

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The proposal is to relocate St. Clement's School, Dingwall, to allow the creation of new accommodation

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS STATEMENT

THIS IS A PROPOSAL PAPER PREPARED IN TERMS OF THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY'S AGREED PROCEDURE TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010

INTRODUCTION

The Highland Council is proposing, subject to the outcome of the statutory consultation process:

- To replace the current St. Clement's School building with a new school building located on a site off Dochcarty Brae, Dingwall. Relocating the school would allow the construction of considerably improved accommodation.

The proposed changes, if approved, will be implemented when the new accommodation has been completed.

SUMMARY OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Proposal Paper Published

The proposal paper will be available for inspection, free of charge, at:

- St. Clement's School
- Dingwall Public Library

and published on the Highland Council website:

www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

Copies of this Proposal Paper are also available on request from:

Copies of this Proposal Paper are also available on request from:
Business Support Team
Education Service
County Buildings
High Street
Dingwall
IV159QN

E-mail: Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk

To request this information in an alternative format, e.g. large print, Braille, audio formats, or suitable language, please also contact the Copies of this Proposal Paper are also available on request from the Business Support Team, Education Service, County Buildings, High Street, Dingwall, IV159QN

E-mail: Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk

Formal notice of the Proposal and relevant information will be given and be made available, free of charge, to the consultees listed as follows:

- (i) Parents of pupils attending St. Clement's School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (ii) The Parent Council of St. Clement's School;
- (iii) All staff of the school.
- (iv) Members of Parliament and Members of the Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;
- (v) Trade union representatives;
- (vi) All Community Councils for the Highland Council wards of Dingwall and Seaforth; Black Isle; and Cromarty Firth; as well as Strathpeffer Community Council
- (vii) Education Scotland;

Advertisement in Local Media

A notice announcing the public meeting will be placed in the *Ross-shire Journal* and on the Highland Council's Facebook page.

Consultation Period

The consultation for this Proposal will run from 2 March 2022 and will end on 29 April 2022. This period allows for the statutory minimum of six weeks, including at least thirty school days.

Public Meeting

A public meeting will be held, the details of which are set out below:

10 March 2022 at 6.30pm, location to be advised.

Anyone wishing to attend the public meeting is invited to do so. The meeting will be convened by the Council, will be chaired by a senior elected councillor, and will be addressed by officers of the Education Service. Electronic invitations will be sent to all statutory consultees and the link for the meeting will be made available to others.

The meeting will be an opportunity for the public to hear more about the proposal; to ask questions about the proposal; and to have the views of all stakeholders recorded so that they can be taken into account. A note will be taken at the meeting of questions asked and views expressed. This note will be published on the Council website. The meeting will also be recorded.

The note will be forwarded to Education Scotland, along with other submissions and comments received by the Council during the consultation process.

Responses to the Proposals

Interested parties are invited to respond to the Proposals by making written or electronic submissions on the Proposals to:

Ian Jackson
Education Officer (Resources)
Camaghael Hostel
Fort William
PH33 7NE
Email: Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk

Or via an online form, a link to which can be found on

www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

When responding, you are invited to state your relationship with the school – for example, “pupil”, “parent”, “carer”, “relative”, “former pupil”, “teacher in school”, “member of the community” etc. However it is not compulsory to do so.

Those sending in a response, whether by letter or electronically should know that their response will be open to public scrutiny and may have to be supplied to anyone making a reasonable request to see it. If they do not wish their response to be made publicly available, they should clearly write on the document: "I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to Councillors and Council Officers of Highland Council". Otherwise, it will be assumed that the person making the response agrees to it being made publicly available. All written responses must be received by the last day of the consultation period, 29 April 2022 at 5.00pm.

Involvement of Education Scotland

When the Proposal Document is published, a copy will also be sent to Education Scotland by the Council. Education Scotland will also be sent, by 9 May 2022, a copy of any relevant written representations that are received by the Council from any person during the consultation period. Education Scotland will also receive the summary note of the public meeting that and so far as is practicable a copy of any other relevant documentation. Education Scotland will then prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal not later than 27 May 2022. In preparing their report, Education Scotland may visit the affected schools and make such enquiries of people there as they consider appropriate.

