



## **CONSULTATION REPORT Bucksburn Academy and Oldmachar Academy Rezoning**

This Consultation Report has been compiled in response to a public consultation carried out from January to March 2020, on proposals to rezone an area of the planned new Grandhome housing development, from Bucksburn Academy to Oldmachar Academy. The document summarises the feedback received on the proposals set out below and Aberdeen City Council's response to the verbal and written comments submitted by interested parties, in compliance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

### **Proposal:**

**To rezone an area of ground to the west of Whitestripes Avenue in Aberdeen, from Bucksburn Academy to Oldmachar Academy, with effect from 1 August 2020**

Maps illustrating the proposed changes to the above school zone boundaries are included at Annex A of this report.

## **1. METHODOLOGY**

This consultation was conducted in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. All requirements of the legislation have been met.

## **2. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS**

### **2.1 Public Event**

A public consultation event was held on 26 February 2020 to discuss the proposals. The event took place at Oldmachar Academy commencing at 7.00pm. The event was attended by 19 members of the public, all of whom were parents of pupils at Oldmachar Academy, or at primary schools within the Oldmachar Associated Schools Group.

### **2.2 Comments Received**

There were 72 responses to the consultation submitted via the Council's online consultation portal. Four written comments were also received via email, including a response from Oldmachar Academy's Parent Council.

Overall, 42 respondents indicated that they were not in support of the proposal, (although two of these appear to have mistakenly thought that the proposal was to rezone the whole of the Grandhome development to Bucksburn Academy, rather than to Oldmachar Academy), whilst 30 respondents indicated that they were in support of the proposals.

All of the submissions, anonymised as necessary, are available to view on the Council's website: [www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/schoolsconsultations](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/schoolsconsultations)

### **2.3 Issues Raised**

The main issues raised at the public meeting and in the written responses to the consultation, are summarised below.

Respondents who indicated that they did not agree with the proposal, raised the following points:

- Two of the email respondents expressed concern at the possibility of pupils living within the Grandhome development being required to attend Bucksburn Academy, due mainly to the travel distance involved. It appeared that these respondents had understood that the proposal was to rezone the whole of the Grandhome development to Bucksburn Academy. The respondents were contacted to explain that the proposal was in fact for the area to be rezoned to Oldmachar Academy.
- The most common concern about the proposals, which was raised by more than 30 respondents to the consultation and during the public meeting, was in relation to a perception that Oldmachar Academy does not have sufficient capacity to accommodate additional pupils from Grandhome, should the proposed changes to the school zones be approved. Some of the respondents felt that there would be a negative impact on pupils' learning, if the school was to exceed its capacity as a result of the changes.

- A small number of online respondents questioned why the new housing at Grandhome had been approved by the Council, without having put a plan in place for providing the required school capacity to accommodate the development.
- Some other respondents also commented that there appeared to be no long term plan for secondary education in Bridge of Don and Danestone, and that whilst a new school may ultimately be built at Grandhome, the existing school buildings might not be improved.
- At the public meeting and in some of the online responses, it was suggested by respondents that the school roll forecasts used by the Council to plan the estate are not accurate, and that the proposed changes could result in the school exceeding capacity.
- Over 20 respondents also expressed a concern about possible insufficient numbers of teaching staff available to accommodate an increase in pupil numbers, and that this would mean the school would be unable to offer a broad range of subject choices for pupils. Others suggested that this could also lead to larger class sizes.
- Approximately 16 online respondents highlighted issues relating to the condition and suitability of the Oldmachar Academy building, and suggested that this might prevent the school from safely accommodating any additional pupils from the Grandhome development. This concern was also raised at the public meeting. Some respondents suggested that the school does not have adequate social spaces for pupils, and others felt that there had been a general lack of investment in the building.
- Several respondents to the online consultation and at the public meeting highlighted concerns about possible increased traffic levels as a result of the proposed changes, and about road safety for pupils arriving at and leaving the school site.

