

**Rezoning of Balmedie School catchment at Blackdog
Statutory Consultation Online Survey Response**

Introduction

Education & Children’s Services of Aberdeenshire Council created an online survey to gather the views and comments regarding the statutory consultation to rezone Balmedie School catchment area at Blackdog. It stated; Aberdeenshire Council are proposing, subject to the outcome of the statutory consultation process;

- To rezone the Balmedie School catchment area to include the whole of the Blackdog settlement and align with the Aberdeenshire Council boundary.
- The proposal would apply to all primary age pupils within the settlement of Blackdog from August 2023.
- There will be no requirement for existing primary school pupils to move schools if their catchment area changes.

This consultation was undertaken in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. The Act requires any changes to the school estate, including a school boundary or catchment area, are subject to rigorous statutory consultation.

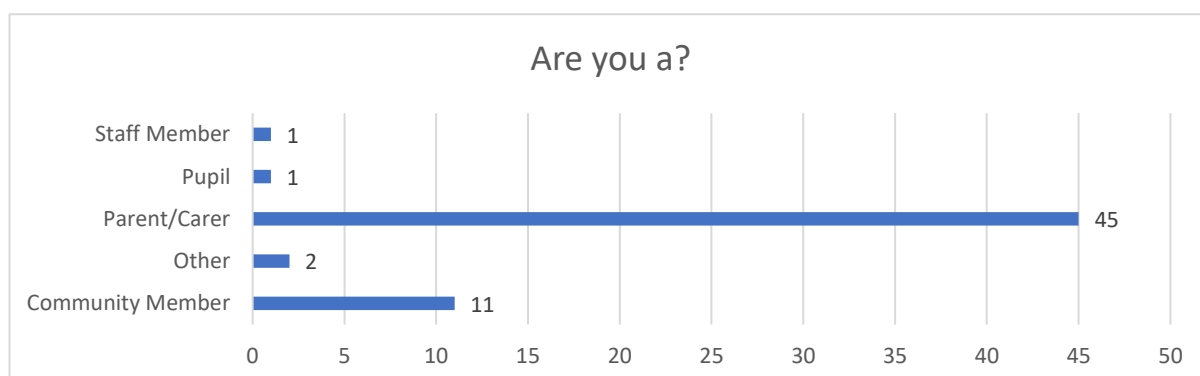
The consultation ran from 14 October 2022 to 6 January 2023. Letters and emails with the link to the survey were sent to all consultees including Parent Council of Balmedie School, Parents/Carers of pupils and pre-school pupils zoned to Balmedie School, Staff at Balmedie School, Elected Members, residents within the Blackdog settlement, Belhelvie Community Council, Aberdeen City Council, Early Years providers and relevant users of Balmedie School.

A total of 60 participants completed the survey, all responses have been analysed and have been detailed below.

Q. Are you a?

Chart A below shows that the majority, 45 (75%) participants are Parents/Carers, 11 (18.3%) participants are Community Members, two (3.3%) participants stated Other and there was one (1.7%) participant which was a Pupil and one (1.7%) Staff Member.

