



CONSULTATION REPORT REGARDING SECONDARY CATCHMENT ANOMALY REZONING AT LUMPHANAN

2023

**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. Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been prepared following a statutory consultation on the proposal to rezone Aboyne Academy catchment area to include the area in the Lumphanan School catchment area currently zoned to Alford Academy.
- 1.2 This report has been prepared in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. The objective of the report is to:
- Provide a record of the total number and a summary of written and oral responses received during the statutory consultation period;
 - Provide a statement of the Council's response to those written and oral representations;
 - Provide the full text of the Education Scotland report and statement of the Council's response to this report;
 - Provide a statement on how the Council reviewed the above proposal following the representations received during the consultation period;
 - Provide details of any omission from, or inaccuracy in, the proposal document and state how the Council acted on it;
 - Provide officers conclusions and recommendation.

2. The Proposal and Consultation Process

- 2.1 The requirement for consulting on a relevant proposal relating to schools is set out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 2.2 At its meeting on 31 August 2023, Education and Children's Services Committee authorised the launch of a statutory consultation regarding the secondary catchment anomaly rezoning at Lumphanan.
- 2.3 The Proposal included as Appendix A on which the consultation took place was:
- To rezone Aboyne Academy catchment area to include the area in the Lumphanan School catchment area currently zoned to Alford Academy.**
- 2.4 The proposal applies to all secondary aged pupils residing within the anomaly area of Lumphanan School catchment area from August 2024. There will be no requirement for existing secondary school pupils to move schools if their catchment area changes.
- 2.5 The proposal document made clear to relevant consultees that the consultation period would run from 5 September 2023 until 3 November 2023. This covered the required minimum of 30 days school term time.
- 2.6 On 5 September 2023 copies of the proposal document were distributed to;

- Parent Councils of Aboyne Academy, Alford Academy and Lumphanan School
 - Parent/Carers of pupils attending Aboyne Academy, Alford Academy and zoned to Lumphanan School.
 - Pupils and Staff at Aboyne Academy, Alford Academy, Lumphanan School
 - Trade union representatives of staff at Aboyne Academy, Alford Academy and Lumphanan School
 - Lumphanan, Torphins, Donside and Cromar Community Councils
 - Residents living within the anomaly area of the Lumphanan School catchment area
 - Education Scotland
- 2.7 The majority of distribution was through email however the residents of the area anomaly were sent paper copies of the proposal document and accompanying letter by post.
- 2.8 Lumphanan School, Aboyne Academy, Alford Academy as well as Aberdeenshire Council Headquarters, Woodhill House were sent copies of the proposal document to be readily available for members of the public. Large print copies of the proposal maps were supplied to the Schools.
- 2.9 The proposal document was published on the Council website: <http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/education-consultations/> and a copy of the document was also available on request from Aberdeenshire Council Learning Estates Team.
- 2.10 An advertising poster was sent to Lumphanan School, Aboyne Academy, Alford Academy, Aboyne Library and Alford Library giving information on the proposal, public meeting details, link to the online survey and contact details of the Learning Estates Team.
- 2.11 An online survey was available through Engage Aberdeenshire during the consultation period to gather views and responses regarding the rezoning proposal.
- 2.12 The proposal was advertised on Aberdeenshire Council's social media pages giving an overview of the consultation and link to the online survey.
- 2.13 An overview of the consultation and public meeting details were advertised in the Deeside and Donside Piper Newspaper on 8 November 2023.

3. Educational Benefits Statement

- 3.1 The proposal document contained the Educational Benefits within it. The statements are replicated here for reference.

3.2 In September 2019, Scotland's Learning Estate Strategy 'Connecting People, Places and Learning' was launched. This was developed by the Scottish Government and COSLA. This contains ten guiding principles. Local Authorities are required to take account of these principles in planning changes to their school estate, namely:

- Learning environments should support and facilitate excellent joined up learning and teaching to meet the needs of all learners;
- Learning environments should support the wellbeing of all learners, meet varying needs to support inclusion and support transitions for all learners;
- The learning estate should be well-managed and maintained, making the best of existing resources, maximising occupancy and representing and delivering best value;
- The condition and suitability of learning environments should support and enhance their function;
- Learning environments should serve the wider community and where appropriate be integrated with the delivery of other public services in line with the place principle;
- Learning environments should be greener, more sustainable, allow safe and accessible routes for walking, cycling and wheeling and be digitally enabled;
- Outdoor learning and the use of outdoor learning environments should be maximised;
- Good consultation about learning environments, direct engagement with learners and communities about their needs and experiences, and an involvement in decision making processes should lead to better outcomes for all;
- Collaboration across the learning estate, and collaboration with partners in localities, should support maximising its full potential;
- Investment in Scotland's learning estate should contribute towards improving learning outcomes and support sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

3.3 At the Education and Children's Services Committee on 18 March 2021, the revised Learning Estates Strategy, which sets the minimum standards for the various elements of educational buildings to achieve optimal educational benefit, was approved. The strategy for Aberdeenshire Council's Learning Estate sets out three values, Equity, Excellence and Inclusion. They are core to all decision making.