Respondents who indicated that they were in support of the proposal, gave the following reasons for this:

- Fifteen respondents noted that they could see logic in zoning the whole of the Grandhome development to Oldmachar Academy, as this would provide a safer and shorter walking route to school for all pupils living in this area.
- Seven respondents also noted that they could see benefits in all pupils from the Grandhome development attending the same school, in that this would help to promote community cohesion.
- Six respondents noted that Bucksburn Academy is close to full capacity, and felt that the rezoning proposal would help to address this.

## **2.4 Education Scotland Report**

An essential element of the statutory consultation process is the involvement of Education Scotland, whose report is provided as Annex B of this Consultation Report.

In its report, Education Scotland noted that the proposal to rezone the area of the Grandhome development from Bucksburn Academy to Oldmachar Academy has some educational benefit, as it reduces medium term pressures in capacity at Bucksburn Academy, and provides shorter walking and cycling routes to school for the pupils living in the affected area.

The Education Scotland report highlighted the main issues raised by stakeholders during the consultation, including concerns regarding available pupil capacity at Oldmachar Academy, possible difficulties in recruiting teachers, and potential increases in traffic in the vicinity of Oldmachar Academy.

The report stated that there is a need for the Council to continue engaging with parents and other stakeholders on its plans for ensuring equitable education provision for all young people across the north of Aberdeen, and suggested that it would be helpful for the Council to review the current car drop-off and traffic flow arrangements around Oldmachar Academy.

### **3. THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO ISSUES RAISED DURING THE CONSULTATION PERIOD AND CONTAINED WITHIN THE EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT**

#### **3.1 Capacity concerns at Oldmachar Academy, and long term planning for Grandhome and the Bridge of Don**

As the Grandhome development continues to grow over the coming years, it is anticipated that there will be a need for new secondary school capacity to serve this new community, and provision for this has been included within the masterplan for the development. When planning consent for the development was granted, it was stipulated that a financial contribution would be required from the developer, to be used in providing new school capacity to serve the development.

Prior to any new secondary school being constructed, however, it is important that adequate education provision is made available for the initial numbers of young people who will be living in the new community, by using available capacity within the existing school estate. This is why the eastern section of the Grandhome development is currently already included within the Oldmachar Academy catchment zone, and why it is proposed to also include the western section of the development within the Oldmachar Academy zone.

Oldmachar Academy has a total pupil capacity of 1104, and the pupil roll at the school during 2019/20 was 716, leaving an available capacity of 388 pupil places. The Council's current school roll forecast for Oldmachar Academy, which indicates the likely pupil roll at the school in each of the next seven years, and takes into account all of the new houses planned for the Grandhome development which currently fall within the Oldmachar Academy zone, indicates that the pupil roll is likely to increase gradually year on year until at least 2026, when the roll is expected to reach approximately 1044. This would leave an available capacity in 2026 of approximately 60 pupil places.

Whilst there is a small number of existing houses within the area affected by this proposal, it is understood that there are currently no young people living within these houses who attend the affected schools, and so rezoning these houses from Bucksburn Academy to Oldmachar Academy is not expected to alter pupil numbers at

either of the schools. Had there been any young people living in these houses currently attending Bucksburn Academy, then they would be entitled to remain at that school, after the rezoning to Oldmachar Academy took effect, and any younger siblings of these pupils would also be entitled to attend Bucksburn Academy after reaching secondary school age, in order to keep family groups together.

The developer for Grandhome has confirmed that the area of the Grandhome development which is affected by the proposal, and which would be rezoned to Oldmachar Academy, is not due to be developed until after 2026. This means that there would be no new houses completed or occupied within the rezoned area before this date, and therefore the pupil roll at Oldmachar Academy would be unaffected by new house building in the rezoned area for at least the next seven years, should the rezoning go ahead.

The developer has also indicated that the build rate for the affected area of the development after 2026 is expected to be approximately 175 houses per year. Based on current figures used to calculate the number of pupils per household within the Oldmachar Academy catchment zone, this would generate approximately 18 additional pupils at the school, in each year after the new houses begin to be occupied, if the area was to be rezoned to Oldmachar Academy.