Review of Consultation Exercise

Highland Council will review the proposal having regard to the Education Scotland Report, written representations that it has received, and oral representations made at the public meeting. It will then prepare a Consultation Report. This Report will be published in electronic and printed formats and will be sent to anyone who submitted a written representation during consultation. It will be available on the Council website as well as at the affected school and local library, free of charge. The Report will include a summary of the written and oral representations made during consultation and a copy of the Education Scotland Report, together with the Council's considered response to the issues raised. The Report will include details of any alleged inaccuracies and/or omissions and how these have been handled. The Consultation Report will be published at least 3 weeks prior to being submitted to the Council's Education Committee, who will make a recommendation to the full Highland Council.

In publishing the report the Council will invite any person or party to make further representations to the Committee prior to its meeting. A notice to this effect will also be published on the Highland Council website.

At the present time the Council intends to publish its Report in October 2022, prior to submission to the Council's Education Committee in December 2022. However, this timescale may change depending on the nature of issues raised during consultation, and the need to give full consideration to those issues. In the latter event, the Report may not be submitted until a later Committee meeting.

Any proposal approved by the Education Committee would require to be confirmed by a subsequent meeting of the full Highland Council.

Note on Corrections

If any inaccuracy or omission is discovered in this Proposal paper, either by the Council or any other person, the Council will determine if relevant information has been omitted or, if the paper contains an inaccuracy. The Council will then take appropriate action, which may include the issue of a correction or the reissuing of the Proposal or the revision of the timescale for the consultation period, if appropriate. In that event, relevant consultees and HMI will be advised.

PROPOSAL

Legislative Background

- 1.1 The proposal is advanced within the context of all applicable legislation. Amongst other duties, education authorities are required to secure adequate and efficient provision of school education (S.1 of the Education Act 1980); and to publish or otherwise make available information as to their arrangements for the placing of children in schools under their management (S.28 of the 1980 Act)
- 1.2 In common with all public bodies in Scotland, the Highland Council also has a duty to provide Best Value. This includes making arrangements to secure continuous improvement in performance whilst maintaining an appropriate balance between quality and cost; and, in making those arrangements and securing that balance, to have regard to economy, efficiency, effectiveness, equal opportunities requirements and to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

Reason for the Proposal

- 2.1 This proposal is being advanced because St. Clement's school currently suffers from poor quality accommodation. Relocating the school would permit the construction of a new build school.
- 2.2 St. Clement's School provides for some of the most vulnerable young people in Highland, and the Council has had a long-standing commitment to replace the school.
- 2.3 In 2014, following inspection, HMIE noted:

“The buildings do not provide a satisfactory range or quality of facilities. Corridors and doors are narrow and challenge pupils with limited mobility. One classroom can only be accessed through the staffroom and there is a lack of space and specialist facilities.”

Whilst there have been some improvement works since, the current school is not suitable in its condition or layout as a special needs school.
- 2.4 A new build school offers the opportunity to address this long-standing issue and to provide appropriate accommodation for the young people attending St. Clement's.

Informal Consultation

- 3.1 Extensive informal discussions have been held with local elected councillors of Highland Council, with the Head Teacher of St. Clement's and with members of the parent body. Discussions with local elected members began in February 2019 and with parents in July 2019, and have continued since. The identification of suitable site options and the provision of funding have been key

factors in the time taken to arrive at the position set out in this Paper, and the length of the informal dialogue that has taken place. The informal discussions suggest that the parent body are overwhelmingly in favour of a new building for St. Clement's School.

- 3.2 Because the school takes in children from a wide area of Easter Ross and even beyond (see paragraph 4.1 below) one of the issues discussed with parents was the possibility of locating St. Clement's School away from the town of Dingwall. The Parent Council representatives favoured the school being located within Dingwall itself, due to the historic association between the school and the town, the transport links from Dingwall to other areas, and the nearby location of facilities such as the Dingwall Puffin Pool. For this reason, the examination of possible sites has been restricted to those in and around Dingwall itself.