3.4 The proposed amendment to the anomaly area of the Lumphanan School catchment area will consolidate Aberdeenshire Council's agreement to give any pupils residing in the catchment area anomaly in zone entitled school transport and would remove the requirement for a placing request.

- 3.5 The proposal supports the views of the majority of residents within the catchment anomaly who believe that their postcode/address should be zoned for Aboyne Academy for secondary education.
- 3.6 This proposal will alleviate uncertainty and give clarity on secondary school catchment areas and school transport for children and families living in the catchment anomaly area.
- 3.7 This will enable all pupils within Lumphanan School to attend the same secondary school enhancing socialisation, friendships and opportunities to strengthen the community.
- 3.8 Secondary School transitions for Aboyne Academy will be more collaborative and cohesive as the entire P7 cohort of pupils zoned to Lumphanan School will be in zone for the same Academy.
- 3.9 The rezoning of the anomaly to Aboyne Academy will have a positive impact on mental health as reflected in the informal survey from previous pupils and families expressing distress on the current process and being out of zone for Aboyne Academy.
- 3.10 As secondary age children currently attending either Aboyne Academy or Alford Academy will not be required to move schools, they will continue to receive good quality education in whichever setting they attend.
- 3.11 Both Academies have a broad range of facilities and offer a full curriculum therefore any young people whose catchment area changes as a result of the consultation will have access to the same educational benefits as previously mentioned above.

4. Public Engagement

Public Meeting

- 4.1 All parents/carers and stakeholders were invited to a face to face public meeting which was held during the consultation period on 14 September 2023 at Lumphanan School. The meeting was attended by one member of the public. The minutes of the meeting are attached as Appendix B.
- 4.2 The chair of Education & Children's Services Committee opened the meeting and gave welcome and introductions. An overview of the proposal and statutory consultation process was discussed, and the attendee was able to have their questions answered and give their views.

Online Survey

- 4.3 During the consultation period parents/carers, pupils, staff, community members and stakeholders were invited to take part in an online survey through Engage Aberdeenshire to express their opinions on the proposal.

- 4.4 The survey provided a summary of the proposal and a variety of questions to gain their views. Participants were also given the opportunity to leave their comments regarding the proposal.
- 4.5 A total of 64 people took part in the survey, 15 of which live within the area anomaly. These were from a variety of stakeholders: community members, parents/carers, pupils and staff members. A full summary of the online survey is attached as Appendix C.
- 4.6 There were 36 participants who chose to leave their views and comments, these were in the themes of:
- Pupils should go to the same primary and academy
 - Pupil social and mental health benefits
 - Community links with Aboyne
 - Aboyne Academy capacity
 - Aboyne Academy funding
 - Aboyne Academy staffing
 - Alford Academy capacity
 - Alternative proposal
 - Road conditions
 - Closer distance
 - Transport
- 4.7 There was also a section within the online survey to specifically gain views of children and young people, of which 11 comments were received.
- 4.8 The majority of participants (62.4%) agree that the anomaly area should be rezoned to Aboyne Academy, this included the majority of the participants which reside within the area anomaly.

Discussion with Pupils

- 4.9 As part of the consultation process the Head Teachers of Lumphanan School, Aboyne Academy and Alford Academy were asked to consult with pupils and given suggested questions. It was also suggested that secondary pupils may want to participate in the online survey. A summary of the pupil consultation is attached as Appendix D.
- 4.10 Positive feedback was received by all pupils, many commenting on the benefits of staying with their primary school peers, siblings, and children they know for an easier transition to secondary school. Others commented on the reduction of pupils at Alford Academy would create more classroom space.
- 4.11 The vast majority of pupils who took part in the consultation agreed that the anomaly area should be rezoned to Aboyne Academy.

Staff Engagement

- 4.12 Lumphanan School were sent the proposal document and link to the online survey asking to publicise the proposals to their staff team. Aboyne Academy, Alford Academy and Lumphanan School were asked to forward any comments or questions from their staff members to the team, however no comments were received.
- 4.13 Staff Members were also able to access the online survey through Engage Aberdeenshire. Three members of staff completed the survey and agreed with the proposal to rezone the anomaly area to Aboyne Academy.

