



## CONSULTATION REPORT

### **New Hazlehead Academy Campus and alteration of existing secondary school catchment areas for Hazlehead, Countesswells and Kingswells**

This Consultation Report has been compiled in response to a public consultation carried out from 26 February to 22 April 2024, relating to the Council's plans to build a new secondary school to replace the existing Hazlehead Academy. The consultation focused on a proposal to make changes to the existing Hazlehead and Countesswells secondary school catchment areas, which also include Kingswells, to create a new catchment area which would be served by the proposed new school.

The document summarises the feedback received on the proposal set out below and Aberdeen City Council's response to the 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 merge the existing secondary school catchment areas for Hazlehead, Countesswells and Kingswells, to form a new catchment area to be served by the planned replacement building for Hazlehead Academy**

Maps illustrating the proposed changes to the school catchment 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 Events

Three public consultation events were held during the consultation period to allow consultees the opportunity to discuss the proposals with officers. The details of these events and the number of people who attended each one are shown below.

| Date & Time                                       | Venue                | Attendees |
|---|----------------------|-----------|
| Wednesday 20 <sup>th</sup> March 2023, 7pm to 8pm | Kingswells School    | 32        |
| Thursday 21 <sup>st</sup> March 2023, 7pm to 8pm  | Countesswells School | 20        |
| Tuesday 26 <sup>th</sup> March 2023, 7pm to 8pm   | Hazlehead Academy    | 11        |

### 2.2 Comments Received

156 online questionnaire responses were submitted via the Council's consultation portal, and one response was submitted using a paper version of the online questionnaire. Eight written responses were also received via email, including a submission from Kingswells School Parent Council.

Overall, 75 respondents indicated that they were in support of the proposal, whilst 81 respondents indicated that they were not.

### 2.3 Issues Raised

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

Comments from respondents who indicated that they were in agreement with the proposals included:

- **Benefits of the new school:** Some of the respondents mentioned the benefits of having a new school building with better facilities, more space, and a modern design. They also hoped that the new school would help improve educational outcomes.
- **Preference for Hazlehead over Bucksburn:** Some of the respondents from Kingswells expressed their preference for their children to attend Hazlehead Academy over Bucksburn Academy. They cited reasons such as shorter travel distances, easier co-ordination with family life and work, and having access to better facilities at the new school.
- **Concerns about the capacity and size of the new school:** Whilst expressing their overall support for the proposals, some of the respondents expressed concerns about the capacity and size of the new school, given the projected growth of the population in the catchment areas. They wondered if the new school would be able to accommodate all of the pupils without overcrowding or compromising the quality of education.
- **Need for infrastructure and transport improvements:** Some of the respondents who supported the proposal also highlighted the need for infrastructure and transport improvements to support the new school, especially for the pupils coming from Countesswells and Kingswells. They suggested that the Council should provide safe and accessible footpaths, cycle paths, bus

services, and link roads to connect the new school with the surrounding areas. They also requested that the new school should have a public swimming pool, as the closure of the Hazlehead pool was regretted by many.

**Issue of school name and identity:** Some people suggested that a new name should be considered for the school to reflect the merged catchment areas, if the changes go ahead. They believe that a new name would help to foster a sense of community and belonging among students from all areas, and promote a fresh start for the new school. This point was also raised in the response from Kingswells School Parent Council.

Comments from respondents who indicated that they were not in agreement with the proposals included:

- **Concerns about the size of the school and its capacity to accommodate all pupils:** Many people including Kingswells School Parent Council expressed concerns that the proposed school would not be large enough to accommodate all pupils from the merged catchment areas. They suggested that the school may quickly reach capacity, leading to overcrowded classrooms and strained resources, which could negatively impact the quality of learning and teaching. Others were concerned that the planned size of the school is too large, and that this will be detrimental to the quality of learning and teaching due to the high numbers of pupils attending the school. They asked whether teaching and management staff numbers would be sufficient for the number of pupils at the school.
- **Concerns about the safety and practicality of transportation to the new school:** Many people raised concerns about the safety and practicality of travelling to the new school. They pointed out that there are no safe walking or cycling routes to the school from certain areas, and questioned whether school transport would be provided.
- **Disappointment about the change in plans for a secondary school in Countesswells:** Several people expressed disappointment about the change in plans for a secondary school at Countesswells. They felt that the original plan to build a secondary school in Countesswells should be pursued, as it would provide a more local and sustainable solution for the growing community.
- **Concerns about the impact on children's education and wellbeing:** Several people expressed concerns about the impact of the proposed changes on children's education and well-being. They were worried that the disruption caused by changing catchment areas could negatively impact children's mental health, academic performance, and social relationships.
- **Concerns about the reputation and performance of Hazlehead Academy:** A small number of people raised concerns about the reputation and perceived performance of Hazlehead Academy. They were worried that the school has a poor reputation for academic achievement, behaviour and discipline, and that merging the catchment areas could exacerbate these issues.
- **Concerns about the impact on traffic and the local community:** Some people expressed concerns about the impact of the proposed changes on traffic and the local community around the site of the school. They worry that the increased number of students and staff traveling to the new school could lead to increased traffic congestion, safety risks, and disruption to the local community.