St. Clement's School – Description

- 4.1 St. Clement's is one of 3 special schools run by Highland Council, and provides education to children in the 3-18 age group. It is located in the centre of Dingwall and admits pupils from a wide area of Easter Ross, with a few pupils attending from further afield. The number attending the school fluctuates and some attend on a part-time basis, but generally there are between 48-50 pupils. The school itself dates to the early years of the 20th century although there have been many building modifications down the years. The current school accommodation comprises the original main building, a modular annexe building that was installed in 2015 and an older modular unit. Overall the accommodation is currently rated "C – (Poor)" for both Condition and Suitability, mainly due to the state of the main building, having three separate buildings on the campus, and the limitations of some of the facilities, such as external areas. There is general agreement that the accommodation does not adequately support the delivery of education for some of our most vulnerable pupils, who are unable to attend a mainstream school. The proposed new build will significantly improve the learning environment for pupils. Further details on this are provided in Section 5 below.
- 4.2 There is general agreement that the school should be relocated to provide a better environment for learning. Highland Council
- 4.3 The proposed new school site is located off Dochcarty Brae, Dingwall. A drawing showing the approximate extent of the new site is at Appendix B, and a location drawing is at Appendix C. If agreed at the conclusion of the current consultation exercise, the building of the new school would be subject to planning permission.
- 4.4 This area of land would have to be purchased, and negotiations on this are progressing, subject to the successful conclusion of the statutory consultation exercise. It is currently designated as Housing Development, but it is intended to change this to Community Use in the revised Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan. The suggested layout is to suit the flood risk and tree protection zone.

- 4.5 Prior to proposing the site off Dochcarty Brae, the Council looked at a variety of other sites in the area:
- i. Land at Ferry Road, Dingwall – This was an area in the ownership of Dingwall and Highland Marts. Issues identified were a high risk of flooding, where a proposed flood protection scheme would not protect the field. The site is unlikely to ever be suitable for a school development and is not considered a viable option.
 - ii. Dingwall Primary School – An area within an existing school site, with the associated issues of disruption from a new build on a live school site. The area is in any case too small, and would incur too great a loss of school space. The access is via a restricted narrow road with pre-existing issues, and there is a flooding risk across the site.
 - iii. Dingwall Academy – an area within an existing school site, with the associated issues of disruption from a new build on a live school site. The area is in any case too small, and would incur too great a loss of school space. The area is also currently part of a Public Private Partnership (PPP) contract.
 - iv. Land at Old River Road – an area in the ownership of Dingwall and Highland Marts. The site requires Flood Risk Assessment which may affect the developable area of the site; Contamination Assessment; a Recreational Access Management Plan to avoid any adverse effects on the integrity of the Cromarty Firth SPA/Ramsar; and a Transport Assessment. The developable area is likely to be too small.
 - v. Former Depot Craig Road – an area of in the ownership of Highland Council. The site requires Flood Risk Assessment which may affect the developable area of the site; Contamination Assessment; a Recreational Access Management Plan to avoid any adverse effects on the integrity of the Cromarty Firth SPA/Ramsar; and a Transport Assessment. The developable area is in any case too small.
 - vi. St Clement's School Site (Plus Church Site) – this is the site of the existing school, owned partly by Highland Council and partly by the Church of Scotland. The site requires Flood Risk Assessment which may affect the developable area of the site; Contamination Assessment; a Recreational Access Management Plan to avoid any adverse effects on the integrity of the Cromarty Firth SPA/Ramsar; and a Transport Assessment. It's an existing school site, with the associated issues of disruption from a new build on a live school site. Existing buildings would require demolition and the current school would need relocation. The Council would need to purchase the church, and the area available is too small.
 - vii. Land at Gallows Hill – An area of in the ownership of Highland Council. This is a sloping site with a narrow access from Blackwells Street only, for these reasons is not considered a viable option.

- 4.6 The examination of other sites has led to the conclusion that the site off Dochcarty Brae is the only suitable one within Dingwall. As mentioned at paragraph 3.1 above, the informal consultation exercise has identified strong support for the building of the new school, and thereby for the site proposed.

