerns were raised about lack of out of school provision, particularly at Skene.
- Some parents wondering whether an extension at Skene School would be necessary and if extending Crombie would not be a better option.
- Concerns were raised about school transport provision and safe routes to school.

2.2 Discussions with Pupils

As part of the consultation process, the head teachers across the Westhill Network posed a short set of questions to pupils about the proposal to rezone the Westhill Network catchment areas. A summary note of responses from the pupils is appended (Appendix 2).

3. **WRITTEN RESPONSES**

In all, 12 written responses were received by email. An overview of this correspondence is provided below.

- (1) E-mails from Westhill Community Council 14-19/08/2015: raising concerns about a clash in dates between the public meeting and the Westhill Community Council AGM.
- (2) E-mails from parent 17-18/08/2015: asking for more information about the proposed catchment boundary through the north Broadshade development. Also querying why the catchment cuts through back gardens, rather than following the road.
- (3) E-mail response from Gemma Dacre 17/08/2015: to parent explaining the rationale behind the proposed catchment boundary.
- (4) E-mail response from Rachael Goldring 19/08/2015: to Westhill Community Council explaining the reasons why the meeting has to be held on the chosen date.
- (5) E-mail from parent 08/09/2015: raising concerns about after school provision in Westhill.
- (6) E-mail from parent 09/09/2015: expressing support for the proposed changes to the Elrick School catchment area.
- (7) E-mail from parent 15/09/2015: objecting to the proposed Skene rezoning. Concerns were raised that the rezoning will leave Skene over capacity and thinks it should be a rural school only (i.e. no housing from the Broadshade

development should be included). Also, makes the suggestion that Skene's catchment should be reduced by expanding Crombie/Elrick westward to take in the new housing, whilst shrinking them in the east so that the Westhill Primary catchment can be enlarged westward.

- (8) E-mail from parent 16/09/2015: raising concerns about the current transport situation for her daughter and stressing that these issues will get worse if the Broadshade development remains within the Skene School catchment.
- (9) E-mail from parent 21/09/2015: objects to the proposal to expand the Skene School catchment into Westhill and raises concerns about the planning application process.
- (10) E-mail from parent 21/09/2015: in support of the proposed rezoning to Elrick School.
- (11) E-mail from parents 27/09/2015: object to the current proposed boundary that divides the Broadshade development housing between Skene & Crombie Schools. They strongly suggest the boundary moved to follow Broadshade Road so that all houses to the north of it are within the Crombie catchment.

In summary, the written responses highlight:

- Support for the proposed Elrick School catchment.
- Objection to the proposed Skene School catchment. Most would prefer that the Broadshade development is zoned to Crombie School and that the Skene School roll should not be increased.
- Concerns around limited, and imbalanced, after school provision across the Westhill network.

3.1 SURVEY MONKEY RESPONSES – shown as a percentage for each school.

An online survey was issued to all parents of existing pupils at all Westhill Schools, all parents of pre-school age children who would attend schools in the Westhill network, as well as all members of staff. There was a response rate of 25. This would suggest a broad acceptance of the proposed zones. The following questions were asked:

Questions 1–4: Do you think that the proposed catchment area for your school is appropriate?

School	Y (%)	N (%)	Not sure/No preference (%)
Crombie	70.83	4.17	25.00
Elrick	78.26	13.04	8.7
Skene	72.73	4.55	22.73
Westhill	76.19	0.00	23.81

Questions 5–10: Do you think there is a benefit to the changes in areas 1–6?

Area	Y (%)	N (%)	Not sure/No preference (%)
Area 1	42.11	5.26	52.63
Area 2	63.16	5.26	31.58
Area 3	33.33	33.33	33.33
Area 4	61.11	5.56	33.33
Area 5	54.71	5.88	29.41
Area 6	50.00	0.00	50.00

There were 18 written responses in the comments section relating to the rezoning. Of the 18 comments received 16 of them were related to the proposed boundary changes. A summary of these comments is given below.