In summary, the above figures show that the proposed rezoning will not have any impact on the available capacity at Oldmachar Academy until at least 2026, and whilst it is not currently possible to accurately predict pupil numbers beyond that time, based on current forecasts and the planned build rate of houses in the affected area, the school is unlikely to reach or exceed its available capacity until at least 2029/2030. It is anticipated that well before reaching this point, additional school provision for all pupils living with the Grandhome development at that time would be in place, or at least detailed plans for this would be known, which would help to ensure that the pupil roll at Oldmachar Academy remains within its available capacity in the longer term.

Officers are therefore confident that the proposed rezoning will not lead to Oldmachar Academy exceeding its pupil capacity. However they will continue to regularly monitor the actual and forecast pupil numbers at the school, and will take appropriate action as required, should there be any risk of the pupil roll exceeding available capacity. The Council will also continue to engage with parents and stakeholders of all schools in this area of the city, to consult on longer term plans for ensuring sufficient and appropriate levels of education provision are maintained.

### **3.2 Accuracy of the school roll forecasts**

It is acknowledged that it is not possible to provide entirely accurate predictions of pupil numbers in future years, particularly when attempting to predict numbers several years into the future, due to the wide range of factors which can influence these figures. However, officers are confident that the methodology used to calculate school roll forecasts is sufficiently robust, to give a clear indication of trends and likely changes in pupil numbers over time, and to highlight potential problems with schools reaching or exceeding available capacity. Forecasts are monitored regularly and where they indicate possible shortfalls in capacity in the short to medium term, mitigating actions are put in place to address these.

### **3.3 Staffing shortages**

The Council continues to face challenges with teacher recruitment in many parts of the city; however the situation is improving. Vacancy numbers have reduced by approximately half in the last two years. Given the anticipated impacts on the pupil roll

at Oldmachar Academy as a result of this proposal, as detailed above, officers do not consider that the proposal would lead to any significant difficulties with teacher recruitment at the school.

### **3.4 Condition and Suitability of the Oldmachar Academy building**

The condition of the Oldmachar Academy building is currently graded as 'B' (Satisfactory). However the suitability of the building is graded as 'C' (Poor). Officers were due to undertake an updated suitability survey for the building earlier this year, in order to identify specific required improvements so that these could be considered for an allocation of funding within the Council's Condition and Suitability programme; however this survey was delayed as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. It is hoped that it will be possible to safely undertake the survey later this year, and subject to the allocation of sufficient funding, any necessary improvements to the suitability of the building will be undertaken in due course.

Due to the timescales and relatively small forecasted increase in pupils numbers resulting from this proposal as described above, it is not anticipated that the proposal would have any negative impact on the suitability of the building.

### **3.5 Increased traffic levels at Oldmachar Academy**

Due to the timescales and the relatively small forecasted increase in pupils numbers resulting from this proposal as described above, it is not anticipated that the proposal would lead to any significant impact on traffic levels in the vicinity of Oldmachar Academy. However, officers will continue to monitor car use and traffic flow around the school, and will liaise with the school management team regarding any required mitigating action, should there be an increased concern for the safety of pupils when arriving at or leaving the school grounds.

## **4. COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 9(1) OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010 AND CONSIDERATION OF THE PROPOSALS**

Following the conclusion of the consultation period, Section 9(1) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, requires the Council to review the relevant proposal, having had regard to any written representations that have been received by it during the consultation period, any oral representations made to it at the public meeting held on 26 February, and Education Scotland's report.

In terms of Section 10(2) (e) of the said Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, the Consultation Report is required to contain a statement explaining how the Council complied with its duty under the above Section 9(1) of the Act.

With relation to Section 9(1) of the 2010 Act and having considered all of the information received during the consultation process, officers are satisfied that no comments have been received which would have caused them to review the merits of the proposal to make changes to the school zones for Bucksburn Academy and Oldmachar Academy.

When submitting the original proposal for this change, it was anticipated that elected members would be in a position to make a decision on the proposal before August 2020, and it was therefore anticipated that if approved, the changes to the school zones would take effect from 1 August 2020. As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, the scheduled meeting of the Education Operational Delivery Committee in May 2020

was cancelled, and therefore the committee was not able to consider the proposals prior to the suggested implementation date.