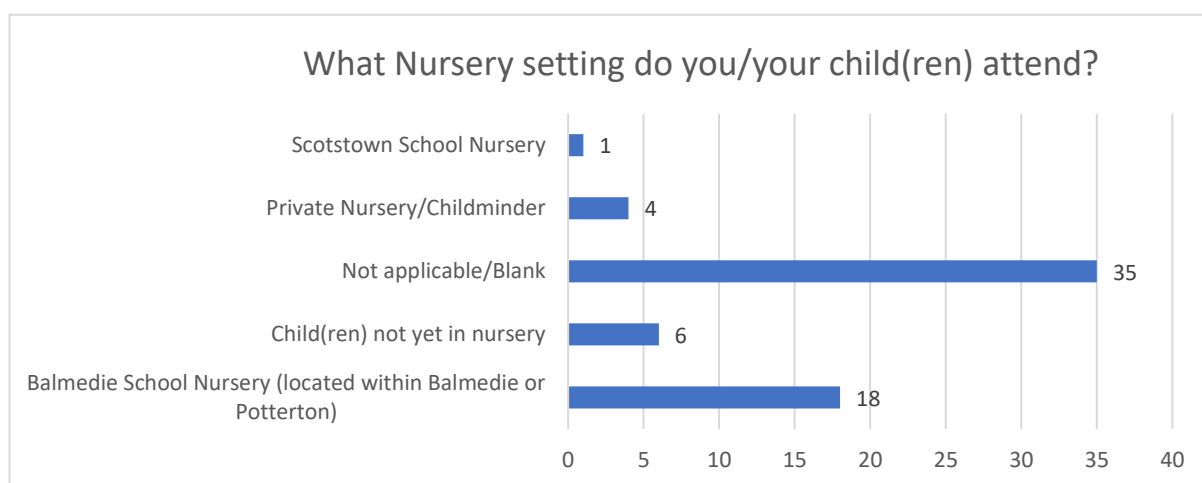
Chart A



Q. What nursery do you/your child(ren) attend?

Chart B below shows that the majority, 35 (54.7%) participants stated not applicable or left the question blank, 18 (28.1%) of participants stated Balmedie Nursery located at either Balmedie or Potterton sites, six (9.4%) participants stated they have a child or children who are not yet at Nursery, four (6.2%) participants stated their child attends a private nursery or childminder and one (1.6%) stated they have a child who attends Scotstown School nursery. There were four respondents which selected more than one option and these have been counted in the numbers above.

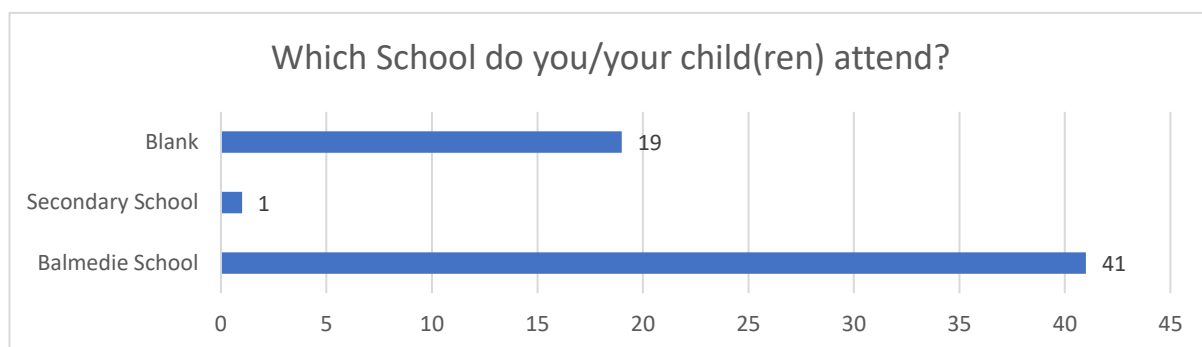
Chart B



Q. What School do you/your child(ren) attend?

Chart C below shows that the majority, 41 (67.2%) participants stated their child/children attend Balmedie School, 19 (31.2%) participants left the question blank and one (1.6%) participant stated their child attends a Secondary School. There was one participant who stated both Balmedie School and Secondary School and these have been counted in those numbers. There were no survey responses from Scotstown School, Greenbrae School or another Primary School.

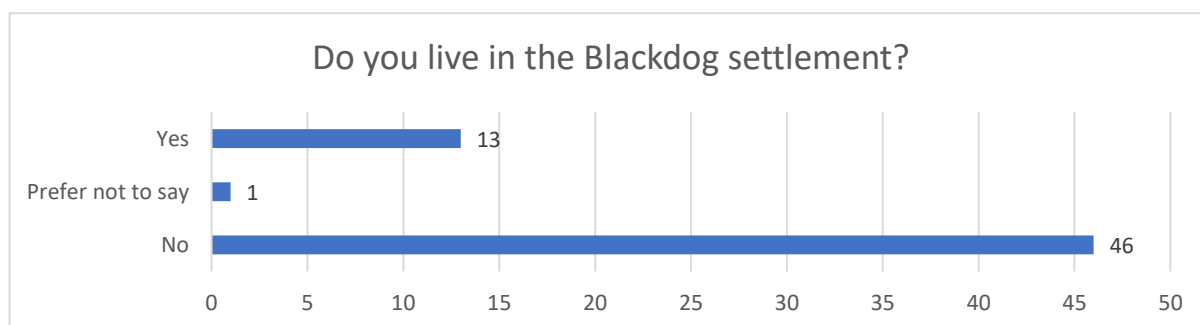
Chart C



Q. Do you live in the Blackdog settlement?

Chart D below shows that the majority, 46 (76.7%) participants stated they do not live in the Blackdog settlement, 13 (21.7%) participants stated they do live in the Blackdog settlement and one (1.6%) participant preferred not to say.