Educational Benefits

- 5.1 Highland Council is of the view that the school environment should be of a quality that sustains and improves education provision, pupil performance and outcomes for the young people of Highland.
- 5.2 With the above aim in mind, Highland Council has publicly stated that pupils should be educated in facilities which are rated at least category B for each of Condition and Suitability.
- 5.3 It is generally recognised that poor quality school accommodation can be dispiriting for pupils, staff and parents, can limit the effectiveness of teaching (for example when a disproportionate amount of staff time is spent on building issues) and can pose issues for the safety and security of children.
- 5.4 At St. Clement's, the needs of every child must be placed at the centre of developing the new design. The new school would offer good quality accommodation that provides a safe, healthy and visually stimulating environment, flexible teaching spaces, better facilities for visiting specialists, and a healthier, less stressful environment. Pupils should also have the opportunity to engage in the widest possible range of activities beyond the core curriculum.
- 5.5 The new school would be of modern design, environmentally efficient, and allowing pupils the opportunity to enjoy a comfortable, naturally lit and well ventilated environment designed to meet the needs of the learners and their teachers; meeting the requirements for "A" assessments for both Suitability and Condition.
- 5.6 It would be important to include a degree of flexibility and adaptability within the design in order to provide options to alter spaces in the future in response to the changing needs of the school. This approach is likely to optimise the use of available space. Extensive engagement would take place with parents and other stakeholders about the detailed design of the school, following a decision to relocate the school after completion of the current consultation exercise.
- 5.7 Elements of the design might include, but are not limited to:
- Purpose built classrooms
 - Flexible learning and teaching spaces for pupils, including quiet rooms and activity/retreat rooms, which would maximise the use of space inside the building

- Multi-use games hall
 - Sensory and soft play rooms
 - HT office, reception/admin office, staff room, meeting room/staff base and FM/controls room
 - Storage, plant and medical room. Appropriate toilet provision including assisted toilets and showers.
 - Kitchen with dining area.
 - Design which will maximise the use of natural daylight and natural ventilation, together with heating, ventilation and electrical systems which provide modern requirements in an energy efficient and sustainable manner.
 - Security design features incorporated inside and outside the building to support and facilitate the safe management of all users of the building, with external public areas of the site being separated from the private secure pupil play areas
 - The landscaping around the school will be designed in conjunction with the school users to ensure that there is an interesting “play and learning” environment.
 - Safe access to the school with the appropriate arrangements for those arriving/departing on foot, by bicycle, by bus or by car.
- 5.8 The above overview provides an outline of the design opportunities that exist. These opportunities will be developed in conjunction with the school communities to ensure that the new school design takes account of the aspirations of future users of the facility.
- 5.9 In summary, the new school offers the prospect of strong educational benefit arising from improved accommodation.

Effects on School Transport

- 6.1 As the new school will be located less than a mile from the current site, there is not expected to be any significant effect on school transport arrangements.

Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements

- 7.1 The relocation will have no impact on school management or staffing arrangements.

Effect on the Local Community

- 8.1 The proposal is not expected to have any negative impact on the wider local community. It will retain the traditional link between St. Clement’s School and

the town of Dingwall, and the informal consultation exercise suggests there is wide community support for retaining that link.

Equalities Assessment

9.1 The Proposal will improve educational provision for disabled children, and as such will have a positive Equalities impact.

9.2 The proposal has been assessed as having no impact on the following Equality areas:

- Gender
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy or Maternity
- Marriage/Civil Partnership
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sexual Orientation
- Looked After Children
- Young Carers
- Children and Young People Living in Deprivation

9.3 In respect of age equality, the proposal relates to a school and therefore affects children in the 3-18 age group, and their parents. The proposal is advanced on the basis of educational benefit to the children in the area concerned. No negative age-related effects arise. Age is not a protected characteristic for the purposes of school provision.

Recommendation

10.1 Taking the above into account Highland Council recommends that St. Clement's School is relocated from its current site to a new site off Dochcarty Brae to allow for the construction of a new building.

10.2 This consultation paper is issued in terms of the authority's procedures to meet the relevant statutory requirements. Following the consultation period, a report and submissions received will be presented to the Education Committee of the Highland Council.

END OF PROPOSAL PAPER