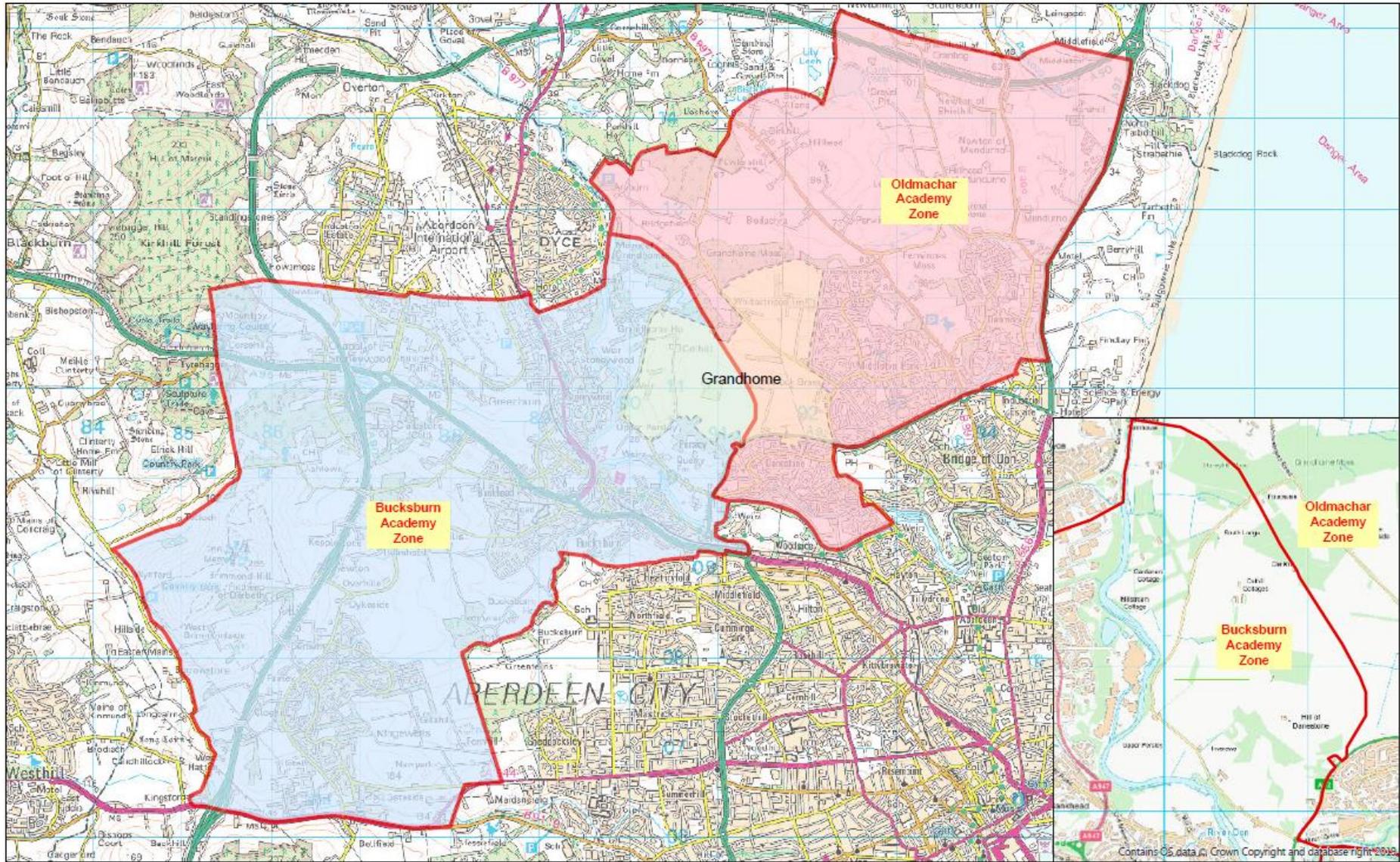
It is therefore proposed that, if approved by the Committee, the changes to the school zones are instead implemented from 5 January 2021. Given that the changes will not affect any existing pupils or families, this change in implementation date is not expected to create any difficulties.

