



EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

**CONSULTATION REPORT REGARDING THE
REPLACEMENT OF
INVERURIE MARKET PLACE SCHOOL**

NOVEMBER 2015

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

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1. THE PROPOSAL

- 1.1 At its meeting on 28 May 2015, Aberdeenshire Council's Education, Learning & Leisure Committee authorised the launch of a statutory consultation regarding the replacement and relocation of Inverurie Market Place School at Uryside, Inverurie. The Proposal Document was issued to those individuals and bodies listed under Distribution within the proposal 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 Monday 1 June 2015 to Friday 4 September 2015. This covered the required minimum of 30 days term time consultation.

The proposal on which the consultation took place was that:

Education provision at the existing Inverurie Market Place School should be discontinued during the 2016/17 school session, on completion of a new primary school located at Uryside;

Pupils of the existing Inverurie Market Place School and future pupils from the Inverurie Market Place catchment area should continue their education at this new primary school when the building is complete subject to appropriate transition arrangements.

The name of the replacement school should be subject to community input and a new name may be introduced for the school opening.

- 1.1.1 The proposal document stated that the catchment area for Inverurie Market Place School would not change with the new location. All pupils currently zoned to Inverurie Market Place School would continue to be zoned to the school and would attend the new establishment.

1.2 Educational Benefits Statement

The Proposal Document contained within it an educational benefits statement. That statement drew upon concerns about the increasing pressure upon the capacity at Inverurie Market Place School and the increasing school roll. The new Inverurie Market Place School will be built with an increased capacity of 540 pupils. This capacity takes into account all allocated housing developments in the Local Development Plan and will increase capacity across the Inverurie primary school network as a whole.

The educational benefits statement noted that all pupils in the replacement school will be taught in the main school building, rather than in temporary units, thus further enhancing coherence in the provision of educational programmes.

In addition to a new indoor sports hall, the new establishment will have two outdoor sports pitches, one grass and one multi-use. Classrooms will have direct access to outdoor spaces, increasing opportunities for outdoor learning.

The new build school will also have an increased dining capacity and larger core facility spaces which will provide greater opportunities for social interaction, and enhance learning activities by allowing more group and team activities.

2. THE PUBLIC MEETING

2.1 A public meeting was held on Wednesday 24 June 2015 at Inverurie Market Place School. The meeting was attended by 44 people, including parents, elected members, staff and members of the community and a representative from Education Scotland. A full note of the meeting is available on our website (at the link provided in 1.1). There were several comments and questions raised and there was a feeling of overall support for the replacement school. A summary of the questions raised can be found below:

- Capacity of the proposed new building
- School transport and safe routes to school
- Schedule for completing the new school
- What provisions are in place if there is further slippage with the date
- Disposal of the current school
- Transition arrangements to the replacement school
- Early Years provision in Inverurie Market Place
- Site traffic and safety

2.2 Discussions with Pupils

As part of the consultation process, the head teacher from Inverurie Market Place School posed a short set of questions to pupils about the proposal to build a replacement school. A summary note of responses from the pupils is appended (Appendix A).

3. WRITTEN RESPONSES

There were three written responses via email to the consultation. An overview of this correspondence is provided below.

1. Email from parent 09/06/2015: thanking the council for the opportunity to comment and asking that the whole school will be moved over to the new building as one, to keep children and teachers together in the same classes. The respondent also suggested that the old school be kept open to provide space for further new developments around Inverurie.
2. Email from parent 24/06/2015: expressing concerns regarding the new school and the impact it would have on children with hearing impairments. The respondent also had concerns regarding a possible negative impact on the town centre when the school moves out of the town centre and the potential for a loss in passing trade to the local businesses. Concerns were also expressed regarding accessibility of the site by foot and the increase in traffic out of town and potentially through the housing estate, also the distance to the new school for people living in the town. Questions about the capacity of the new school and if it will be big enough to cope with further housing developments.

Concerns about the flood risk to the proposed site and the plans to house a flood storage area within the grounds of the school and the risk to children's safety if it were to contain water.

The respondent did agree that a new school should be built at Uryside but objected to the closure of Market Place to facilitate this.

3. Email from parent 24/06/2015: The respondent seconded the above email and reiterated the request that Inverurie Market Place School remains open alongside the new school at Uryside. The respondent commented that there should be provision for the schooling of children from Uryside but that it should not be dependent on the closure of Market Place.

