

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: REPORT BACK ON THE CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED SITE FOR NEW CARRONGRANGE SCHOOL
Meeting: EDUCATION EXECUTIVE
Date: 16 December 2013
Author: ACTING DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

1. BACKGROUND/PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 At the Education Executive meeting on 27 August 2013 members agreed that a formal statutory consultation take place on the proposal to relocate Carrongrange School to one of two sites:
- (i) Land alongside Moray Primary School in Grangemouth
 - (ii) Weedingshall in Polmont.
- 1.2 The consultation took place between 28 August and 11 October 2013 in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as is required for any proposal to relocate a school.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to:
- provide the Education Executive with details of the responses received during the consultation, and
 - recommend a preferred location for the new school.

2. DETAIL OF THE CONSULTATION

2.1 List of Statutory Consultees

Those consulted were:

- (i) Parents of all pupils at Carrongrange School and of all pupils attending Primary Additional Support Needs (ASN) provision.
- (ii) Pupils at Carrongrange School.
- (iii) Staff at Carrongrange School.
- (iv) The parent councils at Carrongrange School, Kinnaird Primary School, Maddiston Primary school, Moray Primary School and Windsor Park School.
- (v) All active community councils in the Falkirk Council area.
- (vi) All elected members.
- (vii) Trade unions.
- (viii) Other local authorities with pupils at Carrongrange School.

2.2 Public Meetings Held

There were two public meetings held both at Moray Primary School and Carrongrange School. In addition a meeting was also held with Carrongrange School staff during the consultation period.

2.3 Site Visits Arranged

There was also an opportunity for parents and staff to visit both sites and a site visit was also arranged for the Carrongrange School Student Council who themselves reported back to the rest of the pupils at an all school assembly.

2.4 Education Scotland Involvement

At the end of the consultation period, all responses and minutes of the public meetings were sent to Education Scotland who have a duty under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, to scrutinise the consultation process and present a report on the educational aspects of any proposal. They reported back to Education Services on 5 November 2013.

2.5 Consultation Report

The Consultation Report was published on 11 November 2013 and is attached as Appendix 1. It contains all written responses to the consultation, meeting minutes and the report from Education Scotland, as well as Education Services response to the main issues raised in the written responses that we received.

3. **SUMMARY OF THE CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

3.1 The detailed responses can be read in the Consultation Report in Appendix 1.

3.2 Responses from Individuals

There were 77 individual responses received, mainly from parents (52% of responses) and school staff (43% of responses). These responses are detailed in the table below:

	Weedingshall		Moray		Neither or None specified		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Parents	16	40%	21	53%	3	7%	40	52%
Staff	18	55%	8	24%	7	21%	33	43%
Others	1	25%	0	0%	3	75%	4	5%
All individual responses	35	45%	29	38%	13	17%	77	100%

There was no overall or significant majority in favour of either location, though 83% of respondents did express a preference.

The majority of parents prefer the site next to Moray Primary School, but the majority of Carrongrange School staff prefer Weedingshall as a site for the new school.

3.3 Responses from Groups and Organisations

There were 5 responses from groups and organisations as follows:

- The Carrongrange Parent Council favoured the Weedingshall location by a small majority of 5 to 4.
- Carrongrange School staff responded collectively to request that the new school should build on the current strengths of Carrongrange, whichever location is chosen, with suggestions for what works well and what could work better.
- GMB (Falkirk Branch) responded on behalf of their members working at Carrongrange School seeking clarification on re-deployment opportunities following a relocation.

- EIS (Falkirk Branch) responded to say that they did not agree with the proposal to relocate Carrongrange School.
- West Lothian Council expressed no preference for either location.

3.4 Response from Pupils

Pupils responded collectively and it was not possible to ascertain a majority preference for one location. There were strong views expressed in favour of both site, however, and these can be read in detail in the consultation report.

3.5 Support for the Location Beside Moray Primary School

The main advantages coming out of the individual responses in favour of this location were:

- It has nearby access to a good range of community facilities and local schools.
- There are very good public transport links.
- The flat site and surrounding streets would be very accessible for less mobile pupils.
- The pedestrian access to the surrounding area is generally safe.
- The level site will ensure that the Council can provide maximum value for money.
- The location is ideal for forging links with the nearby High School and the community.
- It is in a central location in the heart of Grangemouth.

