

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeen City Council to rezone an area from Bucksburn Academy to Oldmachar Academy.

March 2020

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Aberdeen City Council's proposal to rezone an area from Bucksburn Academy to Oldmachar Academy. 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 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.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for 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 young people in the 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 26 February 2020 in connection with the council's proposals; and
- 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.

2. Consultation process

2.1 Aberdeen City Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The statutory consultation period ran from 27 January to 15 March 2020. A public meeting was held on the 26 February 2020 in Oldmachar Academy. The consultation document was available to stakeholders including Parent Councils, parents and young people of both schools, and elected representatives for the area. Copies of the consultation document were available at the schools affected by the proposal, local libraries, the council's headquarters and on the council website.

2.3 The public meeting was attended by 19 members of the public. The council received 72 responses through an online survey and four email responses. Of the 72 responses to the online survey, 30 were in favour of the proposal and 42 against. The main areas of concern raised were about the capacity of both schools to cope with additional numbers both in regard to this

specific proposal and wider planned and potential housing developments. Overall, respondents who commented in relation to Bucksburn Academy were in favour of the proposal. Respondents who commented in relation to Oldmachar Academy were concerned about the potential negative impact on school accommodation and resources in relation to issues such as social space and teacher recruitment. A minority of respondents commented on the need for wider education estate planning for the whole of the Bridge of Don area. A few stakeholders raised concerns about the potential increase in traffic around Oldmachar Academy.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council outlines how the proposal to change the catchment areas will have some educational benefits. It outlines that the proposal will establish safer walking routes to school for young people in the area affected. The council believes that both schools will have viable pupil rolls under the proposal and that this will enable teacher staffing levels to be maintained. In turn this will enable the provision of an appropriate curriculum for young people. There is potential educational benefit to this proposal as it would contribute to reducing the projected medium term increase in the school roll at Bucksburn Academy. It also provides shorter routes to school for the young people who will live in the area under consideration.

3.2 A minority of stakeholders who responded agree with the proposal to change catchment boundaries. The main reason being that the proposal would reduce future increases in the roll of Bucksburn Academy. In both schools, parents and other stakeholders are concerned about the capacity of their school to cope with additional numbers. There are a number of housing developments underway or planned in both the current catchment areas. Almost all respondents, whether in favour of the proposal or against, raised concerns about increasing school rolls across the wider area. There is a need for the council to continue to engage parents and other stakeholders on how they plan to ensure equitable provision for all young people, whilst meeting the demands the projected increase in school rolls will place on the educational estate across north Aberdeen.

3.3 Most of those who commented about routes to school acknowledge that the proposal will be beneficial for pupils who would live in the area under consideration. HM Inspectors are of the view zoning the area under consideration to Oldmachar Academy will allow for shorter walking and cycling routes to school for pupils. A few respondents are concerned about the increase in traffic the proposal could generate around Oldmachar Academy. Should the proposal go ahead it would be helpful for the council to review car drop-off and traffic flow arrangements around the school.

3.4 Almost all of those respondents who commented specifically about Oldmachar Academy, including the school's Parent Council, are concerned about how well the school will accommodate any increase in the school roll. Stakeholders are worried about the pressure this will put on the accommodation, particularly social spaces. Other concerns relate to the recruitment of any additional teachers that may be required.

3.5 Although there are currently no young people living in the small number of existing houses in the area whom this would affect and it is not stated in the proposal, the council has confirmed that it would support younger siblings of young people attending Bucksburn Academy at the time changes are implemented. They will be entitled to attend Bucksburn Academy, in order to keep family groups together.

4. Summary

Overall, the proposal has some educational benefit. It reduces the medium term pressures in capacity at Bucksburn Academy. In addition, it provides shorter walking and cycling routes to school. The council acknowledges the need to continue to engage stakeholders in its planning for school provision across the catchments areas of both schools as planned and future housing developments progress.

HM Inspectors
April 2020