4. EDUCATION AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO WRITTEN AND ORAL REPRESENTATIONS

4.1 Educational benefits

For Aberdeenshire Council, Education & Children's Services, educational benefit to pupils affected by the proposal is the key issue. Pupils are already accessing high quality education at Inverurie Market Place School, and parents are happy that their children are receiving quality education in their chosen setting. There are however increasing concerns that the rising pupil population in Inverurie will restrict that education if the status quo continues.

The provision of a replacement Inverurie Market Place School will relieve the physical pressure on the current school, which is currently operating within working capacity but with an increasing school roll, thereby providing better physical environments for learning and teaching.

The current Inverurie Market Place School includes temporary accommodation classrooms. All pupils in the new build school will be taught in the main school building.

A new Inverurie Market Place School will provide a high quality learning environment offering greater flexibility for all school activities. The suitability of the new school building is at the heart of the design process. It should be an attractive place to learn that inspires pupils to engage with the curriculum.

4.2 School transport / safe routes to school / site traffic

At the public meeting questions were raised about entitlement to school transport. Pupils are entitled to free school transport if they live more than two miles away from their zoned school. Pupils living within two miles are not entitled to transport. However if there are available seats on an existing transport contract then parents can purchase a 'privilege seat' for their child at an annual cost of around £100.

It is anticipated that with regards to transport, only a small number of pupils will be affected by the replacement school being built on a different site. The council will work with families affected during the transition.

The council are working with the school and parents regarding safe walking/cycling routes to school. Discussions are ongoing to ensure that the current school travel plan is appropriate for the increased number of pupils travelling from Uryside to the town centre.

The replacement school will have adequate parking and pick up/drop space for staff and parents of both primary and nursery age pupils.

Site traffic will be considered alongside the safe routes to school plan. There will be a one way traffic system in operation and it will be completely separate from the housing estate. There will be no access for site traffic through the housing estate.

4.3 Capacity of the replacement school

Concerns were raised at the public meeting regarding the size of the replacement school and if there would be enough space for the housing in the Local Development Plan. The replacement school capacity will be 540 pupils, however the new school building is being designed with sufficient flexibility to expand the core facility of the school at a later date if required, without the need to add temporary accommodation.

Education & Children's Services have closely monitored the school roll forecast and take into account all sites in the Local Development Plan and monitor developers build out rates.

Across the Inverurie network there will be sufficient capacity in Kellands, Strathburn and Port Elphinstone Schools alongside the new school to meet demand.

There will be a consultation to realign the catchment areas in Inverurie at some point in the future.

4.4 Contingency plan

Questions were raised regarding what plans the council have should there be any further slippage with the delivery of the replacement school.

Aberdeenshire Council have a contingency plan and would work with parents and the community should it become necessary. However the legal contracts have been signed transferring the land to Aberdeenshire Council and preparatory works are underway to facilitate the start of construction in spring 2016. The school is expected to open in the 2017/18 school session.

4.5 Transition arrangements

Parents and pupils will be fully involved with the move to the replacement school at Uryside. Pupils, parents and staff will be able to visit the building before the replacement school opens.

Pupils and parents will also be involved in designing a new logo and deciding whether the replacement school should also have a new name.

4.6 Disposal of the current building

There were some questions from parents regarding what will happen with the existing school building once the replacement school is open. Some parents suggested that the existing building should remain open for the pupils living in the centre of Inverurie.

The council are looking into all available options regarding the future use of the building and the land.

Current projections indicate that with the new larger school there will be sufficient primary school capacity across the town.

There will be a rezoning exercise carried out in the Inverurie network at a later stage to realign the pupil numbers appropriately with ongoing building.

5 EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT

5.1 The Education Scotland report is reproduced in full (Appendix B).

5.2 Education Scotland acknowledges the proposal to replace the existing Inverurie Market Place School with a new school building located at Uryside, Inverurie has the potential to be of clear educational benefit for current and future pupils of Inverurie Market Place School and the local community. They recognise that options to extend the current building are limited and would result in considerable pressure on use of the existing space.

5.3 Education Scotland agree that the proposed new building will have the potential to support the delivery of a modern curriculum and accommodate the forecast increases in the school roll. The new school will have enhanced sports, physical education, and outdoor learning space and improved digital technology.

5.4 Education Scotland acknowledge that the capacity for the replacement school takes into account all the allocated housing development sites in the Local Development Plan.

5.5 Education Scotland agree that Aberdeenshire Council has consulted on the proposals with children, parents, staff and members of the local community. Consultees supported the proposal and recognised the unsuitable nature of the existing school building and welcomed the potential move to a new building fit for purpose.