5. Written Responses

- 5.1 All consultees and members of the public were given the Learning Estates contact details with the opportunity to express their comments and questions. No written responses were received.

6. Education Scotland Report

- 6.1 In line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 a report was produced by Education Scotland on the educational aspects of the proposal. The full report is attached as Appendix E.
- 6.2 Education Scotland attended the face to face public meeting on 14 September 2023 held at Lumphanan School regarding the proposal.
- 6.3 On the receiving of all the documentation on the proposal, Education Scotland carried out visits to Lumphanan School and Aboyne Academy to discuss the proposal with relevant consultees.
- 6.4 Education Scotland spoke with children and young people regarding the proposal who were all supportive of rezoning and informed they think it would be stressful not to attend the same secondary school with their primary school peers. The children and young people stated that all of their out of school activities are in Aboyne and not in Alford. Young people also stated public transport is easier to Aboyne than Alford from Lumphanan.
- 6.5 Education Scotland also discussed the proposals with Head Teachers who all agreed with the proposals. Lumphanan School Head Teacher stated their school undertake learning opportunities with other schools in the Aboyne Academy cluster which includes activities which support the transition to Academy.
- 6.6 Education Scotland concluded that they agreed that there will be benefit in resolving the long-standing catchment anomaly and that there is benefit in children being entitled to attend the same secondary school as their primary school peers. It was also stated in the report that the proposal will give assurance to children that they will be entitled to progress to the same secondary school as their peers and remove the current need for parents to

complete placing requests. Education Scotland stated that the council should give consideration to the wider issues around the capacity of secondary schools as raised by stakeholders through this consultation.

7. Education Authority Response to Written and Oral Representations

- 7.1 Officers acknowledge there were many comments on the capacity at Aboyne Academy however, it is not expected that Aboyne Academy will exceed capacity in future years and the small number of pupils generated from this proposal would not put any significant pressure on this.
- 7.2 There were also comments in regard to funding and staffing in Aboyne Academy, however as this proposal is only affecting a small number of pupils, there should be no impact upon staffing requirements, or the level of investment required for Aboyne Academy.
- 7.3 In contrast, there were comments on the capacity of Alford Academy. Officers are aware there is a short-term peak in the roll for Alford Academy however this is forecasted to reduce.
- 7.4 There was a suggestion from a member of the public to rezone the primary catchment area instead of the secondary catchment area however, the parental and community wish is to stay at Lumphanan School and go to the zoned academy with the other Lumphanan pupils. This also would go against the informal agreement of those pupils attending Lumphanan School who live within the anomaly getting a place at Aboyne Academy catchment.

8. Alleged Omissions or Inaccuracies

- 8.1 Section 10(3) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 places a requirement on the Council to provide details of any inaccuracies or omission within the proposal document which has been either raised by consultees or identified by the Council itself.
- 8.2 This section of the 2010 Act also requires the council to provide a statement on the action taken in respect of the inaccuracy or omission, or, if no action was taken to state that fact and why.
- 8.3 There were no identified inaccuracies or omissions within the proposal document so no further action was required.

9. Compliance with Section 9(1) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

- 9.1 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 any relevant;

- (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.*

9.2 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.

10. Conclusion

10.1 Officers have carefully considered the opportunities, issues and challenges identified by stakeholders during the informal engagement and formal consultation processes.

10.2 In review of the oral and written submissions to the formal consultation and online survey results, the majority of stakeholders agree that the area anomaly within the Lumphanan School catchment area should be rezoned to Aboyne Academy.

10.3 The majority of the participants who stated they reside within the area anomaly and are directly affected showed preference for the area being rezoned to Aboyne Academy.

10.3 Aberdeenshire Council have three options;

- Adopt the proposal to rezone the anomaly area to Aboyne Academy catchment area; or
- Amend the proposal in a minor way and adopt; or
- Withdraw the proposal and maintain the status quo.

10.4 There was a comment from a participant of the online survey who suggested to move the primary school catchment area to the appropriate Alford Academy primary school, however this would go against the communities wish to attend Aboyne Academy and there is already an informal agreement which was agreed by the senior management team in 2014 for those pupils residing within the area to attend Aboyne Academy with the other Lumphanan pupils.

10.5 As the majority of the respondents support the proposal there would be no merit in maintaining status quo.

11. Recommendation

11.1 The recommendation of officers is that Aberdeenshire Council should adopt the proposal to rezone Aboyne Academy catchment area to include the area in the Lumphanan School catchment area currently zoned to Alford Academy. This will formalise the informal agreement already in place for pupils living within the area anomaly, give clarity and reduce confusion on secondary school catchment areas to residents within the area anomaly. This will also reduce administrative burden which affects a number of teams within Aberdeenshire Council.