

FALKIRK COUNCIL

**Subject: STRATEGIC REVIEW OF SECONDARY SCHOOL CAPACITY:
OPTIONS FOR RESOLVING CAPACITY PRESSURES AT LARBERT
HIGH SCHOOL**
Meeting: EDUCATION COMMITTEE
Date: 23 March 2010
Author: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Following the first Strategic Review of Secondary School Capacity paper presented to the Education Committee on 25 August 2009, it was agreed that a formal consultation take place during the autumn period on a range of rezoning proposals intended to reduce intake into Larbert and Braes High Schools, whilst making use of available capacity in other nearby secondary schools.
- 1.2 Members will recall that following the report on this consultation process, the Education Committee on 26 January 2010 (and subsequently the Policy and Resources Committee on 9 February 2010) approved the rezoning of the Skinflats (Bothkennar Primary School) area from Larbert High School to Grangemouth High School. Ministerial consent has been applied for and it is planned that this rezoning will take effect from August 2011.
- 1.3 Members will also recall that it was also agreed that the proposal to rezone the Airth area from Larbert High School to Grangemouth High School would be brought back to this Committee for further consideration together with details of the options available for extending the capacity at Larbert High School.

2. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 2.1 This report:
- Appraises the proposal to rezone Airth Primary School catchment area from Larbert High School to Grangemouth High School against other rezoning possibilities available.
 - Considers the options for increasing the capacity of Larbert High School to meet future demand.

3. CAPACITY PRESSURES AT LARBERT HIGH SCHOOL

- 3.1 Larbert High School is currently experiencing very high occupancy levels and this is expected to continue for the next 7 years, after which, the rising school roll is expected to exceed the capacity of the school.
- 3.2 The rezoning of the Bothkennar Primary School catchment area to Grangemouth High School will eventually lead to a reduction of about 15 pupils from the Larbert High School roll.

- 3.3 The following table shows the 10 year roll projection for Larbert High School. This takes account of the rezoning in the Skinflats area.

| TABLE 1: Larbert High School Projection (including the rezoning of the Skinflats area) | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Year | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 |
| Total | 1733 | 1733 | 1754 | 1734 | 1691 | 1706 | 1726 | 1807 | 1834 | 1961 |
| Capacity | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 |
| Occupancy* | 95% | 95% | 96% | 95% | 92% | 93% | 94% | 99% | 100% | 107% |

*Members should note that it is the view of Education Services that the optimum occupancy level for a secondary school is between 80-90%.

- 3.4 The projection can be considered fairly reliable as the majority of these children are already in our nursery and primary schools.

3.5 Impact of Migration/Population Movement and House Building

What is more difficult to predict accurately is the impact of additional children into the area's new housing developments. The current projection shown in Table 1 above is based on the following build out rates for agreed new housing developments. There is, however, a degree of uncertainty in the house building industry at present which makes it more difficult to predict the phasing of sites. It should be noted that there is a risk that these estimated rates vary resulting in Larbert High School reaching or exceeding its capacity sooner or later than predicted.

| TABLE 2: New housing proposals in the Larbert High School Catchment area with estimated phasing | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 |
| Airth | 0 | 0 | 20 | 32 | 70 | 79 | 81 | 30 | 20 | 0 |
| Carron | 0 | 11 | 31 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Kinnaird | 24 | 40 | 40 | 42 | 50 | 126 | 110 | 108 | 80 | 80 |
| Larbert Village | 49 | 12 | 20 | 12 | 19 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Stenhousemuir | 0 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| All Areas | 73 | 87 | 135 | 127 | 139 | 219 | 196 | 138 | 100 | 80 |

- 3.6 As shown in the above projections there is a rising roll forecast over the next 10 years. As the Bellsdyke/Hill of Kinnaird housing development will be continuing beyond 10 years, it will continue to produce a high number of new houses. The impact of this will mean that the Larbert High School roll will rise further than projected in Table 1 above, and can probably be expected to settle above 2,000 pupils, unless alternative corrective action can be taken to address this.

4. **OPTIONS FOR RESOLVING CAPACITY PRESSURES AT LARBERT HIGH SCHOOL**

- 4.1 There are 3 options for resolving Larbert High School's capacity pressures longer term:

- Option 1: Reduce the intake through rezoning existing catchment areas
- Option 2: Extend capacity at Larbert High School
- Option 3: Relocate Carrongrange School to allow Larbert High School to expand into it.

4.2 **Option 1: Reduce Intake Through A Rezoning**

There are no rezoning options that would not meet with significant opposition from the communities affected. The options that have been considered are described below.

(It should be noted that the effect of parental choice is difficult to predict and could significantly affect the roll projection scenarios outlined.)