- Concerns around the Broadshade development. Some respondents suggest it would be better to fully incorporate this development into the Crombie School catchment because the Skene School roll remains over capacity after the rezone.
- General support for the proposed Elrick catchment, but one suggestion that the Elrick boundary could be expanded further west to follow the main road and incorporate the Mason Lodge Estate.
- Suggestions that the Westhill Primary catchment is expanded westward to take in a greater roll at the under capacity Westhill Primary (i.e. areas 2 & 3 should be incorporated). This is suggested so that Crombie can take in all of the Broadshade development.
- Although giving overall support to the proposed Westhill Primary catchment, one respondent expresses concern that the southwestern boundary (i.e. Brimmond Drive area) is too far west because Elrick School is closer. Furthermore, they suggest the new route to Westhill School is less safe.
- Support for the Westhill Primary proposal around areas 4 and 5 (i.e.

agrees that these should be included in its catchment).

4. ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED ZONING OPTIONS

- 4.1 Three broad options regarding the rezoning of the Westhill Network were consulted upon. One to maintain the status quo, one to make changes to all of the catchment area, and a further option to make some, but not all of the changes. An overview of the responses to each option is provided below.

Option 1 – Maintain the Status Quo

The overwhelming view was that the new catchment areas are needed, but concern was expressed at the public meeting, in writing, and via the online survey about specific details, particularly around proposals for Skene School.

Option 2 – Changes to all school catchment areas

This option sees expansion of Skene School in the northeast and southeast, but with shrinkage of its zone around the urban area currently along its eastern border. Elrick and Crombie Schools are expanded westward to take up this area removed from Skene. However, much of Crombie and Elrick's rural areas are removed, and their eastern extents in Westhill are reduced, with Westhill Primary expanded to take up these areas.

There is overwhelming support for the proposed catchment areas at all Schools when directly asked about them in the online survey (>70% agreed they were appropriate – see §3.1). However, a number of concerns have been raised verbally and in writing from parents and pupils, regarding the catchment area proposed for Skene School. There is a strong feeling that this should be an entirely rural school, and concerns have been raised that the proposed changes would see Skene School remain over capacity. Thus, a popular suggestion is that as much as possible, and ideally all of the Broadshade development (current and future) should be incorporated into the Crombie School catchment. To balance this increased roll at Crombie School, some suggest that the Westhill Primary boundary should be moved westward to increase its roll, which remains below capacity (reflected in support for the option 3, area 3 proposal – see below).

Option 3 – Make some but not all of the changes

Six suggested changes were proposed (areas 1–6) around the key boundary changes of option 2. Option 3 presents each of these areas and gives stakeholders the choice as to whether these proposed changes are included or whether they should remain as the current catchment boundaries there. Thus, allowing some, but not all of the changes suggested in option 2 to be implemented. The response to each of these areas is detailed individually below.

Area 1

This option sees the Skene School catchment extended northeast along the B979 to the edge of the Westhill Network boundary, giving pupils a more direct route to school. There is overall support (or no preference either way) for this change. Although one respondent to the online survey questions why the Skene School boundary is being extended at all.

Area 2

This option sees the area east of Hill of Keir moved from Skene School to Westhill Primary. Although there are no current pupils here, if houses were built here it would be closer to Westhill Primary. There is support for inclusion of this area in the Westhill Primary catchment.

Area 3

In option 2, this area is included in the Crombie School catchment. For option 3, stakeholders were asked if they would rather this area be included in the Westhill catchment instead. There is a mixed response to this option, with an even split between those in favour, those against, and those of no preference (in the online survey). However, both verbally and in writing, some suggest this should be included in the Westhill Primary catchment so that all of the Broadshade development can be included in the Crombie School catchment rather than the split to the development that was proposed.

Area 4

This sees removal of the rural element (to the south of the B9119) from Elrick School, making it a largely urban catchment. There was overall support for this proposal.

Area 5

This sees extension of the Westhill Primary boundary westward to align it to the B979. There is overall support for this proposal.

Area 6

The Skene School boundary here is extended eastward to the B979 to match the catchment area to the road. There is overall support for this proposal.

Summary of option 3

There is strong support for the proposal, but with the incorporation of some changes:

- Area 1 should be zoned to Westhill Primary.
- Area 2 should be included in the Westhill Primary catchment.
- Area 3 should be zoned to Westhill Primary to allow incorporation of the Broadshade development into Crombie School.
- Area 4 and Area 5 should be zoned to Westhill Primary.
- Area 6 should be incorporated into the Skene School catchment.