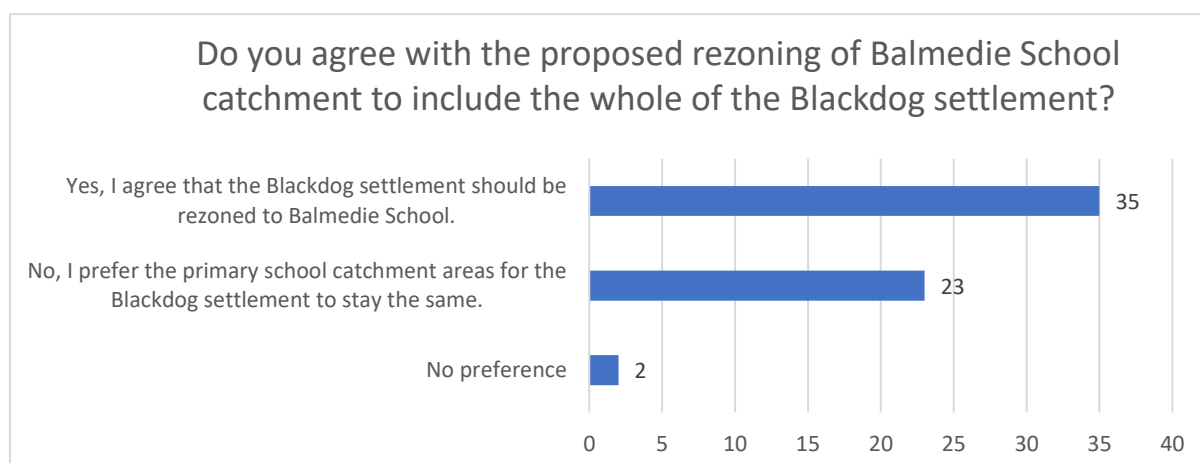
Chart D



Q. Do you agree with the proposed rezoning of Balmedie School catchment to include the whole of the Blackdog settlement?

Chart E below shows that the majority, 35 (58.3%) participants agree that the Blackdog settlement should be rezoned to Balmedie School, 23 (38.3%) participants stated they would prefer the primary catchment areas for the Blackdog settlement to stay the same and two (3.4%) participants stated they have no preference.

Chart E



Further analysis show that all of the participants that reside within the settlement of Blackdog, stated they do support the rezoning of Balmedie School catchment to include the Blackdog settlement and align with the Aberdeenshire Council boundary. The majority of the Parents/Carers, Pupil and Staff Members also stated they agree that the Blackdog settlement should be rezoned to Balmedie School.

Participants were given the opportunity to express further views and give comments.

Of the 60 participants who completed the survey, 37 chose to leave their views and comments, these are listed below:

