

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by North Lanarkshire Council to alter the existing denominational catchment area within the Ravenscraig area and build a new denominational primary school within the Ravenscraig area.

January 2021

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 North Lanarkshire Council's proposal to alter the existing denominational catchment area within the Ravenscraig area and build a new denominational primary school within the Ravenscraig area. 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 children 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 virtual public meeting held on 28 October 2020 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;
- virtual visits to the site of Our Lady and St Francis' Primary School, Cathedral Primary School and St Thomas' Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees; and
- telephone calls with the headteachers at Taylor High School, Our Lady's High School and St Aiden's High School.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The consultation process ran from 2 March to 6 November 2020. The original period of consultation was extended due to periods of lockdown where schools were closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Taking account of public health concerns, a virtual public meeting was held on 28 October 2020 where approximately 30 people attended. Most were positive about the proposals. A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document was produced and shared with all

consultees. This document was populated by questions submitted to the mailbox and by questions raised at the public meeting. Fifty-two stakeholders responded to the council's online survey. In terms of changing the catchment area, 35% are in favour, 40% against and 25% not sure. With regard to building a new denominational primary school in the area 48% are in favour, 38% against and 14% unsure. The main concerns include the safety of the proposed site and potential impact on local parish links. All three Parent Councils were consulted and all three were in favour of the proposal for a new school. However, Our Lady and St Francis' Parent Council expressed concerns should classrooms be open plan and about the potential for sibling groups to be split up as a result of the proposed catchment change. St Thomas' Parent Council expressed concern regarding potential contamination on the proposed site due to its previous use. The council consulted with 130 children across the cluster. The majority of children indicated that they were in favour of the proposals with 55 % in favour, 14% against and 31% unsure.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 Significant levels of house building are underway within the Ravenscraig site in Motherwell. Approximately 3,000 new houses are expected to be built. As a result, existing denominational primary schools, in some cases already over capacity, are expected to face increasing pressure as the proposed housing is built and demand for places rises. The council proposes to build a new denominational primary school at Ravenscraig to alleviate this pressure.

3.2 The council has set out a reasonable case for the proposal to establish a new denominational primary school and implement catchment changes to address school capacity and accommodation pressures in the Ravenscraig area. There are a number of potential educational benefits. The proposal recognises pressures as a result of planned housing developments in the Ravenscraig area. Children attending the new school will benefit from a modern state of the art learning environment. A new 21st century school building will provide a hub for learning and activities and facilities that should make a contribution to improving children's health and wellbeing. The school environment should promote creative and engaging teaching approaches. Its co-location to a park and local sport centre will encourage further health and wellbeing and outdoor learning. Young people and staff will have access to a fully digital learning environment. The proposal addresses current over capacity issues at Our Lady and St Francis' and Cathedral Primary Schools. It has the potential to reduce class sizes, placing requests and reduce pressure on traffic and school facilities at the existing schools.

3.3 All parents, staff and children from Our Lady and St Francis', Cathedral and St Thomas' Primary Schools who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposals. They agreed there was a strong case for a new denominational primary school to meet the expected demand the new housing will bring. Children attending the new school would benefit from a modern, purpose built school. The proposed change in catchment would address capacity and accommodation issues at the existing denominational schools. Parents from Our Lady and St Francis' Primary School sought clarification on the future rights of siblings to attend their school.

3.4 The headteachers from Taylor, Our Lady's and St Aidan's High Schools were supportive of the proposed new build denominational primary school and catchment changes.

3.5 The council also received a written submission from the Diocese of Motherwell. The Diocese, whilst welcoming the proposal for the provision of a new denominational school expressed concerns that a 'joint-campus' school model had the potential to diminish the link between school and local church.

4. Summary

North Lanarkshire Council's proposal to establish a new denominational primary school in the Ravenscraig area and implement catchment changes has clear educational benefits. The proposal addresses school capacity and accommodation pressures as a result of planned housing developments in the Ravenscraig area. Children attending the new denominational primary school will benefit from a modern, state of the art learning environment which provides full digital learning. A new 21st century school building will provide a hub for learning, activities and facilities that will make a contribution to improving children's health and wellbeing. In taking forward the proposal, the council should continue to address concerns raised during the consultation. These concerns included the suitability of the site, the possible design layout, the future rights of siblings and ensuring links between the school and local church are maintained.

HM Inspectors
January 2021