5. EDUCATION AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO WRITTEN AND ORAL REPRESENTATIONS

5.1 Educational Benefits

For Aberdeenshire Council, Education & Children's Services, educational benefit to pupils affected by the proposal is the key issue. Pupils are already receiving high quality education at schools within the Westhill network, and parents are happy that their children are receiving quality education in their chosen setting.

Changes to the catchment areas will ensure a more even allocation of school places across the network. This will relieve the physical pressure on those schools working at, or near to full capacity, thereby providing better physical environments for learning. For those schools operating significantly below capacity, the proposal will ensure an increase in the school roll. This will provide children with opportunities to socialise and learn with more children of different ages and stages, helping to promote more peer learning and encouraging children to participate in more team activities.

Siblings of existing pupils will be entitled to attend the same school, thus keeping families together. No children currently attending the schools will be forced to move schools, although some may choose to. Furthermore, the proposal has no impact on Nursery placements, and parents may still send their child to their preferred nursery subject to available spaces.

5.2 The Broadshade Development

There were concerns raised about some of the Broadshade development remaining within the Skene School catchment. Stakeholders were concerned that this would leave the school above its capacity, and there was a feeling that parents living within the Broadshade development would choose to send their children to Crombie School anyway. Officers recognise this concern and would propose that the Skene-Crombie catchment boundary is moved westward (from that in the proposal) to the minor road at the western boundary of the planned Broadshade development. This incorporates all of this development within the Crombie catchment, ensuring all children here attend the same school, and that Skene School remains within its capacity.

5.3 The area around Morven Drive

It was suggested through the consultation that the area around Morven Drive should be included in the Westhill Primary catchment in order to allow the Broadshade development to be incorporated into Crombie School. Comments at the informal stage suggested that children living in neighbouring streets (i.e. Fare Park Drive area) already play together and that this would maintain friendship groups. Results of the online survey showed that the majority of respondents (66.66%) were either in favour of, or had no preference concerning this proposal (Option 3, Area 3 – see §4.1). Thus, officers recommend that this proposal is incorporated into the rezoning. This will move the proposed Westhill-Crombie border westward to the edge of the Morven Drive area and follow the postcode boundary here. This revision is essential, if the Broadshade development is to be fully incorporated into Crombie School

as suggested above (see §5.2), as it ensures the school remains within capacity. Furthermore, the roll of Westhill Primary is increased to more sustainable levels.

5.4 Mason Lodge

There was overall support for the proposed Elrick School catchment, but with one suggestion that the boundary is moved to the west (slightly) to incorporate all of the Madon Lodge area. This has no impact on the rolls at either Elrick or Skene Schools and so officers recommend that the catchment boundary is aligned to match the postcode boundary here. This incorporates all current houses in the Mason Lodge area into the Elrick School catchment.

5.5 Extension of Crombie rather than Skene School

As part of the consultation proposal it was suggested that developer contributions from the Broadshade development could be used to pay for a two class extension at Skene School. This would allow removal of the temporary accommodation here (giving a net expansion of one classroom), but ensure a sustainable school long-term. However, there was strong opposition to this proposal because parents and pupils did not wish the school to be expanded. If the revisions proposed above (§5.2 and §5.3) are adopted then Skene School will remain at its current size and within its core capacity. Not only does this mean an extension is not required, but also that the temporary accommodation unit could be removed in the longer term. Consequently, officers are exploring options to build an extension at Crombie School rather than Skene School to increase capacity and improve GP space.

5.6 School Roll Forecasting

There have been some comments as to how the school roll forecast is calculated, and concerns were raised about Skene School remaining above capacity if the preferred proposal (Option 2) was adopted. The projected rolls take into account any planned housing developments in the area, alongside numbers of pre-school children currently living within each catchment, and estimates of pupil movement through placing requests based on historic data. Using these projections officers have taken reasonable steps to project the future rolls of each school in Westhill. Furthermore, officers have taken into account stakeholder concerns expressed throughout the consultation period by suggesting the above revisions (§5.2–§5.5) to the original proposal. If all of these revisions are adopted they will lower the Skene School roll to within its core capacity, increase the capacity of Crombie School in response to an increased roll here, as well as increase the roll at Westhill Primary and Elrick School to more desirable levels. This ultimately ensures a better balance of rolls across the network.