5.6 Education Scotland noted that stakeholders were concerned about the timescale for building the new school and that no specific date has yet been given for the commencement of building work. They also had questions regarding contingency plans in place should the timescale prove unachievable.

Preparatory works are underway to facilitate the start of construction in spring 2016. The school is expected to open in the 2017/18 school session. Once the

P1 admissions period is completed in January, the numbers of pupils will be collated, this will then determine which of the contingency plans will be put into place or (actioned).

- 5.7 Education Scotland also noted the concerns raised by some parents at the meeting regarding the impact of the proposal on children with additional support needs, particularly those requiring support with a hearing impairment. Aberdeenshire Council would take this opportunity to address these concerns. The replacement school has been designed to ensure the acoustics are compliant with all necessary specifications. Once the replacement school is open, the parents of all children who will be attending will be invited to visit the school. Colleagues from Sensory Services will also be involved to support any child with a hearing impairment.

Education Scotland noted that overall, it was acknowledged that the council's proposal has the potential to improve provision for children with additional support needs, including providing full access for those with mobility problems and through better, modern facilities.

- 5.8 Education Scotland noted that the council is aware that in taking forward the proposal, it will require a detailed travel plan including identifying safe walking routes to school. Steps will need to be taken to mitigate the risks associated with road crossings and other hazards.

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

- 6.1 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.

6.2 Conclusions and Recommendation

The Council now has 3 broad options, namely;

- (a) Adopt the proposal; or
- (b) Amend the proposal in a minor way and adopt; or

(c) Abandon the proposal and maintain the status quo.

If the council adopts the proposal it would be on the basis that the educational benefits set out in the proposal document would materialise. There would be a requirement that the Council continues to work closely with stakeholders including community groups and parents to ensure that any concerns raised are addressed.

There are no obvious ways of significantly amending the proposal other than possibly postponing its implementation or by selecting a different site.

Stakeholders, parents and the wider community recognise the need for the replacement school and are supportive of the proposal. There have been no reasons identified through the consultation process to abandon the proposals at this stage.

6.2.1 The recommendation of officers is that the Council should adopt the proposal for a replacement Inverurie Market Place School and that education provision should be discontinued during the 2016/17 school session, on completion of a new primary school located at Uryside, Inverurie.

6.2.2 Aberdeenshire Council will be notifying the Scottish government of the relocation as a matter of courtesy, however it is important to note there is no statutory requirement for this and the legislation makes no provision for the community to appeal the decision with the government.

APPENDIX A – NOTE OF MEETINGS WITH PUPILS

Inverurie Market Place School Replacement Consultation

1. What do you think might be some of the good things about a new primary school?
2. Is there anything that worries you about the new primary school?
3. Do you have any suggestions or ideas you would like us to consider before the move?
4. What are you looking forward to most about the new school?
5. What are you going to miss most?

Summary of Inverurie Market Place Pupil Responses
Q1. Safer routes to school, no major crossings, bigger more appropriate building, larger outdoor area for play and learning, community facilities, modern layout to suit modern teaching styles, additional parking and drop off areas, new equipment, greater opportunities for range of sports.
Q2. Disruption if the move is during a school year, loss of small community feel, busy roads having to be crossed on the way to school, congestion of access roads to school through residential area, delays meaning that children currently at the school will not see the new one before leaving for the academy, recruitment of enough teaching staff for larger school, will the capacity of the new school cope with an increasing roll.
Q3. School crossings should be in place before the move, visit to the school for children and parents before the move, keeping everyone informed and updated, involving the children in planning the move, linking parent council with Osprey Village Residents Association, keep the old building open for children who live on this side of the town, plan a swimming pool at the new school for all schools to visit and use.
Q4. New things to play with, seeing where the toilets are, bigger playground, excited as it's next to my house, seeing my new classroom, making new friends, more computer.
Q5. Seeing the trains, being near to the shops, the ramp up to my classroom, the playground and garden, my classroom, being called Market Place.

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeenshire Council to replace Inverurie Market Place School with a new school to be located at Uryside.

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 replace Inverurie Market Place School. 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 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.