3.6 Support for the Weedingshall Location

The main advantages coming out of the individual responses in favour of this location were:

- It is a very central location.
- It is a quiet, rural setting in beautiful surroundings.
- It is a large site with room for growth.
- It has great potential for outdoor learning.
- The school would have its own identity in this location.

3.7 Main Issues Raised

The main issues raised, together with the response from Education Services can be read in detail in Section 5 of the Consultation Report. In summary these concerns were:

a) Moray Primary School:

- Increased traffic congestion.
- Concerns over whether the site is large enough.
- Location next to a primary school.
- It is in the “blast zone”.
- Fly infestation issues in the locality.

b) Weedingshall:

- It is a hilly site that would disadvantage less mobile pupils.
- Pedestrian access to nearby community facilities.
- Shared access road with and proximity to cemetery.
- Possible access problems in severe winter weather.
- Poor public transport links.

- Proximity to the new distillery.
- Isolated location.
- Demolition of historic building.

c) Other General Concerns:

- Neither site is as close to a secondary school as the current school.
- Some staff may be disadvantaged by a relocation to a different area (GMB).

3.8 Report by Education Scotland

The Education Scotland Report can be read in full in the Consultation Report. Their summary conclusions, taken directly from the report, are as follows:

- Falkirk Council has set out the case for relocating Carrongrange School and given concise and helpful information on the two preferred sites to allow consultees to inform them on the final site decision.
- They have explained the context and reasoning for their proposal well.
- They have made a strong case for the building and facilities that will be built on the chosen site.
- However, the proposal provides less detail on the proposed sites. The proposal is focused on site selection. Key information to inform such a decision has not yet been provided. (This relates to not having a design for schools at each site.)
- Respondents have not given either site a significant majority of support.
- Falkirk Council need to provide information on how all key stakeholders will be involved in the design and construction stages, whichever site is selected.
- The importance of developing young people's life skills in settings such as Carrongrange School is crucial and, in taking forward the proposal, Falkirk Council needs to provide more information on how it plans to support the development of links with whichever local community and high school is selected and provide reassurance to young people that they can move about their new local area safely and independently.

3.9 Response to the Report by Education Scotland

A number of concerns were raised in their discussions with consultees and reflected in the summary conclusions. The response of Education Services to these issues are as follows:

- (i) The lack of any detailed representation or layout of the proposed new school in either setting was reported as a concern for the parents that Education Scotland spoke to.

Response:

It is the view of Education Services, that this was a consultation on the proposal to relocate the school and the relative merits of each proposed location, and there was sufficient information and opportunity provided to come to a view on this. The time and expense required to provide indicative designs for a school in either location would not have been justified at this stage and would have moved the discussion, too early, to one focussed on design, which is the next stage of the process.

- (ii) Falkirk Council will need to provide information on how all stakeholders will be involved in the design and build stages, whichever site is selected.

Response:

Once a location is selected, the design process will begin in earnest and it is planned that all stakeholders will be consulted at key points along the way:

- The Parent Council have been closely involved in the site selection process and this engagement will continue. They will be invited to comment on the design options as they develop.
- Carrongrange School staff will have the opportunity to input all of the way through the design stage and a representative staff group has already been set up to help in this process.
- The local community around the new school will be consulted once a design is agreed. Comments will be invited prior to submitting a detailed planning application to ensure that community/neighbour concerns can be addressed, where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

- (iii) Falkirk Council needs to provide more information on how it plans to develop community and high school links, and reassurance that they can move about their new local area safely and independently.

Response:

Education Services will work closely with the Headteacher to prepare a detailed transition plan that will deal with all of these matters.

4. CONCLUSION FROM CONSULTATION

4.1 Overall

The consultation did not provide a strong mandate in favour of either location. There is however a small majority of parents in favour of the site adjacent to Moray Primary School.

