

To:

Planning Policy Team,
Infrastructure Services,
Aberdeenshire Council,
Woodhill House,
Westburn Road,
Aberdeen,
AB16 5GB

Address:

Email:

March 2019

Dear Planning Policy Team,

REF: Main Issues Report for LDP 2021, site MR053 in Banchory

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldpmedia/blids18/MR053.pdf>

It is with deep concern that I see that there is a bid in the LDP 2021 MIR document to use site MR053, referenced above, for the construction of houses. MR053 has, for some years, been reserved for potential educational use in the LDP. In a Banchory Community Action Plan (BCAP) consultation carried out in 2017, the **overwhelming priority** stated by the people of Banchory was the need for a new academy. Additionally, many expressed the wish for a hub that would accommodate adult education and other evening and weekend activities.

I strongly appeal to you to defend the retention of this site for a new academy for Banchory.

My primary concern is the education of our young people in a suitable and stimulating environment.

Banchory Academy is an excellent school. It has a caring approach, its staff are incredibly dedicated, it has an extremely high positive destination rate and its academic results are among some of the best in Scotland. Many families move to Banchory specifically for its excellent school.

However, these qualities are not being given their best chance of survival because the school premises are old: not only are they deteriorating but more importantly they are increasingly not fit-for-purpose.

Capacity for Banchory Academy has been forecast at 99% by 2023. There are already pressures on the academy premises, even when rated under capacity as it is at present by the council.

- There is not enough space to accommodate pupils at lunchtime, therefore many spend their lunchtimes sitting on the floor in the corridors. Others go off premises for lunch: behaviour in the community and littering are difficult to manage. Even with the added area after the conversion of the old pool area in summer 2019, space will still be tight.
- The school is obliged to use prefabs in the grounds, which are well-known for being extremely warm in the summer and extremely cold in the winter – hardly conducive to good teaching and learning
- During the exam period, the Games Hall is completely out of action and over 21 classrooms are needed to accommodate young people with special requirements.

The school buildings are showing their age. Among many other points:

- There have been repeated leaks which have been very difficult to resolve.
- The school has a large area at the front of the building which is single-glazed and very wasteful of energy.

I understand that Aberdeenshire Council will not commit to a new academy for Banchory yet, but there is no doubt that the school will need replacing as soon as possible: it rated B for Condition (B=performing adequately, but showing minor deterioration) and C for Suitability (C=showing major problems and/or not performing optimally) in the 2017 Aberdeenshire Condition and Suitability report submitted to the Scottish Government.

Giving up MR053 will be a significant loss to the community:

- Having no land set aside would lead to even more delays in achieving a new academy for Banchory.
- An academy on site MR053 would be accessible by foot for most young people in Banchory. If MR053 was lost, a new site would have to be found further out of the village, which would add significantly to traffic on the roads.
- Site MR053 is close enough to local amenities for these to be reached by foot, especially the new sports centre.

To renounce the site sends out an extremely negative message to the community and suggests that the community is not being listened to.

Yours sincerely,