## **5. RECOMMENDATION**

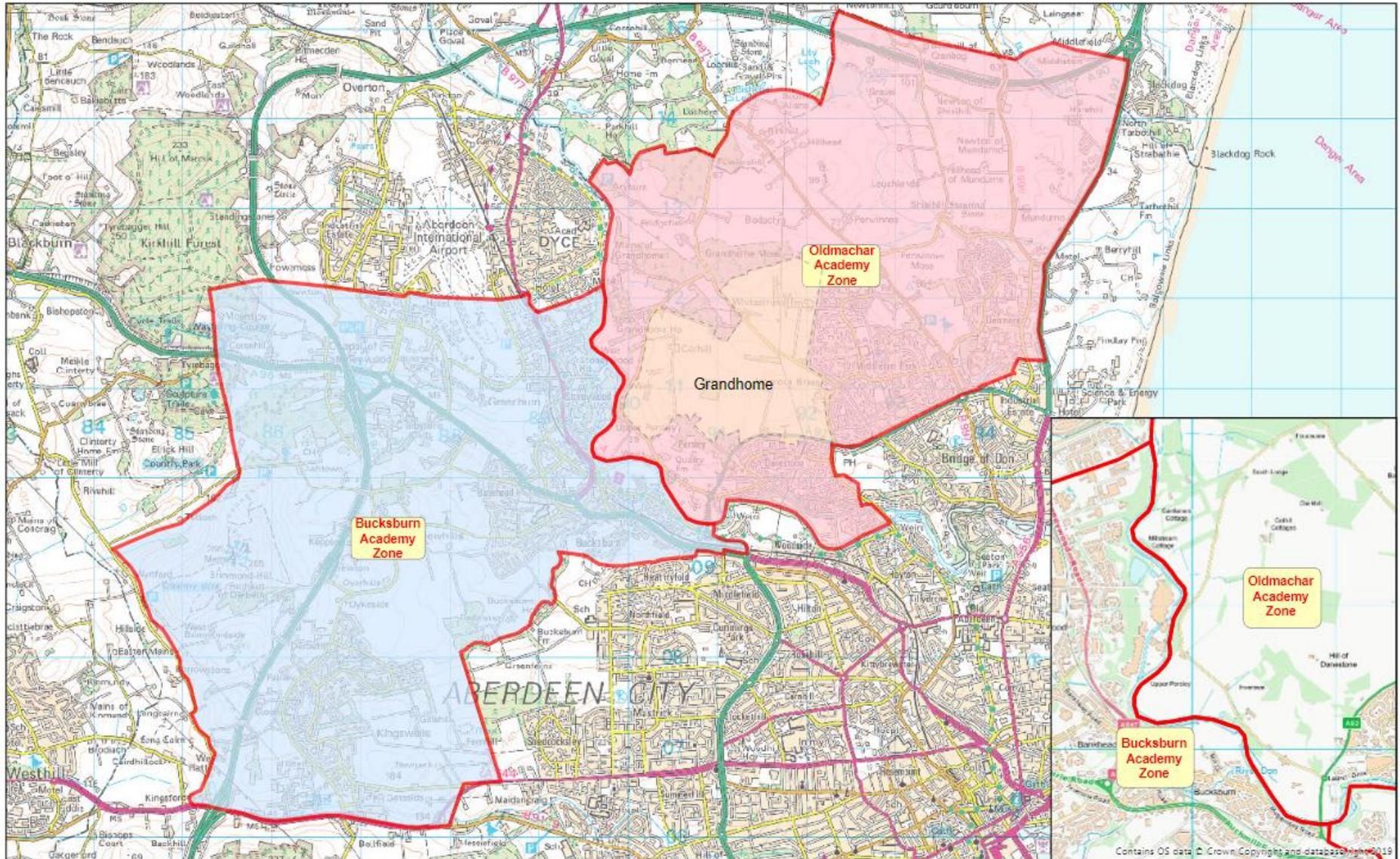
It is recommended that the Education Operational Delivery Committee agrees to implement the proposal to rezone an area of ground to the west of Whitestripes Avenue in Aberdeen, from Bucksburn Academy to Oldmachar Academy, with effect from 5 January 2021.