5.7 Transport & Safe Routes to School

There were some concerns raised about the safety of roads around Skene School and in particular that the 20 mph signs were activating at incorrect times. This is recognised as a real concern by officers and has been raised with the Roads team in the Council. Concerns were also raised about safe routes to school within the Brimmond area should it be rezoned to Westhill School. If the

proposals are adopted then Infrastructure Service colleagues will review the roads within the network and assess whether and where any changes need to be made.

5.8 Teaching Provision & Support

Some concerns were raised around staffing in the schools and in particular that a rising roll across the network may mean more teachers are required. Officers monitor school rolls regularly and if the rolls are projected to rise then more teachers will be recruited. Furthermore, Education & Children's Services acknowledge recent difficulties in recruiting sufficient teachers across the region, and so are reviewing a number of contributory factors, such as the relocation package, as well as from where teachers are being recruited. This work is proving successful, but more is being done through engagement with other authorities and universities to address the root cause.

5.9 Out of School Provision

Concerns were raised about an imbalance in out of school provision across the network, and in particular its absence at Skene School. Whilst this is not part of this proposal to rezone the Westhill Network it is an issue that officers are aware of. The Early Years team are currently reviewing out of school care in the network and will engage around this separately in due course.

6 EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT

6.1 The Education Scotland report is reproduced in full (Appendix 3).

6.2 Education Scotland acknowledges changes to the catchment areas will ensure a more even allocation of school places across the area. This will relieve pressure on those schools working at, or near to full capacity, thereby providing better physical environments for learning. Currently Skene School requires temporary premises to accommodate all children within its catchment area and Elrick School is capped. Furthermore, the proposed rezoning may better support parents to place their children within their zoned school

6.3 Education Scotland noted that almost all stakeholder groups are in favour of the proposal. However, parents from Skene School and families living within the Broadshade housing area would like the Council to consider alternative approaches to delineation of School catchment areas. This is acknowledged by officers, who recommend that all of the Broadshade development is incorporated within the rezoned Crombie School catchment (see §5.2).

6.4 They were also concerned about safe routes to school and in particular that transport provision and traffic management around Skene School is inadequate to cope with current zoned pupils. In addition, stakeholders within the Brimmond area were also concerned about safe routes to school if the area is rezoned to Westhill Primary. This is discussed in section 5.7 above.

6.5 Education Scotland suggest that in taking forward the proposal the council should review each school's travel plan, as well as address concerns about Skene School and its catchment. Careful consideration should also be given to transition planning, as well as the timescales and implications of any extensions

required to the schools. Officer recommendations will be within the public domain prior to the P1 admission period with a final decision due in February 2016.

7. RURAL SCHOOLS – COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 11A - 13 OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010

7.1 Section 11A of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 introduces a presumption against closure for any rural school and requires the education authority to have special regard to the following factors when proposing changes to rural schools:

- any reasonable alternatives to the proposal
- an assessment of the likely educational benefits of the proposal and the alternatives identified
- an assessment of any likely community impact of the proposal and the alternatives identified
- an assessment of the likely effect of different travelling arrangements on pupils arising from the proposal and the alternatives identified .

7.2 Reasonable Alternatives to Rezoning

One alternative was identified in the Proposal Document, which is to retain the status quo. This would not address the concerns about the disparity of schools being over and under capacity. In particular, Skene School has the most severe capacity pressures and without the rezoning will be significantly over capacity, ultimately losing its small, rural identity.

7.3 Effect on the Local Community

There are no changes to the level of facilities that will be available to communities particularly in the rural schools. Furthermore, comments about changing the rezoning to support the rural identity of Skene School have been taken on board and form part of officer recommendations.

The proposals for the town based schools within the network will hopefully strengthen the community links around the schools.

7.4 Travelling Arrangements

Pupils living rurally within the Westhill network who are currently entitled to transport will continue to be entitled to transport. They will also be able to attend their current school until they finish primary education.