- **Concerns about the rezoning of Kingsford School:** A small number of respondents had concerns that the proposal would result in children who attend Kingsford School and who live in Sheddocksley no longer being included in the catchment area for Hazlehead Academy.
- **Questions around the timing of the proposed changes:** Some respondents, including Kingswells School Parent Council, were concerned that if the proposed changes to catchment areas were only to be implemented once the new school building has opened, this could result in children from Kingswells requiring to move from Bucksburn Academy to the new school part way through an academic year, which could impact negatively on their education.

## **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 their report, His Majesty's Inspectors agreed that there are educational benefits to the proposal, noting the growing pressures on pupil numbers at Bucksburn Academy and Hazlehead Academy, and acknowledging that the proposed new school would help to address these pressures. The report authors also highlight the benefits to pupils of an enhanced learning environment, with digitally enhanced and accessible learning spaces, which the new school would provide.

The report also noted that a significant number of respondents to the consultation were not in support of the proposals, citing concerns about the size of the proposed new school, and that its capacity may be exceeded within a few years of it opening. The questions raised by stakeholders about school transport arrangements, the potential for the school being given a new name, and what may happen if the new school construction does not run to schedule, were also referred to in the Education Scotland report.

The report suggested that the Council should consult Bòrd na Gàidhlig with reference to the changes which may impact on Gaelic Medium Education at Hazlehead Academy, and that it should continue to liaise with parents and other stakeholders as plans and designs for the new school develop, and to help address the concerns which were raised during the consultation. It also recommended that the Council reviews travel arrangements to ensure that there are safe routes to school for all pupils within the school's catchment area.

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

### **3.1 Size and capacity of the new school**

In response to concerns raised by stakeholders that the school may not be large enough for the number of pupils likely to be attending in the future, if the proposed changes to the catchment area are approved, officers have carefully analysed the available data and recent trends with regard to house building and pupil numbers in this area of the city, and continue to be confident that the proposed new school will be sufficient to accommodate all pupils from the proposed catchment area for the foreseeable future.

There are many factors which have the potential to influence future pupil numbers, and officers will continue to monitor these closely over the coming years, to determine if and when any further secondary school provision may be needed to serve the growing community at Countesswells in particular. Any developments or requirements for further work on this will be provided to Committee members via annual updates to the School Estate Plan.

In terms of the concerns regarding the large size of the new school building potentially having a detrimental impact on learning and teaching, officers provided assurance in the public meetings that the school would be well managed by a staff and management team of sufficient size for the number of pupils attending, and that there would be no detriment to individual pupils' educational experiences. Whilst the proposed school would be the largest in Aberdeen City, there are examples of other similarly sized schools in other parts of Scotland which operate successfully. These include, for example, Inverurie Community Campus, Oban High School, Williamwood High School (East Renfrewshire) and the new Perth and Kinross High School, which is due for completion this summer.

### **3.2 Transport and travel to the new school**

It is acknowledged that arrangements for safely travelling to the new school would need to be carefully considered and clearly communicated to pupils and parents, if the proposals are accepted. As plans for the new school building take shape, work will also be undertaken to establish safe and sustainable routes to school, and officers will work with the relevant Council departments to put clear plans in place, which will be shared with the school communities well in advance of the new school opening.

### **3.3 Requests to revert back to plans for a new school at Countesswells**

The commitment to provide a new secondary school within Countesswells was based on a planned rate of housing construction for this new community which unfortunately has not been achieved to date. This means that the numbers of families and therefore the number of children living in Countesswells is much lower than had been anticipated by this point of the development, and based on progress so far, the rate at which those numbers are likely to continue to grow over the coming years is now also much lower than had been originally expected.

Any new secondary school would require to be built with a capacity of at least 1000 pupils, to help make the project viable but also to ensure that the school can run efficiently and be sufficiently staffed to provide high quality learning and teaching. Currently, there are only approximately 50 secondary school aged children living in Countesswells (of varying ages). If a new school was to be constructed at Countesswells, this would also be attended by pupils living in Kingswells, as and when they reach secondary school age. This would generate a further 50-60 pupils per year who are eligible to attend the new school. Based on these numbers, it would take several years before there would be sufficient numbers of pupils attending the school to make it viable. Running a school with very low pupil numbers would also risk impacting negatively on the quality of learning and teaching that it could provide.