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

- attendance at the public meeting held on 24 June 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 Inverurie Market Place School 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 Aberdeenshire Council formally consulted stakeholders between 1 June and 4 September 2015. A public meeting was held at Inverurie Market Place School on 24 June 2015 and was attended by approximately 50 members of the public. Copies of the consultation document were sent to all parents of children attending Inverurie Market Place School and parents of pre-school children who would be zoned to attend the school. Separate meetings were held with staff and pupils. Three written responses to the consultation were received. They all opposed the proposal. Questions raised by consultees in written responses and at the public meeting included the need for safe walking routes to the proposed new school; arrangements for children with additional support needs, including those with hearing impairment; the timescale for commencing building works; and whether the roll capacity of the new school would be sufficient in relation to new housing development in the area.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 Aberdeenshire Council's proposal to replace Inverurie Market Place School with a new school to be built at Uryside has the potential to be of clear educational benefit. Owing to new housing development, the roll of Inverurie Market Place School is forecast to rise beyond the current building's capacity of 279 pupils to 421 pupils by August 2018. Options for extending the existing building are limited, resulting in considerable pressure on use of existing space. Aberdeenshire Council therefore proposes to discontinue educational provision at Inverurie Market Place School in 2016/17 on completion of a new school at Uryside.

3.2 The proposed new building will have the potential to provide much improved accommodation and facilities and a higher quality learning environment. The existing accommodation at Inverurie Market Place School includes temporary classroom units and the original Victorian building. Parts of the building, including the dining and gym areas, are difficult to manage well due to the insufficient space and ageing nature of the facilities. The council proposes that the new school will include enhanced sports, physical education and outdoor learning space, increased dining area capacity, more and better space for children's learning and improved digital technology. The proposed building of a new school has the potential to support the delivery of a modern curriculum and accommodate the forecast increases in the school roll.

3.3 In considering the educational benefits of the proposal, HM Inspectors met with representative groups of children, parents and staff at Inverurie Market Place School. Almost all children, parents and staff who spoke with HM Inspectors supported the proposal but had a number of concerns about the details. They

recognised the unsuitable nature of the existing school building and welcomed the potential move to a new building fit for purpose.

3.4 Stakeholders were concerned about the timescale for building the new school. Aberdeenshire Council's proposal is to discontinue education provision at Inverurie Market Place during the 2016/17 school session. However, no specific date has yet been given for the commencement of building work. Stakeholders were concerned about the delays in securing the site and commencing building works and the lack of specific information on progress. They want to know the details of alternative plans, should the timescale of 2016/17 prove unachievable. They were also concerned that moving during the school year could be a disruptive experience for children and staff. If Aberdeenshire Council decides to implement its proposal it will need to provide clear information to reassure children, staff and parents on timescales and on contingency plans should the new building not be completed by 2016/17.

3.5 Stakeholders who attended the public meeting and those who spoke to HM Inspectors raised concerns about transport and safe walking routes to the proposed new school. If Aberdeenshire Council decides to implement its proposal it will need to produce a detailed travel plan including identifying safe walking routes to school. The council will need to reassure parents that all reasonable steps will be taken to mitigate risks associated with road crossings and other hazards.

3.6 Concerns on the impact of the proposal on children with additional support needs were raised by parents at the public meeting, in written responses and in discussion with HM Inspectors. This included the concern that children with hearing impairment benefited from the relatively small classroom size at Inverurie Market Place School and would be disadvantaged if they moved to a larger building with potential for more noise. Overall, the council's proposal has the potential to improve provision for children with additional support needs including through providing full access for those with mobility problems and through better, more modern facilities. If it decides to implement its proposal, Aberdeenshire Council will need to reassure parents through providing specific and detailed information on how its proposal will result in improved provision for children with additional support needs, including those with hearing impairment.

3.7 The council's proposal document does not provide specific details on design and layout. Stakeholders wanted to receive more detailed and specific information and to be involved in further discussion so that the views of the school community can be taken into account and influence decisions where possible. If Aberdeenshire Council decides to implement its proposal it will need to provide more specific details on building design and outline how the school community will be engaged in the process of implementation.

4. Summary

4.1 Aberdeenshire Council's proposal to build a replacement Inverurie Market Place School by 2016/17 has the potential to be of significant educational benefit. The existing school building is not capable of accommodating increases in the school roll and its facilities are out of date. The proposed new school has the potential to provide more space and better, modern, purpose-built facilities fit for

purpose. As a result, the proposal has the potential to offer children an improved experience of learning, consistent with the aims of Curriculum for Excellence.

4.2 During the consultation, consultees expressed concern on the timescale for implementing the proposal and the contingency plans should the implementation be delayed. The council will need to clarify its timescale and plans if taking forward its proposal.

4.3 During the consultation stakeholders raised questions concerning road safety, specific details of building design and facilities for children with additional support needs. In taking forward its proposal, the council will need to ensure safe routes to the new school. It will also need to work with stakeholders on the details of plans in order to achieve the potential educational benefits outlined in the proposal.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
September 2015**