For new pupils in the west of the town (e.g. at the Broadshade development) they will still not be entitled to transport (i.e. <2 miles to their zoned school), but will have a safer walking route through the town, on fully paved and illuminated footpaths.

The journey times are not expected to increase for most pupils, and for some (e.g. Broadshade development) it will reduce slightly.

7.5 Financial Implications

This rezoning could eventually allow removal of the temporary accommodation from Skene School reducing the associated running costs for the school. This rezoning will ensure the sustainability of the school estate across the Westhill network, thereby preserving communities and ensuring future provision for children moving into the area.

- 7.5.1 There are no anticipated financial implications for school transportation as an outcome of this proposal. Children currently receiving transport to their primary school would continue to do so.

8. **COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 9(1) OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010 AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 8.1 Section 9(1) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 states that:

After the Education Authority has received HMle's report, the Authority is to review the relevant proposal having regard (in particular) to

- (i) written representations received by the Authority (from any person) during the consultation period,*
- (ii) oral representations made to it (by any person) at the public meeting,*
- (iii) HMle's report.*

Officers of the Education Authority have listened carefully to the points made at the public meeting and have considered equally carefully the written representations. The Education Authority's position is set out in this document.

8.2 Conclusions and Recommendation

The Council now has 3 broad options for each of the proposed changes;

- (a) adopt the proposal in its entirety; or
- (b) amend the proposal in a minor way and adopt; or
- (c) abandon the proposal and maintain the status quo

There has been some opposition to the proposal changing the boundary between Skene and Crombie Schools, namely the inclusion of part of the Broadshade development within the Skene School catchment. Issues around safe routes to school has been raised. There have been no other substantial concerns raised regarding the other proposals. There have been no reasons identified through the consultation process to abandon the whole set of proposals at this stage.

If the council adopts the proposal it would be on the basis that the educational benefits set out in the proposal document would materialise.

8.2.1 The recommendation of officers is that the Council should implement 8.2 (b) above, adopting the new catchment areas as proposed, but with some minor amendments to them. All housing within the Broadshade development should be zoned to Crombie School and the area around Morven Drive (i.e. Option 3, Area 3) should be zoned to Westhill Primary. In addition:

- **Crombie School may need to be extended to cope with all additional pupils in due course**
- **The cap at Elrick School can be lifted**

The maps in Appendix 1 show an overview of the recommended catchment areas across the Westhill network.

Westhill Network

Proposed Catchment Boundaries



Printed on: 09/11/2015

Aberdeenshire Council, Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen AB16 5GB.

APPENDIX 2 – Note of meetings with Pupils

WESTHILL CONSULTATION REPORT

Pupil Questions – Westhill Rezoning

The school that children go to in Westhill (and the rest of Scotland) is decided by which street and sometimes which house they live in. Each school in Westhill has a catchment area. A catchment area or zone is a line on a map which shows the streets and houses that are grouped together for that school.

In Westhill the catchment areas for schools have not been looked at for a very long time, and a lot of new houses have been built in this area since then. This means that there are some schools with a lot of new houses in their catchment area, and therefore a lot of new pupils. There are also some areas where there used to be a lot of school pupils coming from the houses in the zone, but those children have grown up and not as many new families with school aged children have moved into those areas.

Aberdeenshire Council wants to change the school catchment areas so that all of the schools in Westhill have the right number of pupils for the number of classrooms and teachers in the school. This will mean that some of the schools with lots of pupils will have more space, and some of the schools with lots of spare classrooms can have more pupils.

The council have drawn some new lines on the maps, and are asking parents, teachers and pupils what they think about the changes that they are suggesting, and if the catchment for the new school is in the right place.

Your teacher will be able to show you a map with the changes for your nearest school.

1. Do you think that your school needs to have a different catchment area – are there too few or too many pupils at the moment?
2. Do you think that the changes suggested for your nearest school are a good idea?
3. Do you think that changing the catchment areas for some of the schools that are empty or full is a good idea?
4. Is there anything that worries you about this?
5. Is there anything that interests or excites you about this?
6. Is there anything that you think the council needs to think about if they do this?

NOTE: Pupil responses were not directly received for **Elrick School**. Instead the Head Teacher advised that the pupils completed the Survey Monkey questionnaire.