It is likely that house building at Countesswells will continue over the coming years, and that in the long term more families will move in to the area, although the precise rate at which this will happen is less clear. If the proposals for the new catchment area for Hazlehead Academy are accepted, officers will continue to monitor the situation and the numbers of pupils living within Countesswells on a regular basis, and any requirements for additional education provision to be established to serve the needs of the growing community will be brought forward for consideration as the need arises.

### **3.4 School Performance and impact on children's education and wellbeing**

The most recent process of inspection for Hazlehead Academy concluded in July 2023, when HM Inspectors acknowledged both the improvements made by the school, and their confidence in the school's continued capacity for improvement. In relation to performance, data suggests that attainment at Hazlehead Academy is ahead in a number of measures, with young people performing ahead of the virtual comparator in key areas such as literacy and numeracy at Levels 4, 5 and 6.

The measure of *Attainment for all* also shows a three-year picture of improvement for the school, which is often in line with or ahead of the virtual comparator.

As part of the local authority quality improvement processes, officer teams visited Hazlehead Academy in March 2024, and observed “highly positive relationships” evident across the school. Further, the team noted “*Hazlehead Academy’s values of confidence, ambition, inclusion and respect are evident through attitudes and behaviours in classrooms and in corridors.*”

### **3.5 Impact on traffic and the local community**

The concerns raised by stakeholders about the impact on the road network around the Hazlehead Academy site, as a result of the proposed increase in size of the school, has been noted by officers. If the proposals are accepted, this will be considered as part of the planning application for the new school, and any requirements for improvements to road safety as part of that assessment will need to be implemented prior to the new school building opening. The new school campus design will be exemplar in terms of reducing carbon emissions and will also provide pupils, staff and the wider community with the opportunity for more greener active travel. The design will include elements to encourage sustainable methods of travel to school, including the provision of shower and changing facilities for staff, secure cycling storage, Electrical Vehicle (EV) charging points and infrastructure for future conversion of further spaces to EV. Design measures will be incorporated into the proposals to enhance accessibility through carefully designed walking and cycle routes within and around the site, enabling active travel as a priority over vehicle drop off.

### **3.6 Consideration of a new name for the school**

Officers have noted that a number of respondents to the consultation felt that consideration should be given to renaming the school, to reflect the changes to its catchment area, if the proposals are approved. Whilst renaming the school is not under consideration at this time, it will remain under review, as the project to design and develop the new school building progresses.

### **3.7 Impact on Sheddocksley and Kingsford School**

Feedback received during the consultation from parents of pupils at Kingsford School included some concerns about the possibility of Sheddocksley no longer being included in the catchment area for Hazlehead Academy, if the proposed changes go ahead. The proposed changes to the catchment area do not impact on Sheddocksley or Kingsford School, which would remain part of the Hazlehead Associated Schools Group regardless of whether the proposals are accepted or not. In response to the concerns raised, a message was sent out to all parents at the school in April 2024, to confirm that there are no plans to remove Sheddocksley from the catchment area for Hazlehead Academy.

### **3.8 Consideration of timing for the proposed changes**

Officers acknowledge and understand the concerns raised during the consultation by some parents about the possible timing of a move to the new school building, especially for new S1 pupils living in Kingswells. If the new building were to open part way through a school year, this could mean these pupils beginning their S1 year at Bucksburn Academy, before then moving to the new building at Hazlehead when it opens, which would be disruptive to their education.

Having considered this, officers have confirmed that should the proposed changes to the catchment area be accepted, it would be recommended that the changes should take effect from 1 August 2027. This would allow arrangements to be made for pupils from Kingswells to transfer to Hazlehead Academy from the start of the school session in August, even if the new building is not due to open until later in the year. This would enable them to be a part of the school community from the beginning of the school year, and move to the new building along with their peers at Hazlehead once it opens. If necessary, arrangements would be made to ensure there is sufficient additional space in the existing building to accommodate the higher pupil numbers, until the transfer to the new building is complete.

### **3.9 Contingency plans for potential delays to the build**

Some consultees who spoke to HM Inspectors raised questions about contingency planning, if the new school is not completed according to the planned schedule. Whilst the possibility of unexpected delays to a complex and large scale construction project such as this one cannot be ruled out entirely, the project will be carefully planned and programmed to avoid as far as possible such delays impacting on the target completion date. Contingency planning will be an essential part of the overall project planning process, and the priority will be to minimise any impact on learning and teaching. Robust governance and project reporting arrangements will track progress and ensure project timelines are adhered to, any risk of slippage will be assessed and escalated accordingly. Engagement and communication with the school community will continue throughout the duration of the project to ensure the successful delivery of the new school campus.