(a) **Rezone Airth to Grangemouth High School**

This option was fully explored during the recent consultation. Grangemouth High School has sufficient capacity to absorb this rezoning and it is projected to have the following effect on school roll at Larbert High School:

| TABLE 3: Larbert High School Projection (Without Airth from August 2011) | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Class | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 |
| Total | 1733 | 1706 | 1702 | 1652 | 1571 | 1552 | 1544 | 1605 | 1622 | 1742 |
| Capacity | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 |
| Occupancy | 95% | 93% | 93% | 90% | 86% | 85% | 84% | 88% | 89% | 95% |

There would be a reduction of about 175 pupils from existing housing in the Airth Primary School catchment area in addition to about 45 pupils projected to move into new housing agreed for the area. This would reduce the roll by about 220 longer term.

There is still, however, a risk of high occupancies in the long term as Table 3 above shows, but it would be a peak that would be relatively easy to manage.

(b) **Rezone Airth to Graeme High School**

This option would have the same effect on the Larbert High School roll longer term as shown in option (a) above. It would also address some of the main parental concerns raised at the consultation on the rezoning to Grangemouth High School.

The concerns that it would help alleviate in some way are:

- **Public Transport** - For pupils that need to use public transport for a variety of reasons such as participating in after school activities, or they have missed the school bus, there was a real concern that travelling to and from Grangemouth High School would require two buses and a much longer journey. Graeme High School, on the other hand, would only require one journey and is closer to the bus station than Larbert High School is to the nearest bus stop on the Airth bus route.
- **Educational Reasons** - There was a concern that relative attainment levels at Grangemouth High School are lower than Larbert High School and there was a smaller available curriculum at Grangemouth High School due to its size. These factors are less likely to be a cause for concern with Graeme High School.

- Community Links - Responses to the recent consultation made it clear that the Airth community does not have a strong connection with the Grangemouth area in the same way that it does with Larbert and Stenhousemuir. Graeme High School, however, is situated in Falkirk, the area's main town which has strong links with all areas, so this is less likely to be a concern.

The effect that this rezoning would have on Graeme High School is shown below. This projection also assumes a rezoning of the Whitecross area from Braes High School to Graeme High as currently proposed in the forthcoming consultation.

TABLE 4: Graeme High School Projection (With Airth and Whitecross areas from August 2011):

| Class | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 |
|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Total | 1052 | 1058 | 1035 | 1046 | 1093 | 1137 | 1201 | 1268 | 1333 | 1410 |
| Capacity | 1459 | 1459 | 1459 | 1459 | 1459 | 1459 | 1459 | 1459 | 1459 | 1459 |
| Occupancy | 72% | 73% | 71% | 72% | 75% | 78% | 82% | 87% | 91% | 97% |

The projection above shows that the rezoning of Airth to Graeme High School can be accommodated but will create a risk of high occupancies longer term. The continued planned growth in the Whitecross area during that period, will possibly see the school exceed available capacity. This means that some investment would be required longer term at Graeme High School to extend capacity, but we expect that it will not be needed for at least 10 years.

(c) Rezone Carronshore to Grangemouth High School

This option was suggested at the recent consultation as a possible alternative to the Airth rezoning that could have a greater impact on reducing the roll at Larbert High School longer term. This option was considered in an earlier options appraisal but it was not put forward as a viable proposal for the following reasons:

- Most of the pupils living in this area can currently walk to Larbert High School and would have to be bussed to Grangemouth High School if rezoned.
- More families would be affected by a rezoning than was considered necessary to resolve the problem.

Based on current projections, the rezoning of Carronshore can be expected to have the following impact on the Larbert and Grangemouth High School rolls:

TABLE 5: Larbert High School Projection (Without Carronshore from August 2011)

| Class | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 |
|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Total | 1733 | 1686 | 1651 | 1574 | 1492 | 1471 | 1471 | 1550 | 1585 | 1711 |
| Capacity | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 |
| Occupancy | 95% | 92% | 90% | 86% | 81% | 80% | 80% | 85% | 86% | 93% |

TABLE 6: Grangemouth High School Projection (With Carronshore from August 2011)

| Class | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 |
|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Total | 790 | 828 | 866 | 906 | 927 | 949 | 987 | 990 | 987 | 1002 |
| Capacity | 1164 | 1164 | 1164 | 1164 | 1164 | 1164 | 1164 | 1164 | 1164 | 1164 |
| Occupancy | 68% | 71% | 74% | 78% | 80% | 82% | 85% | 85% | 85% | 86% |

(d) 'Pre-zone' the Planned New Housing Development at Bellsdyke/Hill of Kinnaird away from Larbert High School

There is planning permission for about 1,500 more new houses in the Bellsdyke/Hill of Kinnaird area. This is the continuation of a 1,700 house development in North Larbert which is well underway.