Pupil responses to the questions about the proposed rezoning						
School	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
<i>Crombie School</i>	Most pupils (P4-P7) think it is fine the way it is, but would like a bigger hall. P3 children think there are currently too few pupils.	Most pupils (P3, P7) agree it is a good idea, but some were concerned about splitting housing, as better for neighbours to go to same school. P4 & P5 were unsure	P3 & P6 pupils think it is a good idea. P4 & P5 pupils think it should stay the same. There were mixed responses from P7	The main concerns were around being split from friends and a lack of space. Other unfounded concerns (e.g. having to move school) were allayed.	Most were excited about the opportunity to make new friends.	P3-P5 did not answer. P6 & P7 suggested the council need to think about the rolls, the budget for extending their school, and ensuring everyone is kept informed.
<i>Skene School</i>	10% said yes, 75% no, & 15% had no opinion. 20% thought there are too few pupils, 20% too many, 45% think it is just right, & 15% had no opinion.	25% said yes 55% said no 20% had no opinion	30% said yes 45% said no 25% had no opinion	Pupils asked why new children could not go to any school they wished?	Meeting new people.	They think the council needs to consider that most people want the school to remain small. They suggest the rezoning should balance those additional pupils by removing an equivalent number elsewhere. Bigger schools should be filled first. Some think it would be good if the school is slightly bigger.
<i>Westhill Primary</i>	No clear preference. Children felt their school had space for more pupils, with older pupils recognising there is an issue across the network that needs to be addressed. Concerns about dining room space were raised. Saw making new friends as positive.	Pupils were confused by the question and did not respond.	Most pupils said yes. They know children in overcrowded schools & say they know these pupils don't like the overcrowding.	Losing friends if they have to move school. Less teacher time if classes are bigger. Lack of space would mean overcrowding. Getting to know new people & a potential negative atmosphere between old & new pupils. Potential accidents due to new pupils having to cross a busy road	No comments.	They think it is good the council are consulting everyone. Need to extend overcrowded schools & think about cost of this. Need to keep siblings together. The school will need more PSAs if its roll increases.

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeenshire Council to redistribute the primary school catchment areas in the Westhill network.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments contained in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Aberdeenshire Council's proposal to redistribute the primary school catchment areas in the Westhill network, namely relating to Crombie, Elrick, Skene and Westhill Primary Schools, with effect from August 2016. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include a copy of this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all legislative obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the schools; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people in the council area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 10 September 2015 in connection with the council's proposals;

- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- visits to the site of Crombie, Elrick, Skene and Westhill Primary Schools, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 Aberdeenshire Council undertook the consultation on its proposal with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*.

2.2 The statutory consultation period ran from 14 August to 9 October 2015. The council held a public meeting at Crombie School on 10 September 2015. Prior to the formal consultation, the council held informal public engagement sessions. Copies of the proposal document were shared with parents of current pupils of all affected schools and information made available to staff, trade union representatives and wider community establishments. The council collated the views of children from each of the four schools. The council received 25 responses to an online survey about the proposal. Most responses were supportive of the proposal.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The proposal has a number of potential educational benefits for current and future learners at the schools. If accepted, it could offer children across the Westhill area improved learning environments. As some schools are operating at or over capacity and others under capacity, the proposal provides an opportunity to distribute pupils more evenly across the network and to offer greater equity of access to resources, for example practical teaching spaces, dining spaces and social areas. This is particularly pressing for Elrick School as the school roll is currently capped. The proposal could better support parents to place their children in the school for which they are zoned.

3.2 Parents from Skene School who met with HM Inspectors and many families living in the Broadshade housing area would like the council to consider alternative approaches to the delineation of school catchment areas. Parents also expressed their concern that the infrastructure surrounding Skene School cannot support proposed pupil numbers, particularly in relation to transport, traffic management and safe routes to school. The council acknowledges that parents at Skene School would like the school to keep its rural qualities and stay similar to its current size. In taking forward the proposal, the council needs to work with stakeholders to address these particular concerns.

3.3 Stakeholders living in the Brimmond area will be affected by the proposal by being zoned for Westhill Primary School instead of Elrick Primary School. They are concerned about the safety of walking routes to school which this would involve. The council needs to review individual school travel plans and ensure that safe routes to school are identified and communicated to stakeholders.

3.4 Staff and almost all representative groups of parents from the four affected schools who met with HM Inspectors were in favour of the proposal. Pupils' views were more mixed. Stakeholders were concerned that the potential for more houses to be built in the Broadshade area may make demands on existing school accommodation. In taking forward the proposal the council will need to engage with stakeholders regarding the timescales of potential extensions to Crombie and Skene Primary Schools. The council has indicated that should it accept the new zones, they will take effect from August 2016. It will have to ensure that it adheres to timescales in order to avoid negative impact on children's transitions from early learning and childcare settings to primary school.

4. Summary

Overall, the proposal has a number of potential educational benefits. These include improvements to the quality of learning environments for children and the provision of more equitable opportunities and access to resources in schools across the Westhill area. In taking forward the proposal the council will need to review each school's travel plan, to ensure safe routes to school are identified and address concerns of stakeholders at Skene School, particularly in relation to infrastructure. The council will need to engage with stakeholders regarding the timescales and implications of potential extensions to Crombie and Skene Schools. The council should also take into consideration enrolment and transition arrangements for children starting school.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
October 2015**

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**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
October 2015**



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Stage 1: Title and aims of the activity ("activity" is an umbrella term covering policies, procedures, guidance and decisions).

Service	Education and Children's Services
Section	Learning Estates
Title of the activity etc.	Consultation regarding the review of Westhill network primary school zones
Aims of the activity	To realign capacity across primary schools in the Westhill network
Author(s) & Title(s)	Elizabeth Rhodes, Learning Estates Research and Analysis Project Officer

Stage 2: List the evidence that has been used in this assessment.

Internal data (customer satisfaction surveys; equality monitoring data; customer complaints).	School Roll Forecasts School Capacity Information Placing Request Information Housing Land Audit Data
Internal consultation with staff and other services affected.	Discussions with primary school head teachers in Westhill.
External consultation (partner organisations, community groups, and councils).	Briefing meeting with local elected members for Westhill in April 2015 to gain feedback on proposal development. Online survey to gain feedback from local parents in the network.
External data (census, available statistics).	Census data, school roll statistics, school capacity information, statutory performance indicators and Scottish Government Statistics
Other (general information as appropriate).	

Are there any gaps in the information you currently hold?

Further feedback from parents, pupils, community groups, staff and stakeholders as part of the consultation process have filled in gaps in evidence and knowledge.
School roll statistics can be subject to variance.

Stage 4: Measures to fill the evidence gaps.

What measures will be taken to fill the information gaps before the activity is implemented? These should be included in the action plan at the back of this form.	Measures:	Timescale:
	Informal public engagement meetings	27 May 2015
	Consultation on proposal as per May 15 ELL committee report	July/Aug 2015 – End September 2015
	Public Meeting	Early September 2015
	Head teacher meetings	April 2015
	Pupil sessions	Aug/Sep 2015

Stage 5: Are there potential impacts on protected groups? Please complete for each protected group by inserting "yes" in the applicable box/boxes below.

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unknown
Age – Younger	Yes			
Age – Older			Yes	
Disability	Yes			
Race – (includes Gypsy Travellers)			Yes	
Religion or Belief			Yes	
Gender – male/female			Yes	
Pregnancy and maternity			Yes	
Sexual orientation – (includes Lesbian/ Gay/Bisexual)			Yes	
Gender reassignment – (includes Transgender)			Yes	

Marriage and Civil Partnership			Yes	Item: 12 Page: 29
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Stage 6: What are the positive and negative impacts?		
Impacts.	Positive (describe the impact for each of the protected characteristics affected)	Negative (describe the impact for each of the protected characteristics affected)
Please detail the potential positive and/or negative impacts on those with protected characteristics you have highlighted above. Detail the impacts and describe those affected.	Young people – improved access to primary education in enhanced facilities with more space.	
	Young people – many pupils will now have a safer route to school.	

Stage 7: Have any of the affected groups been consulted?	
If yes, please give details of how this was done and what the results were. If no, how have you ensured that you can make an informed decision about mitigating steps?	Pupils were involved in the consultation process, ensuring that the protected characteristic (young people) had an opportunity to influence the decision.

Stage 8: What mitigating steps will be taken to remove or reduce negative impacts?		
	Mitigating Steps	Timescale
These should be included in any action plan at the back of this form.	These will be identified as part of the ongoing consultation process and will be incorporated into the final consultation report	May – December 2015
	Update: no negative impacts have been identified.	

Stage 9: What steps can be taken to promote good relations between various groups?	
These should be included in the action plan.	The wider consultation supported good relations with all identified groups.

Stage 10: How does the policy/activity create opportunities for advancing equality of opportunity?

Broad consultation with as many stakeholders as possible. Various methods have been identified to make the process accessible, and encourage participation in the consultation.

Stage 11: What equality monitoring arrangements will be put in place?

These should be included in any action plan (for example customer satisfaction questionnaires).

Education Scotland involvement ensured that all factors have been considered. All consultation responses were carefully considered the issues raised are addressed in the final consultation report.

Stage 12: What is the outcome of the Assessment?

Please complete the appropriate box/boxes	1	No negative impacts have been identified –please explain.
	No negative impacts have been identified at this stage.	
	2	Negative Impacts have been identified, these can be mitigated - please explain. * Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen.
	3	The activity will have negative impacts which cannot be mitigated fully – please explain. * Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen

* Stage 13: Set out the justification that the activity can and should go ahead despite the negative impact.

Sign off and authorisation.	1) Service and Team	E&CS Learning Estates Team		
	2) Title of Policy/Activity	Consultation regarding the review of Westhill network primary school zones		
	3) Authors: I/We have completed the equality impact assessment for this policy/activity.	Name: Elizabeth Rhodes Position: Research and Analysis Project Officer Date: 27.04.15 Signature:	Name: Matthew Burke Position: Research and Analysis Project Officer Date: 10.12.2015 Signature:	
		Name: Position: Date: Signature:	Name: Position: Date: Signature:	
	4) Consultation with Service Manager	Name: Date:		
	5) Authorisation by Director or Head of Service	Name: Craig Clement Position: Head of Resources & Performance Date: 27.04.15	Name: Position: Date:	
	6) If the EIA relates to a matter that has to go before a Committee, Committee report author sends the Committee Report and this form, and any supporting assessment documents, to the Officers responsible for monitoring and the Committee Officer of the relevant Committee. e.g. Social Work and Housing Committee.			Date:
	7) EIA author sends a copy of the finalised form to: eia@abdnshire			Date:
(Equalities team to complete) Has the completed form been published on the website? YES/NO				Date:

Action Plan					
Action	Start	Complete	Lead Officer	Expected Outcome	Resource Implications
Informal Consultation Online survey	18.02.15	12.03.15	Rachael Goldring	Opportunity for local parents to engage in informal consultation process	Staff time
Informal Consultation Head Teachers	26.03.15	26.03.15	Rachael Goldring	Opportunity to provide initial feedback on rezoning consultation	Staff time
Informal Consultation Local Elected Members	21.04.15	21.04.15	Rachael Goldring	Briefing and initial feedback on rezoning consultation	Staff time
Informal Consultation Engagement Meeting	27.05.15	27.05.15	Rachael Goldring	Opportunity for local stakeholders to engage in informal consultation process	Staff time
Consultation	14.08.15	9.10.15	Rachael Goldring	Responses will need to be analysed and further report written	Staff time
Public Meeting	Mid-September 2015	Mid-September 2015	Rachael Goldring	Opportunity for stakeholders to engage in consultation process	Staff time
Pupil Engagement	Aug/Sep 2015	Aug/Sep 2015	Rachael Goldring	Opportunities for pupils to participate in consultation process	Staff time
Statutory Consultation Staff Engagement	Aug/Sep 2015	Aug/Sep 2015	Rachael Goldring	Opportunity for staff at existing establishment to participate in consultation process	Staff time

Education Scotland Involvement	October 2015	October 2015	Rachael Goldring	Feedback from Education Scotland will need to be incorporated into final consultation report	Staff time
Final Consultation Report	Early 2016	Early 2016	Rachael Goldring	Depends upon response to consultation	Staff time