- It makes much more sense for the entire settlement of Blackdog to be zoned to one primary school. Balmedie school is closer than Scotstown school and also in Aberdeenshire, as Blackdog is. It would be nice for all the children in Blackdog to attend the same primary school too.
- My child already attends Balmedie as it is the closest school to us but we are not in the catchment area. Almost all the children in Blackdog attend Balmedie Primary. As most of my child's peer group within the village attend Balmedie we feel she would be socially disadvantaged by sending her to the catchment school in Aberdeen City. There is such a small proportion of houses currently in Blackdog not within the catchment area to Balmedie, it would make sense for the entire village to be with the same catchment area. We live in Aberdeenshire, pay Aberdeenshire council tax but our catchment school is in Aberdeen City surely it would make sense to move the catchment area. There are currently a few school busses coming into the village, would it not make economical sense to have one larger bus for all school children.
- I think the zone for the school should fall the same as the Aberdeenshire boundary.
- Balmedie primary is stretched as it is. Before and after school club often closed with little to no warning due to staffing issues, Children with ASN unable to be supervised due to not enough PSAs, office staff & deputy staff often helping out in classrooms. I think it's unfair with the planning of more houses in Balmedie which would attract families to Balmedie with children of school age which would increase school numbers of local children surely it's irresponsible to accept children out within the village knowing this. Blackdog pupils are zoned for city academies where Balmedie are offered the shire and city so could leave many with friends not attending academy with them due to zoning.
- I thought there were space issues (too many pupils) in Balmedie school. Are there plans for an extension of the school building?
- It makes sense to have the whole settlement zoned to one school. The current zone was implemented when the zone line was the edge of the settlement - this change is moving with the times.
- It seems crazy that some children in Blackdog are zoned for Balmedie whilst others are Balmedie. My child has friends in Blackdog but has never had the opportunity to play with them at school.
- Balmedie school if not fit for purpose at present and currently has capacity issues - children are still being taught in portacabins! Unless the council are committing to a school a re-build/ new build then I am absolutely against the move of boundary lines that will increase pupil numbers and negatively impact capacity issues and the children. The local authority should give more thought

to infrastructure and schools when they agree to approve private building schemes rather than try and crowd children into existing overcrowded schools. I also do not understand how Bridge of Don can be the catchment for secondary schooling but not primary.

- It will be interesting to understand how this affects forecasted pupil numbers at Balmedie Primary over the coming years in terms of school capacity. Also, as an aging building, does this in any way help with a school redevelopment plan?
- Blackdog is a small community, it makes no sense for the catchment areas to be split it is at present.
- I feel the school will already be at full capacity without this change plus there are many new houses being built in Potterton. This will be too much pressure on the school.
- Balmedie Primary has an excellent reputation, but we have been waiting for the extension for years.
- It makes sense geographically however Balmedie School is overloaded and this would stretch resources even further putting pressure on the school.
- The school is struggling with the numbers they have at the moment and they can't provide out of school club facilities for pupils currently attending Balmedie/there is a waiting list.
- My concern would be the capacity that Balmedie School would have for the extra pupils.
- With the planned increase in housing at Blackdog the school is unable to accommodate successfully.
- Are there plans to expand school to accommodate more kids? If the answer is no, then please put into consideration.
- Makes a lot of sense - we live in Blackdog outwith the Balmedie zone currently - but we put our eldest to Balmedie and hope to put our other children there too - all the village kids that my kids are friends with go to Balmedie. And we're in the shire anyway.
- My only concern is of capacity at Balmedie for these extra children. Balmedie primary will perhaps need to be enlarged rather than enlarging individual classes.
- The current school building does not have the capacity to hold the whole of Blackdog. It also does not make sense that the primary catchment would be the shire however the secondary catchment is the city council. That is another aspect of Balmedie school that should be looked at.
- Is a sensible proposal assuming the school has capacity for the increase in pupils.
- My son is at Balmedie school and the class sizes are full enough as they are right now. There are 30 children to one teacher at present in his class. Surely, they can't be expected to take on another 5-10 pupils per class with these numbers so high? If this is going to happen what are the provisions for Balmedie school? Will an extension be built? Will more teachers be hired to help with the increased numbers? God forbid a new school? All questions which have been asked for the last 10 years I believe yet the council do nothing with regards to Balmedie school. There are houses planned for Potterton too, more children for

Balmedie Primary, what are the provisions for them? One question I would like answered but probably won't get, is what does the council spend the money it receives from the developers of these new housing estates? Because as a parent it does not seem to help the local schooling issues.

- What are Aberdeenshire councils plans for the catchment area of secondary schools with regard to all of the new house in Potterton, Blackdog and the 500 homes being built at Cloverhill, Bridge of Don? This surely must be being looked at with the extra number of pupils in the area. How can they keep being all put to Bridge of Don Academy which is at capacity, and is an old school facility? It is a carbon copy of Ellon academy (where I went to school) 25 years ago and Ellon has since been fully knocked down and replaced. We live in the shire (Balmedie) so our children should go to the shire academy in my opinion. Why they go into the city schools I don't understand. For instance because I live in the shire I am unable to go to a waste recycling centre in the city!?! Ridiculous some ideas that people come up with.
- As Balmedie is rezoning to Aberdeenshire boundaries will pupils be automatically in the Ellon Academy catchment?
- I can't fathom why the whole of Blackdog isn't already in the catchment... it's bizarre. We currently have to drive every morning when the neighbours literally a few doors down all eligible for the school bus. Doesn't seem right.
- Balmedie primary school building is not equipped to handle the extra volume of pupils and Balmedie itself is not equipped to handle the extra volume of cars this will entail. The area around the school is already dangerous at pick up and drop off and has been this way for a long number of years now. Eigie road is already dangerous for pupils to cross in the morning and the additional traffic this would create whether it be parents in cars or busses would also add additional danger to pupils. With the building of an additional 200 houses due to start at Blackdog too this is just a crazy suggestion without the school being expanded further or rebuilt with money from house builders who don't seem to take responsibility for the issues their building causes.
- Balmedie needs to re-assessed, it's will not be able to cope with the extra pupils. Already at stretching point. A new school ideally needs to be built.
- Balmedie Primary School is massively oversubscribed and new houses are due to be built in both Balmedie, Belhelvie and Blackdog. This is not rocket science - a new school is needed! The kids are being taught in cold, aged portacabins.
- It would allow school transport to be put in place for all Blackdog children and not just for some.
- Blackdog should change to a Balmedie catchment. Scotstown is a city school and Balmedie is a shire school, Blackdog is in the shire.
- Completely logical.
- I think it makes perfect sense to align the whole area to be in Aberdeenshire, it should reduce the number of buses required (greener) and saves children being in different social groups which can be very isolating. The only additional thing I would like to see is a full, dedicated, cycle or footpath between the villages as it is within the statutory walking distance for older children.

- Balmedie primary school is already not fit for purpose without adding additional children from other catchment areas. The school would need to be expanded or a new school built to accommodate the additional children. Children are already conducting lessons from cabins across the playfield which is not acceptable long term.
- School almost at capacity already children being taught in a cabin on school grounds.
- (Comment made about the impact of current catchment on their property and school transport entitlement which has been redacted due to GDPR) Whichever decision is taken, all relevant departments need to be in agreement with what is in/out of zone.
- It probably makes best sense to have the whole of Blackdog zoned for the same school. However, with the 300 new houses being built in the short term and larger scale proposals for the longer term, will Balmedie School have the capacity in the future? Perhaps this is a short-term solution, but a new Blackdog school would be a better long term solution.
- It really makes no sense for the zoning area to be anything other than Balmedie primary school as it is within the council boundary.

Of the 13 Blackdog residents, eight participants chose to leave their views and comments. All were in favour of the rezoning of the Blackdog settlement to Balmedie School. Almost all comments referred the rezoning as “makes sense” with half referencing that as Blackdog is within Aberdeenshire, children should attend an Aberdeenshire School. There were also comments regarding school transport stating that reducing the amount of buses currently travelling to Balmedie School and providing a larger bus would be more economic.

There was also a section in the survey to gain children's views

Participants were asked if they have any children in their household, to leave their views and comments.

There were 8 participants who left comments, 4 (50%) of those were Blackdog residents. All children's comments are below:

- My children are of the same views as myself. (in favour of rezoning)
- My child wants to travel on the school bus with her friends which at present she cannot do as we aren't within the catchment.
- The school is too busy.
- They're too young to fully get it, but they want to be with their friends.
- Means all children in the area are at the same school rather than split.
- My children have been to school in Balmedie and they say the school can't cope with the extra numbers.
- This is not rocket science - a new school is needed! The kids are being taught in cold, aged portacabins.

- My child is too young to make a sensible comment. They have repeatedly expressed their love for Scotstown Nursery, however other friends in our area go to a Balmedie nursery. They have said they want to go to school with them.

Conclusion

Of the 60 participants who completed the survey, the majority stated they agree to rezone the Balmedie School catchment area to include the settlement of Blackdog. This includes all of the Blackdog residents who were mostly Parents/Carers and are directly affected.

Learning Estates Team
March 2023