4.2 Weedingshall Site

Whilst the Weedingshall location would provide a range of opportunities for outdoor learning, and a quiet, peaceful location for the school, the disadvantages of this location, identified by those that responded to the consultation, could not be overcome as easily as those identified for the Moray site. The disadvantages/limitations are:

- (i) The poor pedestrian access to nearby community facilities.
- (ii) Topography of site and surrounding areas will present difficulties for less mobile pupils, particularly those that use wheelchairs.
- (iii) Safe access to public transport.
- (iv) It is further from the nearest high school with no option to walk.
- (v) Proximity with cemetery and shared access drive.

NOTE: In addition to these, Members should note that very recently Historic Scotland have advised Education Services that they are currently assessing Weedingshall itself as a potential listed building. If agreed, this will place an additional challenge as the planned demolition of the existing property could be delayed, by factors outwith our immediate control.

4.3 Moray Primary School Site

The main issues arising concerning the Moray Primary School site location can be more easily addressed:

- (i) The concerns that it is adjacent to a primary school can be addressed at the design stage to ensure that the school is quite discrete within its own grounds, and once open, strong links can be forged with Grangemouth High School to ensure a clear secondary identity for the new Carrongrange School.
- (ii) The concerns over possible traffic congestion can be dealt with at the design and planning stage in consultation with Roads and Transport Planning officers. Similar concerns have been successfully resolved with other new school developments in built up areas close to existing schools (eg St Mungo's High school).
- (iii) Education Services have no concerns that this site is too small.
- (iv) It is expected that the fly infestation problem in the locality will be resolved well in advance of the new school opening.
- (v) There remains a requirement at the planning stage to consult the Health & Safety Executive due to this site being in the "Outer Consultation Zone". Early engagement with HSE during the design process will identify any necessary mitigation to reduce the risk that a planning application is referred to Scottish Ministers.

4.4 Site Selection Team View

The Site Selection Team recently met to review the findings of the consultation and unanimously agreed that this gave no clear steer as to the preferred location for the new school.

Their view was that Education Services should progress their preference for the new school location.

5. **EDUCATION SERVICES VISION FOR THE NEW SCHOOL**

- 5.1 The new Carrongrange School will create an inclusive learning environment where young people can be 'all they can be'. The school's mission is to provide a creative learning environment which is flexible and nurturing, supportive yet challenging, where all young people are encouraged to develop skills for life and reach their full potential. The young people need to be:

- Safe
- Healthy
- Active
- Nurtured
- Achieving
- Respected and responsible
- Included

- 5.1 To achieve this aim, it is necessary to remove barriers to participation and learning for individuals and groups. The new Carrongrange School must be part of a learning campus which enables partnership working and day to day engagement in community life. It needs to be:

- highly visible to lessen negative perceptions
- embedded in the local community

- close to local facilities and schools
- in a location which offers the school, staff and pupils an ideal opportunity to develop strong links with the local schools, community and local businesses.

6. EDUCATION SERVICES PREFERRED LOCATION

- 6.1 The location next to Moray Primary School is Education Services preferred site for the following reasons:
- It is the location favoured by a majority of parents that responded to the consultation.
 - It is in the heart of a vibrant community with easy pedestrian access to a range of facilities that the school could access.
 - It is close to Grangemouth High School.
 - It is easily accessible by public transport.
 - The site and surrounding area are level, providing easy access for pupils with physical disabilities.
- 6.2 Education Services feel that the Weedingshall site presents a significantly greater number of on-site challenges, than the site at Moray Primary School. This includes assessing the very recent consideration by Historic Scotland of possible listed building status being applied and the proximity to the cemetery and on-site access constraints, the latter two being raised during the consultation.
- 6.3 In view of the above and of the vision outlined in Section 5, Education Services feel that the site at Moray Primary School offers the better scope to meet more of the visionary outcomes that should be aspirationally sought to achieve.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Education Executive are asked to:
- (i) note the content and responses contained within the Consultation Report; and
 - (ii) endorse Education Services' view that the new Carrongrange School is located on the site adjacent to Moray Primary School.

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Director of Education

Date: 9 December 2013

Contact Officer: Richard Teed, ext 6621

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Education Executive Report ("Consultation on Proposed Site For New Carrongrange School" 28 May 2013)