This area is currently zoned to Kinnaird Primary School which has been constructed using developer contributions. This school also serves the Inches development of about 500 houses and some other existing housing on the Bellsdyke Road and in the surrounding rural area.

It would not be practical to 'pre-zone' a part of the Kinnaird Primary School catchment where houses have not yet been built as this will lead to a situation where children attending Kinnaird Primary School will transfer to different secondary schools. For this reason, any rezoning considered for this area should be for the whole Kinnaird Primary School catchment (including the Inches), and not part of it.

(e) Rezone Kinnaird Primary School Catchment Area From Larbert High School to Grangemouth High School

A rezoning proposal for the area defined by the Kinnaird Primary School would be guaranteed to resolve capacity pressures longer term, but, as with the Carronshore option, it would mean that secondary pupils who can currently walk to school would need to be bussed to another area with subsequent financial implications.

Because of the scale of such a rezoning, with about 350-400 pupils affected longer term, there is the problem that no other school within a reasonable distance has sufficient available capacity longer term to absorb that number of pupils.

The effect of rezoning Kinnaird Primary catchment area to Grangemouth High School is projected as follows:

TABLE 7: Larbert High School Projection (*Without* Kinnaird Primary catchment from August 2011)

| Class | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 |
|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Total | 1733 | 1704 | 1669 | 1622 | 1534 | 1503 | 1482 | 1514 | 1533 | 1641 |
| Capacity | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 | 1833 |
| Occupancy | 95% | 93% | 91% | 88% | 84% | 82% | 81% | 83% | 84% | 90% |

TABLE 8: G'mouth High School Projection (*With* Kinnaird Primary catchment from August 2011)

| Class | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 |
|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Total | 794 | 825 | 865 | 889 | 926 | 976 | 1039 | 1071 | 1085 | 1116 |
| Capacity | 1164 | 1164 | 1164 | 1164 | 1164 | 1164 | 1164 | 1164 | 1164 | 1164 |
| Occupancy | 68% | 71% | 74% | 76% | 80% | 84% | 89% | 92% | 93% | 96% |

As highlighted above, some investment would be needed in terms of additional capacity at Grangemouth High School longer term to accommodate this rezoning. All of the new housing agreed for this area has planning permission and no planning gain has been secured to cover this cost.

Denny High School was not considered as a viable rezoning destination for this area as it is expected to reach and exceed capacity due to large scale new housing developments planned for the Denny/Bonnybridge area. Planning gain is being collected to cover the associated costs of an extension, and there is inbuilt flexibility to cater for this growth. There will be no available long term capacity to absorb a rezoning from the Larbert area.

Graeme High School could not absorb this rezoning along with the proposed Whitecross rezoning without an extension of at least 200 additional spaces, so has not been considered because of the resource implications.

(f) Rezone another Area in the Larbert Cluster

The catchment areas for Carron, Stenhousemuir, Larbert Village and Ladeside Primary Schools have not been considered as viable for rezoning due to their proximity to Larbert High School. These areas are all within easy walking distance of Larbert High School and can be considered the traditional core of the Larbert High School catchment area. They have therefore not been included in this options appraisal.

These catchments mainly cover the areas bounded to the south by the River Carron, to the west by the A9 (Stirling Road), to the north by the Bellsdyke Road and to the west by the New Carron Road.

4.3 **Option 2: Increasing Capacity for Larbert High School**

This has so far been dismissed as an option in favour of rezoning proposals for the following reasons:

- It would be expensive and no capital or revenue funds are currently available for this. We only have £40k of planning gain monies available.
- It would increase the running costs for the school estate.
- The revenue and capital costs associated with extending a PFI school would be relatively high.
- Larbert High is already a large school.
- There is some available capacity at other nearby secondary schools that could accommodate a rezoning.

4.3.1 Estimated Costs of Extending Larbert High School

To accommodate future growth the school's current capacity of 1833 would need to be extended to approximately 2100 pupils, to provide a further 270 pupil places. The current capacity is 1833 pupils. The costs associated with this can be estimated to be in the range of £4.5 to £6.5 million based on a number of available indices.

4.3.2 The following table summarises the estimated capital cost of extending Larbert High School using these available indices and is based on adding 270 places to the current capacity:

| Source of Estimate | Build Cost Per Pupil | Estimated Build Costs |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Scottish Futures Trust | £22,000-24,000 | £5.9 to £6.5 million |
| NPDO Build Costs (Falkirk Council) | £19,500 | £5.3 million |
| Department for Children Schools and Families (England & Wales)* | £16,800 | £4.5 million |

*This multiplier is used to inform Basic Needs Funding and is regionally adjusted. The figure quoted is from 2008/9 and is adjusted for the North of England.

