

# **Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by South Lanarkshire Council to relocate Underbank Primary School from its current site to the former glasshouse site on Lanark Road and to re-align its catchment area to incorporate the Carfin estate development.**

## **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 South Lanarkshire Council's proposal to relocate Underbank Primary School from its current site to the former glasshouse site on Lanark Road and to re-align its catchment area to incorporate the Carfin estate development. 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.

HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the school; 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.

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

- attendance at the public meeting held on 6 January 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;

- visits to both the current and proposed site of Underbank Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees; and
- walking of the routes to and from the proposed site from the village of Crossford.

## **2. Consultation Process**

2.1 South Lanarkshire 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 consultation period lasted from Monday 1 December 2014 until Friday 23 January 2015. A public meeting to explain and further discuss the proposal with stakeholders was held in Underbank Primary School on Tuesday 6 January 2015. Pupil views were gathered during school visits on the 19 and 20 January 2015. Two hundred and thirteen consultation proposal documents were issued. A total of eight responses were received, including a response from the Parent Council. Two responses were in favour of the proposal. Two responses were not in favour of the proposal and four responses were undecided.

## **3. Educational Aspects of Proposal**

3.1 The council's proposal identifies a number of educational benefits for children, should it go ahead. These, in the main, relate to the provision of a new purpose-built modern school. The new building will provide accommodation which is more modern and flexible, thus better supporting the facilitation of high-quality learning experiences through Curriculum for Excellence. A purpose-built school will provide an attractive and motivating environment for learning. Children will benefit from more modern facilities, including better and more equitable access to digital technology and given the much larger site, safer and greater space for outdoor learning and play. The new build school also has the potential to be more energy efficient ensuring better use of existing resources and lower running costs. Links with existing sports and after school clubs and the community have the potential to be further strengthened and encouraged through the provision of improved indoor and outdoor activity spaces. Significantly, a new build school will also help to address the numerous current shortcomings with the existing accommodation such as very poor access and parking arrangements; a lack of internal flexible space; limited storage; poor heating and ventilation; unreliable electrics; leaking roofs and restricted dining space. It will further make the school more accessible for those with limited mobility and improve reception arrangements. The much larger proposed site has the potential to provide a much safer drop-off zone for children arriving by car and bus and safer and more clearly defined parking.

3.2 All parents, staff and children, who met with HM Inspectors, were in favour of the proposal. They appreciated the planned investment and the opportunity to have a new school in their community which will provide enhanced facilities and opportunities for all children. They were pleased about the additional space the identified site would provide particularly for outdoor learning, play and for safer dropping off, pick-up and off street parking. A few parents, in response to the

consultation, thought that there would be a need for safer walking and cycle routes and a much better and safer access and exit point to the proposed site. It was recognised that helpfully, fewer children would have to cross the very busy A72. A few parents sought further clarity about potential flooding of the site; and the situation regarding the footbridge that crosses the River Clyde, which if upgraded had the potential to provide a much safer route for children to and from the proposed site. Parents were keen to ensure that the council and architects maximised the rich potential of the very attractive location and aspect of the proposed site for the new school in both the design and build phases of the project. All stakeholders considered the proposal to re-align the Carfin estate development to the new school was eminently sensible given its close proximity. In its final consultation report the council needs to address concerns about traffic management and safe routes to school.

3.3 During the consultation period a consultee notified the council of an inaccuracy in the proposal to do with the location of the proposed site of the new school on the consultation pack maps. The council has already taken steps to address the inaccuracy identified.

#### **4. Summary**

The proposal to build a new Underbank Primary School and to re-align the school's catchment area to incorporate the Carfin estate development and to provide education in a new purpose-built facility provides a number of significant educational benefits for all children, staff and the community it serves. The proposal has the overall support of stakeholders, including all staff and children and the majority of parents. A few parents raised concerns about the proposal. In taking forward the proposal the council needs to ensure it addresses the reasonable concerns raised in relation to safe travel arrangements for children walking or cycling to and from the new school and improved and safer access to the proposed site. In doing so, the council should continue to consult and communicate effectively with staff, children, parents and the wider community in engaging them fully in the future planning and design stages of the proposal to ensure the potential of the identified site is fully capitalised.

**HM Inspectors  
Education Scotland  
February 2015**