**Steve Whyte**  
**Director of Resources**  
**September 2020**

### Bucksburn Academy and Oldmachar Academy zones (existing)



# Bucksburn Academy and Oldmachar Academy zones (proposed)



## REPORT FROM EDUCATION SCOTLAND

### Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

#### Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeen City Council to rezone an area from Bucksburn Academy to Oldmachar Academy.

March 2020

#### 1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Aberdeen City Council's proposal to rezone an area from Bucksburn Academy to Oldmachar Academy. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for young people of the schools; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other young people in the area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 26 February 2020 in connection with the council's proposals; and
- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others.

#### 2. Consultation process

2.1 Aberdeen City Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The statutory consultation period ran from 27 January to 15 March 2020. A public meeting was held on the 26 February 2020 in Oldmachar Academy. The consultation document was available to stakeholders including Parent Councils, parents and young people of both schools, and elected representatives for the area. Copies of the consultation document were available at the schools affected by the proposal, local libraries, the council's headquarters and on the council website.

2.3 The public meeting was attended by 19 members of the public. The council received 72 responses through an online survey and four email responses. Of the 72 responses to the online survey, 30 were in favour of the proposal and 42 against. The main areas of concern raised were about the capacity of both schools to cope with additional numbers both in regard to specific proposal and wider planned and potential housing developments. Overall, respondents who commented in relation to Bucksburn Academy were in favour of the proposal. Respondents who commented in relation to Oldmachar Academy were concerned about the potential negative impact on school accommodation and resources in relation to issues such as social space and teacher recruitment. A minority of respondents commented on the need for wider education estate planning for the whole of the Bridge of Don area. A few stakeholders raised concerns about the potential increase in traffic around Oldmachar Academy.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council outlines how the proposal to change the catchment areas will have some educational benefits. It outlines that the proposal will establish safer walking routes to school for young people in the area affected. The council believes that both schools will have viable pupil rolls under the proposal and that this will enable teacher staffing levels to be maintained. In turn this will enable the provision of an appropriate curriculum for young people. There is potential educational benefit to this proposal as it would contribute to reducing the projected medium term increase in the school roll at Bucksburn Academy. It also provides shorter routes to school for the young people who will live in the area under consideration.

3.2 A minority of stakeholders who responded agree with the proposal to change catchment boundaries. The main reason being that the proposal would reduce future increases in the roll of Bucksburn Academy. In both schools, parents and other stakeholders are concerned about the capacity of their school to cope with additional numbers. There are a number of housing developments underway or planned in both the current catchment areas. Almost all respondents, whether in favour of the proposal or against, raised concerns about increasing school rolls across the wider area. There is a need for the council to continue to engage parents and other stakeholders on how they plan to ensure equitable provision for all young people, whilst meeting the demands the projected increase in school rolls will place on the educational estate across north Aberdeen.

3.3 Most of those who commented about routes to school acknowledge that the proposal will be beneficial for pupils who would live in the area under consideration. HM Inspectors are of the view zoning the area under consideration to Oldmachar Academy will allow for shorter walking and cycling routes to school for pupils. A few respondents are concerned about the increase in traffic the proposal could generate around Oldmachar Academy. Should the proposal go ahead it would be helpful for the council to review car drop-off and traffic flow arrangements around the school.

3.4 Almost all of those respondents who commented specifically about Oldmachar Academy, including the school's Parent Council, are concerned about how well the school will accommodate any increase in the school roll. Stakeholders are worried about the

pressure this will put on the accommodation, particularly social spaces. Other concerns relate to the recruitment of any additional teachers that may be required.

3.5 Although there are currently no young people living in the small number of existing houses in the area whom this would affect and it is not stated in the proposal, the council has confirmed that it would support younger siblings of young people attending Bucksburn Academy at the time changes are implemented. They will be entitled to attend Bucksburn Academy, in order to keep family groups together.

## 4. Summary

Overall, the proposal has some educational benefit. It reduces the medium term pressures in capacity at Bucksburn Academy. In addition, it provides shorter walking and cycling routes to school. The council acknowledges the need to continue to engage stakeholders in its planning for school provision across the catchments areas of both schools as planned and future housing developments progress.

**HM Inspectors**  
**April 2020**