In addition to the build costs, the additional facilities management costs charged by Class 98 would also require to be considered. Given the financial and legal complexities involved with the Class 98 contract, these additional charges could place a significant financial burden on the council. Without a detailed appraisal it is difficult to calculate with any degree of certainty the extent of these charges. Although an estimate was requested from Class 98, they indicated that they would require a feasibility study before they could commit to providing one. This exercise could cost the council up to £50,000, so therefore at this stage, the feasibility study has not been requested.

4.4 **Option 3: Relocate Carrongrange School**

If Carrongrange School was relocated, the current facility would provide Larbert High School with approximately 500 additional spaces. This would comfortably meet future demand for spaces, and would provide Larbert High School with a distinctly separate school facility which would provide options for sub-division within the school, which may be necessary to manage such a large number of pupils.

Without undertaking a full options appraisal for relocating Carrongrange School it would be difficult to estimate likely costs. It would certainly be more expensive than simply extending Larbert High School, both in terms of capital and revenue costs. There are no available cost indices for estimating the construction of a special school, however we estimate the actual cost to be in the range £7 to £10 million.

4.5 **Short Term Options for Addressing Capacity Pressures at Larbert High School**

In recent years Larbert High School has largely managed the very high occupancies through the internal conversion of ancillary and non-teaching spaces to classrooms. This has so far included the conversion of 4 departmental staff bases to teaching classrooms and enlargement of the fitness suite. There has also been the opportunity to share some of the rooms in Carrongrange, and so far this has mainly been the PE facilities.

Further options that will ease timetabling pressures are under consideration as follows:

- Shared use of available capacity in upstairs classrooms at Carrongrange School for smaller S5 and S6 classes at Larbert High School.
- Expansion of PE changing rooms which currently experience overcrowding.
- Expansion of the main dining room to reduce congestion at lunchtimes.
- Full conversion of a science classroom to a laboratory.

There is £40k planning gain available from recent new housing developments that should facilitate the required works.

Another short term option that could be considered is the use of temporary modular classrooms. These would cost approximately £100k per classroom at current prices. There are, however, no funds currently available to meet these costs.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The new housing development in the North Larbert area is expected to continue for at least the next 15 years and this will put increasing pressure on the schools capacity. Whilst there appears to be a period of up to 7 years to tackle this problem, the school may reach capacity sooner than this depending on the rate of new housing development. Members should also consider that a rezoning can take 7 years to take full effect and that major construction projects commonly take about 3 years when lead in times are taken into account.

5.2 Rezoning a Part of the Existing Larbert High School Catchment Area

Reducing intake at the school through a rezoning is also an option, but none of the viable options outlined in this report would be acceptable to the communities affected. All options would mean that either the risk to Larbert High School's capacity remains to some degree, or that this risk is transferred to another school. Rezoning Airth to Grangemouth High School is the option with the least financial risk and the lowest risk to the future capacity of Larbert High School.

5.3 Larbert High School Expansion

Extending Larbert High School to accommodate the growing roll could be achieved by extending the school or by relocating Carrongrange School to allow Larbert High School to move into this facility. Neither is currently an affordable option, however, short term measures could delay the need for an extension for several years, at which point the financial situation could be reviewed. Further analysis could be carried out during this period to ensure that the costs and options for expansion are fully understood.

6. PROPOSED WAY FORWARD

- 6.1 Whilst the option to rezone Airth to Grangemouth High School, as previously proposed, would provide best value for the council, it is recognised that there is significant opposition to this from those that would be affected.

- 6.2 It is therefore proposed that:

- (i) Further use is made of available classroom capacity in Carrongrange School to ease timetabling pressures in the short term.
- (ii) A detailed feasibility study is carried out by Class 98 to:
 - identify and estimate the cost of further temporary measures to increase capacity in the short term, eg temporary modular classrooms and internal conversions
 - specify and provide costs for a permanent extension to Larbert High School to meet the anticipated long term increase in the demand for spaces.
- (iii) The proposal to rezone Airth to Grangemouth High School is placed on hold in the meantime pending the outcome of the feasibility study.

- 6.3 It is further proposed that the outcome of this feasibility study is reported back with recommendations to the Education Committee at a future date.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Education Committee is asked to note the options appraisal presented in this report and agree that:

- (i) further use is made by Larbert High School of classrooms in Carrongrange School;
- (ii) Class 98 is instructed to carry out a feasibility study as outlined in this report;
- (iii) the previous proposal to rezone the Airth Primary School catchment area to Grangemouth High School is placed on hold pending the outcome of the feasibility study; and
- (iv) a report detailing the outcomes of the feasibility study is brought back to Education Committee at a later date.

- 7.2 Education Committee is also asked to agree that this report is referred to Policy and Resources Committee to approve the recommendations made in 7.1 above.

.....
Director of Education

Date: 15 March 2010

Contact Officer: Richard Teed, ext 6621

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL