

**HIGHLAND COUNCIL**

**CARE AND LEARNING SERVICE**

REVIEW OF THE PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL TO

SERVE THE NESS CASTLE AND NESS-SIDE HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

|  |
| --- |
| This report has been prepared following a review of the proposal:  To establish a new primary school to serve the Ness Castle and Ness-side  housing developments, and to amend the delineated area (catchment area) of  the current Holm Primary School, in order to create the catchment area for the  new school.  Having had regard (in particular) to:   * Relevant written representations received by the Council (from any   person) during the consultation period:   * Oral representations made to it (by any persons) at the public meeting held at Holm Primary School on 8 November 2017: * The report from Education Scotland.   this document has been issued by the Highland Council under the  requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. |

**CONTENTS**

1. Background.
2. Consultation process.
3. Responses Received.
4. Issues raised during the consultation period, and Highland Council’s responses.
5. Summary of issues raised by Education Scotland.
6. Responses to Issues raised by Education Scotland
7. Review of Catchment Proposals
8. Effects on the Community.
9. Effects on School Transport
10. Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements
11. Alleged omissions or inaccuracies.
12. Overall Review of Consultation Exercise
13. Legal issues
14. Conclusion
15. Recommendation

Appendices:

**Appendix 1** - The Proposal Paper

**Appendix 1a-** Appendix to Proposal Paper – Holm/Ness Castle catchment option A

**Appendix 1a(i)-** Appendix to Proposal Paper – Holm/Ness Castle catchment option Ai

**Appendix 1b-** Appendix to Proposal Paper – Holm/Ness Castle catchment option B

**Appendix 1c-** Appendix to Proposal Paper – Holm/Ness Castle catchment option C

**Appendix 1d-** Appendix to Proposal Paper – Proposed location of school

**Appendix 1e-** Latest HMIe report for Holm Primary

**Appendix 2** - List of Responses Received

**Appendix 2a** - **2q** Copies of written and other submissions received.

**Appendix 3 -** Minute of public meeting held at Holm Primary Portree on 8 November 2017

**Appendix 4** -Report from Education Scotland

**Appendix 5 -** Revised Roll Projections

**1.0 Background**

1.1 Highland Council’s People Committee, at its meeting on 19 October 2017, agreed that a statutory consultation be undertaken on the proposal to establish a new primary school to serve the Ness Castle and Ness-side housing developments, and to amend the delineated area (catchment area) of the current Holm Primary School, in order to create the catchment area for the new school.

1.2 **Appendix 1** is the original consultative paper and provides full details of the above proposal. **Appendices A-F** are the appendices to the original proposal.

1. **Consultation process**

2.1 The formal consultation period ran from Monday 23 October 2017 to Friday 1 December 2017. Written representations on the proposal were sought from interested parties as defined within the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.

2.2 In accordance with statutory requirements, the following were consulted:

1. Parents of pupils attending Holm Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
2. Parents of pupils attending Lochardil Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
3. Parents of pupils attending Aldourie Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
4. The Parent Councils of the above schools.
5. Members of Parliament and Members of the Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;
6. Staff of Holm Primary School; Lochardil Primary School; and Aldourie Primary School

(vi) Trade union representatives;

1. Lochardil and Drummond Community Council;
2. Dores and Essich Community Council

(ix) Education Scotland;

1. Highland Youth Convener
2. The Inverness Community Planning Partnership

2.3 The proposal document was advertised on the Highland Council website.

2.4 A public meeting was held at Holm Primary School on 8 November 2017. The meeting was advertised in advance on the Highland Council website and Facebook page, and in the *Inverness Courier*.

2.5 Following receipt of written representations received by Highland Council and consideration of oral representations made at the public meetings, officials reviewed the proposals.

2.6 The outcome of this review process is reflected in the response, conclusion and recommendations outlined below.

1. **Responses received**

3.1 A list of those who responded in writing during the public consultation is at **Appendix 2**, whilst copies of the actual responses are at **Appendix 2a-2q**. Pupils (including the nursery class children) at Holm Primary School completed, or were assisted to complete, age adapted questionnaires.

3.3 Overall, a large majority of the children expressed support for the proposal. 203 of the returned questionnaires (72.7%) expressed support for the new school with 76 (27.3%) expressing opposition. The various points raised in opposition are addressed in Section 4 below.

3.2 Five other written responses were received. Two responses specifically expressed support for the new school, and none expressed direct opposition. The majority of the comments received concerned the proposed options for the school’s catchment, and three responses suggested the Council needed to look not just a new school at Ness Castle but at all educational provision across this part of Inverness, including Lochardil Primary, Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis, and secondary school provision. These matters are also addressed in Section 4 below.

3.3. The note of the public meeting is at **Appendix 3**. The note records a total of 36 questions. None expressed direct opposition to the proposed new school. A number of questions sought clarification on future enrolment, placing requests etc. Others expressed concern about potential negative effects on Holm Primary, whilst others expressed similar views to those written responses that suggested the Council needed to look at wider educational provision across Inverness. Again, these matters are addressed in Section 4.

**4.0 Issues raised during the consultation period**

4.1 The main arguments opposed to the proposal are summarised below, together with the responses from the Council. In many cases different responses have made the same or very similar arguments, and where this occurs the arguments have been addressed only once.

4.2 The points raised in the written responses are at Issues 1-12 below. Points of concern raised by the pupils at Holm Primary are at Issues 13 – 22 below.

4.3 The majority of questions raised at the public meeting were answered directly during the meeting, the note of which is at **Appendix 3**. Other issues were addressed in follow-up correspondence from Highland Council.

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 1**  The size of the new school needs to take into account the overall growth of the area over the next decade or more, therefore it needs to be based on the bigger catchment option i.e. Option A. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 1**  Section 7 below reviews the points made in respect of the recommendation on future catchments. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 2**  Future residents of Ness-side may want to have some choice on the  catchment (i.e. based on proximity/travel) but it is important to future proof  the capacity of the new school in terms of having a bigger capacity. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 2**  Once a decision has been taken on the future catchment areas of Holm  Primary and Ness Castle Primary, those will be the formal catchments for  each school. The Council does have arrangements to consider placing  requests for pupils seeking placement at a school other than their catchment  school. Given the majority of houses within the new housing development  have still to be built, residents of houses yet to be built on Ness-side will be  able to take the school catchment into account when deciding on a purchase.  Highland Council agrees that the new school should be future proofed in  terms of capacity, and is basing its plans for the school on long-term school  roll projections. With his in mind we are continually reviewing our roll  projections for the area, to ensure decisions are based on the most up to date  information. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 3**  It is important that new school provision does not reduce the resources available for existing primary schools in the area. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 3**  Highland Council agrees with this comment. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 4**  There is a need to start looking into the additional secondary school requirement for this side of Inverness. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 4**  Decisions on future secondary school provision in Inverness would be taken  independently of this present consultation, and would not affect the outcome  of the current exercise. Response 2 above advises that Highland Council  continually reviews our roll projections for the area, and bases its decisions  on the most up to date information regarding future rolls. The receiving  secondary school for Ness Castle Primary and Holm Primary is Inverness  Royal Academy, and projections of the impact on secondary provision are  also factored into the Council’s capital investment plans. Any proposal for a  new secondary school in Inverness are likely to be some years away, and  would be subject to a separate statutory consultation process. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 5**  Boundaries on options A/B do not fare well for Holm primary, would this affect  the quality of the teaching in the school is under capacity. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 5**  In establishing a new Ness Castle Primary School, given there remain  capacity pressures across the City of Inverness, the Council is committed to  ensuring ongoing sustainable provision within the existing Holm Primary  school. Section 7 below sets out further updated projections relating to  school rolls, which demonstrate that the Council is planning for Holm Primary  to continue with a healthy school roll which would make use of the capacity of  the school.  The Council does not consider there would be any detrimental impact to the  quality of teaching at Holm Primary.  The Council will ensure that the pupils at Holm Primary are taken care of and offered a suitable education, that continues the existing high standards. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 6**  Holm Primary Parent Council would like to see the feasibility on an option for  an “all singing/dancing” school for the area.  Should there be an option for one school and closing or re-organising Holm  Primary School? |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 6**  The Council considered this before publishing the Proposal Paper. If the new school were also to replace Holm Primary, that would result in a very large primary, perhaps up to 1000 pupils. That would be an unprecedented size of primary school within a Highland setting. The new school site that has been reserved as part of the planning conditions would not be big enough for a school that size, and we are unclear whether parents would favour a school with such a large roll. Holm Primary is in reasonable condition relative to the 200 or so schools in Highland. There is an A-D rating system we have to follow, for the condition and suitability of our schools. Holm Primary is rated B for both. There are about 70 schools in Highland with a “C” rating. In terms of decisions on investment, the need for work at this school has to be judged against the 70 or so schools that rated “C” for “Poor”. Although there is no way around a new school in some form to meet the needs of the new housing developments, it is very difficult to argue for significant additional investment to replace a school such as Holm Primary, which is relatively modern and is in reasonable condition.  On balance, Highland Council does not favour the option of closing Holm  Primary and replacing it with one new school for both Holm and Ness Castle. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 7**  The boundaries for the existing areas should all be looked at as all the schools are under pressure.  Boundaries for the schools need to be re-addressed. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 7**  We agree there are school capacity issues right across the city of Inverness. The Council has been asked a number of times about redrawing catchments across Inverness. The reality is that redrawing catchments will not solve the capacity issues. The number of houses being built – which is a very positive thing – means we will have to increase the number of schools in Inverness and/or increase the number of places in the current schools. Whilst the Council has not closed its mind to redrawing catchments where there is evidence that educational benefit could arise, in overall terms our opinion is that redrawing the lines will not solve the problem.  Any proposal to amend a catchment area would also be subject to statutory consultation. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 8**  Would it be an option to move the existing Gaelic medium school and replace it with an English medium school to deal with overcrowding coming from that side of the boundary? |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 8**  The Council recognises that BSGI is also under capacity pressure, and  house-building means there are English medium capacity pressures in the  Slackbuie area also. It’s too early to state what changes may be progressed  in that catchment at this time. We think that it is legitimate to present this  current proposal as a self-contained one, without prejudicing future options  that may be considered regarding BSGI and Slackbuie, and whether that in  turn has implications for the Lochardil catchment. The proposal as outlined in  this report and consultation is limited only to the existing Holm Primary  catchment. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 9**  There is an issue with Safe-Routes-to-School with all the options.  Has the safe routes to school had a look at the potential distance and main roads for the children to cross to get to this new school? |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 9**  Should the new school be approved, there will be intensive discussion with  stakeholders about the detailed design requirements, including Safer Routes  to Schools (STRTS). The formal Planning process for building a new school  would also require the Council to consider traffic and other assessments.  The Council acknowledges that in this area the houses would be close to the  new school and children will be unlikely to use public transport. Some will be  dropped off by car but many will be walking or cycling to school. The Council  will be looking to provide safe routes for walking and cycling, as these have a  positive social impact.  A Stakeholder Group will be formed to provide input to the specification,  design and construction of the new Ness Castle Primary school. That Group  would also be engaged in discussion in regard to SRTS matters. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 10**  The Council should look at the potential overcrowding for the next three years  at Holm school now before it becomes an afterthought. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 10**  The Council undertakes regular review of the school estate, and annually  updates school roll forecasts to consider both short and long-term capacity  and investment requirements. Additional modular accommodation has been  added where necessary, to reflect the rising roll of the school. We acknowledge that the situation at Holm Primary is difficult, and this is one of the reasons for building the new school to address capacity pressures within the area. In the intervening period the Council will ensure that Holm PS has sufficient capacity to accommodate pupils, and also that the quality of education is maintained. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 11**  Will the catchment boundaries be enforced? |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 11**  Highland Council’s enrolment system specifies that children must be enrolled  in their local catchment school, at least initially. However, legislation enacted  at national level, gives parents the right to request that their child attend a  school other than the catchment school. These are termed “placing requests”  and Highland Council can only refuse placing requests under certain specified  circumstances. These include where a school is or is likely to become  overcrowded, or where accepting children on placing requests would require  the Council take an additional teacher into employment. Any placing requests  made in respect of either Holm Primary or the new school would be assessed  within the context of the above. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 12**  Catchment Options A, Ai and B look sensible.  Slightly favour Option B, as those existing housing areas that have long been connected to Holm Primary (and Lochardil in the case of Essich Gardens) are better served continuing that link, and are distinct enough as established areas of housing and communities to link with the existing school/s.  It also slightly improves the viability of Holm Primary in the revised roll post-opening of Ness Castle.  With an eye on the formation of the new community in this area, Option C should be avoided. The local Church of Scotland Parish includes the Slackbuie housing from Fairways across to Holm Dell, Ness Castle and Ness-side.  It fits the model of Ness Castle and Ness-side in their entirety being in one school catchment.  Of course people don’t live and form communities according to church parishes anymore, but the church is seeking to be a catalyst to a cohesive community as the new housing goes up in Ness Castle and Ness-side. We hope ourselves to be geographically present in a building that will serve as a community centre as well as a place of worship, in the Ness-side area.  Splitting the new community of housing in Ness-side as per Option C militates against forming strong community identity.  It will lead to a situation much like in Bramble Close at present, where children with different school uniforms head off in different directions every morning, and families living next to each other have no common community connection of a school to build community around.  There is concern amongst some that a radically reduced roll at Holm School  in the future will challenge its viability.  However Option C not only militates  against the formation of new community in Ness-side, but also continues to  squeeze Holm Primary beyond the capacity it was built for.  There should be  less concern about the new school being of a larger size as a result - it can be  built for that purpose more successfully than Holm PS can be adapted beyond  its reach. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 12**  Section 7 below reviews the points made in respect of the recommendation  on future catchments. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 13**  New children should come to Holm as it is a good school.  Holm Primary is really fun. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 13**  Although the Council agrees that Holm Primary is a good school, we think it will become too overcrowded if we don’t build the new school. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 14**  A new school would take up too much space amongst the new houses.  We would be taking up more land.  Building a new school would not be good for the environment. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 14**  With the number of houses being built in the area, it was always known that a  new school would be needed, and space has been reserved within the  housing development to build a new school. The new school will be constructed to modern standards of energy efficiency. The Council’s expectation is that the new build would have a CO² equivalent impact of about 15 tonnes per year at most. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 15**  Holm Primary could have an extension added, or another storey, which would be less expensive than building a new school. A new school would cost too much money. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 15**  The Council’s roll projections suggest that the projected long-term rise in the  local pupil population could not be addressed by simply adding more  accommodation to Holm Primary School.  Even were this not the case, it would not be enough simply to add extra  classrooms to Holm Primary. Adding more pupils to the roll at Holm Primary  will put further pressure on the communal facilities such as the gym  hall/dining room and the playground. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 16**  People from other schools would move to the new school. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 16**  Past experience in Highland does suggest that new schools have something  of a “magnet” effect and that placing requests will be submitted from parents  in other school catchments. Response 12 above sets out how the Council  would handle such requests. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 17**  There won’t be many children left in Holm. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 17**  Holm PS will be left in a stable and sustainable position. The different catchment options will have different ramifications for Holm, but the figures are only projections. Section 7 sets out further information on the catchment options and the Council’s recommendation. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 18**  Children would lose their friends if they moved to the new school. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 18**  This might happen to some children, but no-one who is already in the P1-7  classes at Holm Primary will be made to move to the new school when it  opens. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 19**  Children should be allowed to go to whichever school they want to. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 19**  In common with other local authorities in Scotland, Highland Council places  all of its communities within designated school catchments. Pupils enrol into  the designated school for their home address, at both primary and secondary  level. This system is necessary for the efficient planning of educational  provision. If parents choose another school, then this must be by means of  a placing request. See Response 12 for further details. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 20**  Children from Ness Castle who have come to Holm School might have to move again. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 20**  If a child is already enrolled within the P1-7 stages at Holm Primary, they  would, if they wished, be able to continue at that school. We wouldn’t force  children already at Holm Primary to attend Ness Castle.  Children from the Ness Castle catchment whose parents wanted them to  attend the new school could do that. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 21**  The new school may not have enough pupils. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 21**  The need for the new school has been identified because of the number of  new houses being constructed in the area, and the likely number of children  that will be living in the area as a result. Highland Council staff have looked at  this issue in detail, and we think the evidence supports the need for a new  school. The current capital programme also proposes the new school is  delivered on a 2 phase basis, phase 1 to meet the immediate school roll  forecasts, with further expansion later as additional housing is completed. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 22**  We should build the new school, but also plant more trees to offset the carbon emissions from both the school and the houses. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 22**  It is Council policy that any building and site development takes account of a holistic environmental assessment of the area, including the minimisation of carbon emissions from the buildings and mitigation measures for the impact on the site caused by the development.  The new buildings will meet the requirements of the Scottish Building Standards for energy and sustainability.  Beyond this, the school will have a landscaped external environment which will be developed to preserve and enhance the biodiversity of the site. |

**5.0** **Summary of the issues raised by Education Scotland**

5.1 In line with legislative requirements, Education Scotland was invited to submit comments on the Council’s proposals. A copy of the report from Education Scotland is appended – **Appendix 4.**

5.2 In its report, Education Scotland concludes that a new primary school is required to meet a growing pupil population arising from new housing developments in the area. Children attending the new school would benefit from a modern, purpose designed learning environment with appropriate facilities. Education Scotland adds that the Council’s proposal paper provides a strong case for a new school and outlines the clear educational benefits which will result. Parents, staff and children from all three schools who spoke with HM Inspectors fully supported the proposal to establish a new school. They expressed a variety of views on the council’s approach to catchment area options.

5.3 Education Scotland recommends that the Council’s final consultation report needs to consider the views of stakeholders on the catchment options and provide reassurance to stakeholders on educational arrangements locally during the three year period before the new school becomes operational. They add that the council should also address local concerns about road safety in relation to the new school and the new housing. The issues raised are addressed in Section 6 below.

**6.0 Responses to the Issues Raised by Education Scotland**

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 23**  The council will need to consider stakeholders’ views on the proposed changes to school catchment areas. The educational benefits of Option C for Holm Primary School are not sufficiently clear. Should the council decide to proceed with this option it will need to clarify the educational benefits and provide details of arrangements for accommodating the additional number of children at Holm Primary School. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 23**  Section 7 below reviews the points made in respect of the decision on future  catchments. The Council is not recommending option C. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 24**  The council will need to provide reassurance to stakeholders on arrangements during the three-year period proposed to build the new school. It will need to ensure that the temporary arrangements for accommodating additional pupils at Holm Primary School can be delivered without negative impact on children’s learning experiences. The council should provide details for its plans for the transition from existing arrangements to establishing a fully operational new school. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 24**  The Council undertakes continual monitoring of school rolls and adjusts its  roll projections annually on the basis of actual enrolments, statistics for the 0-  5 age group in each area, planned housing developments, and other factors.  Additional classroom accommodation will be provided at Holm Primary as  and when required.  The Council acknowledges that additional classroom space will put pressure  on dining and play space within the school.  A local Stakeholder Group will be formed including parent and other representatives, and its remit will include transition arrangements as well the development of the new school building. The Council will look to discuss with the local Stakeholders Group how the accommodation pressures at Holm Primary can be managed. This would include consideration of additional hard play space. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Issue 25**    The Council will need to address concerns raised by stakeholders about road  safety and safe walking routes to the new school and to Holm Primary School  from the new housing developments. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Response 25**  Holm Primary has had a very active School Travel Team led by the Parent Council who worked with Highland Council for a number of years on their School Travel Plan/SRTS scheme.  Through this a number of projects were successfully funded/implemented, including:-   * Improvements to the steps at the back of the school * Cycle Storage * 2 SID signs on Stratherrick Road * Footprints * Fence * Hi Viz Vests * Park Smart Banners     The Council acknowledges that further review of travel plans will be required,  particularly recognising that in the short term, until the new school is built,  there will be additional pupils attending Holm Primary, many of whom will be  travelling from the new Ness Castle and Ness-Side Housing developments.  As part of the planning process the Road Safety Team will work with the nominated School Travel Teams from both the new school and Holm Primary School.  These School Travel Teams are responsible for putting together the school travel plans for their schools with assistance and guidance from the Road Safety Team.  All parties will have to take cognisance of the constraints within the existing Holm Primary school site and the routes accessing this site. |

**7.0 Review of Catchment Issues**

7.1 The Proposal Paper set out 3 potential options for the future catchments of Ness Castle and Holm Primary Schools, as well as a variation to one of the options.

7.2 There was no consensus, in the responses to consultation, about the best shape of the new catchments. Lochardil and Drummond Community Council favoured Option A; whilst Holm Primary School Parent Council expressed concerns about Options A and B. The local Church of Scotland Minister expressed opposition to Option C. Whilst having no strong preference between Options A and B, he slightly favoured Option B.

7.3 Education Scotland raised concerns about Option C on the grounds that the projected roll for Holm Primary would eventually exceed the capacity for the accommodation that could be provided at that school.

7.4 Highland Council also agrees with the argument advanced at Issue 12 above, i.e. that splitting the new housing in Ness-side as per Option C would militate against the formation of a strong community identity.  It would lead to a situation where families living next to each other lack the common connection of a school to build a community around.

7.5 For the above reasons, Highland Council does not propose to adopt Option C for the new school catchments for Holm and Ness Castle Primary Schools.

7.6 One response argued in favour of Option A, on the grounds that the new school needed to have the capacity to absorb as much of the anticipated population growth as possible, and to relieve pressure on the existing schools (see Issue 1)

7.7 Holm Primary School Parent Council expressed the opposite concern, based on the roll projections outlined in the Proposal Paper. These suggested that future rolls at Holm Primary could fall as low as 112 under Option A or 126 under Option B. The Parent Council were concerned at the potential effect of such a fall on the quality of teaching at the school.

7.8 Highland Council reviews its roll projections on an annual basis. An update to the projections was published in December 2017, since the Ness Castle Proposal Paper was published.

7.9 In addition, considerable further work has been carried out on the roll projections for all of the schools in this part of Inverness, following the decision taken by Highland Council in March 2018 about its priorities for future capital projects. The adjusted roll projections anticipate a much larger school at Ness Castle as well as ongoing capacity pressures at Lochardil, Cauldeen and Hilton Primary Schools.

7.10 This work also indicates that the resident pupil population within a revised Holm Primary school catchment would be higher than had been previously forecast. As a result of these capacity pressures, the adjusted roll projections incorporate a remodelling of the optimal level of placing requests each year at Holm Primary and Ness Castle Primary, with the aim of keeping the school rolls at Lochardil, Cauldeen and Hilton below 95% capacity if possible.

7.11 The remodelled roll projections also assume that 50% of the pupils from the new housing will move to Ness Castle PS when it opens in 2021, but 50% will choose to remain in Holm PS. Although the 50% figure is merely an assumption, it is a more realistic figure than the previous assumption that all of the existing Holm PS pupils from the new housing would move to the new school when it opens.

7.12 New roll projections for both schools have been prepared, based on the new assumptions set out above. The revised figures are attached at **Appendix** **5.** The new projections take session 2021/22 as their starting date, in line with the potential opening date for the new school.

Some key figures to highlight from the appendix 5 are as follows:

* By year 2032/33, as far as current roll forecasts project, the new Ness Castle Primary school would have a roll of approximately 630 pupils.
* At the point of opening, 2021/22, the new Ness Castle Primary School is forecast to have a roll of 198 (Option A) and 143 (Option B), rising steadily each year thereafter. Both figures may vary based on the pace of house building and occupation, and parent choices, but are based on current forecasts.
* Holm Primary School would have a reasonably stable school roll over the period shown, with that roll within the current capacity of the school. Under option A, the roll is lower than option B, in the main due to the different catchment boundaries of both options, and the retention of Holm Dell housing within the Holm catchment under option B.

7.13 Although initially Option A shows a higher roll for Ness Castle Primary and a lower roll for Holm Primary, over time the numbers become more aligned, due to the anticipated effect of placing requests from neighbouring catchments.

7.14 The original Proposal Paper gave a figure of 244 for the permanent planning capacity of Holm Primary. The provision of additional accommodation at the school in Autumn/Winter 2017 has since raised this figure to 308.

7.15 Option B has the advantage of using a natural feature – Holm Burn – as the boundary for part of what will be the Holm/Ness Castle catchments. It also allows for the existing houses at Holm Dell to remain part of the Holm PS catchment, as they are at present. This option has the advantage of using logical and natural boundaries for establishing the catchment, and in doing so maximising the school roll within the existing Holm Primary. It would also leave all of the new Ness Castle and Ness-Side developments within the new school catchment.

7.16 Having considered all of the above, Highland Council proposes to adopt Option B from the Proposal Paper as the new catchment areas for Holm Primary School and Ness Castle Primary School.

**8.0 Effects on School Transport**

8.1 An assessment of the effects on school transport can be found at S.8 of the Proposal Paper, and the assessment has not changed since.

8.2 Safer Routes to Schools issues are addressed at Responses 9 and 25 above.

**9.0 Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements**

9.1 An assessment of the effects on school transport can be found at S.9 of the Proposal Paper, and the assessment has not changed since.

**10.0 Effects on the Community**

10.1 An assessment of the effects on the community can be found at S.10 of the Proposal Paper, and the assessment has not changed since.

**11.0 Alleged omissions or inaccuracies**

11.1 No alleged omissions or inaccuracies were identified during consultation.

**12.0 Overall Review of Consultation Exercise**

12.1 The consultation exercise has not identified any significant opposition to the Proposal. Aside from the pupil responses, only five written representations were received and none expressed opposition to the establishment of the new school.

12.2 The Council’s assessment of the options for the proposed new catchment areas is set out at Section 7 above. Having reviewed the consultation responses and carried out more work on roll projections, the Council is proposing to recommend the new catchments are delineated as per Option B of the Proposal Paper.

**13.0 Legal issues**

13.1 Throughout this statutory consultation Highland Council has complied in full with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

13.2 As provided for in section 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, it is the duty of the Council to ensure adequate and efficient provision of school education within Highland. The above, and all other legislative requirements, have been taken into account in the preparation of this Report.

**14.0 Conclusion**

14.1 The consultation process has complied fully with legislative requirements and has provided an opportunity for all parties to identify key issues of concern. These issues have been fully considered and the Council’s response detailed in sections 4 and 6 above.

14.2 Education Scotland staff visited Holm Primary School and Lochardil Primary School to speak to parents, pupils and staff. They also had the opportunity to review in detail the proposal document, all written responses, and the notes of the public meetings.

14.3 The Director of Care and Learning, on reviewing all of the submissions, the notes of the meeting, and the Education Scotland report; concludes that the Proposal for a new school should be implemented and that the catchment area should be delineated as per Option B of the Proposal Paper. The reasons for this conclusion are set out above.

**15.0 Recommendation**

15.1 It is therefore recommended that Highland Council proceeds with the course of action set out at Paragraph 14.3 above.

**Bill Alexander**

**Director of Care and Learning**

**1 May 2018**