### **3.10 Gaelic Medium Education**

Officers have made contact with Bòrd na Gàidhlig to share with them plans for the new school and proposed changes to the catchment area.

## **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 meetings held in March, 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.

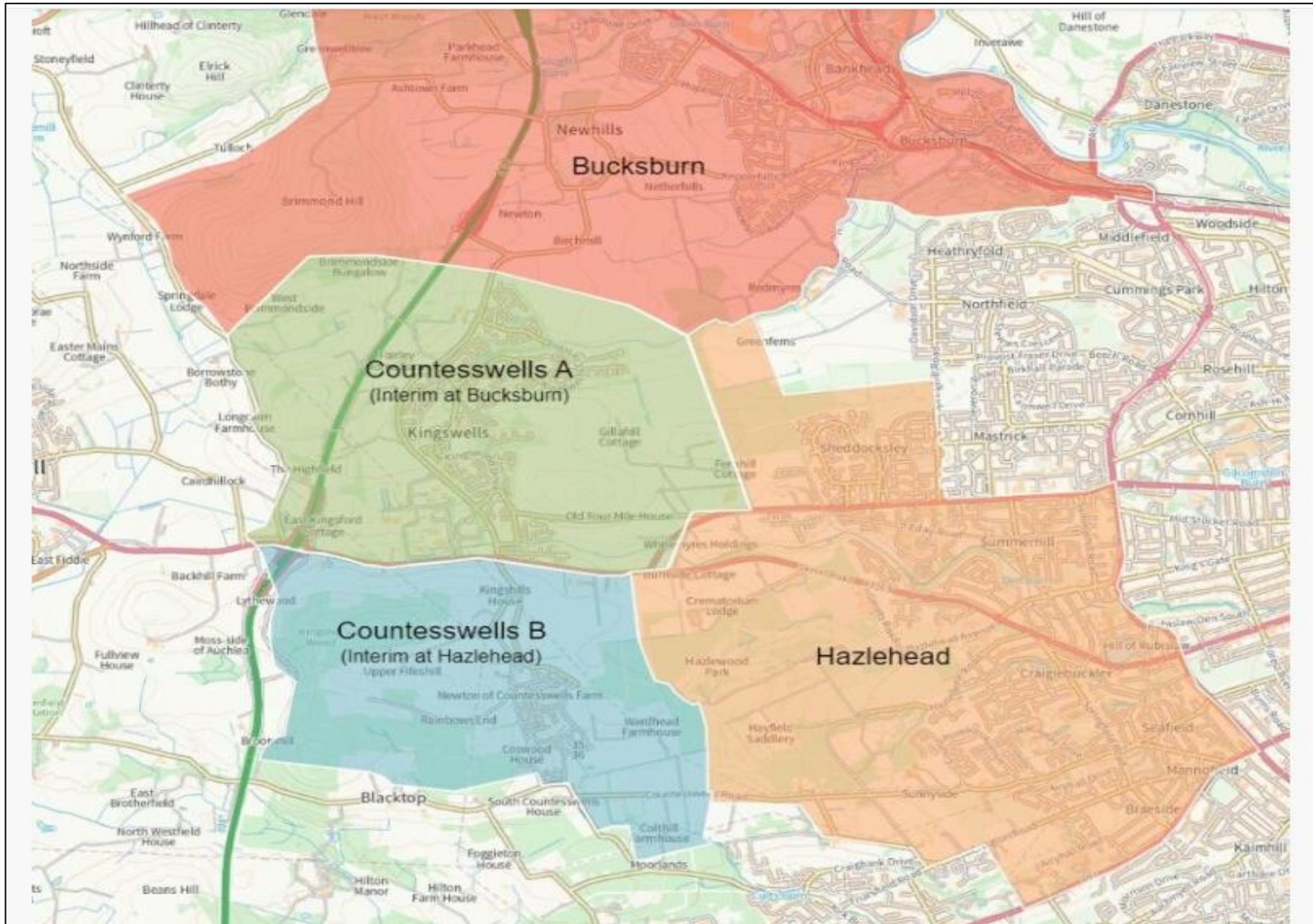
With relation to Section 9(1) of the 2010 Act and having considered all of the information received during the consultation process, officers have concluded that the proposed changes to catchment area for Hazlehead Academy remains appropriate, and that there is no reason to change this.

## **5. RECOMMENDATION**

In summary, it is recommended that the Education and Children's Services Committee agrees to implement the proposed changes to the catchment area for Hazlehead Academy, as defined within the maps at Annex A, with effect from 1 August 2027.

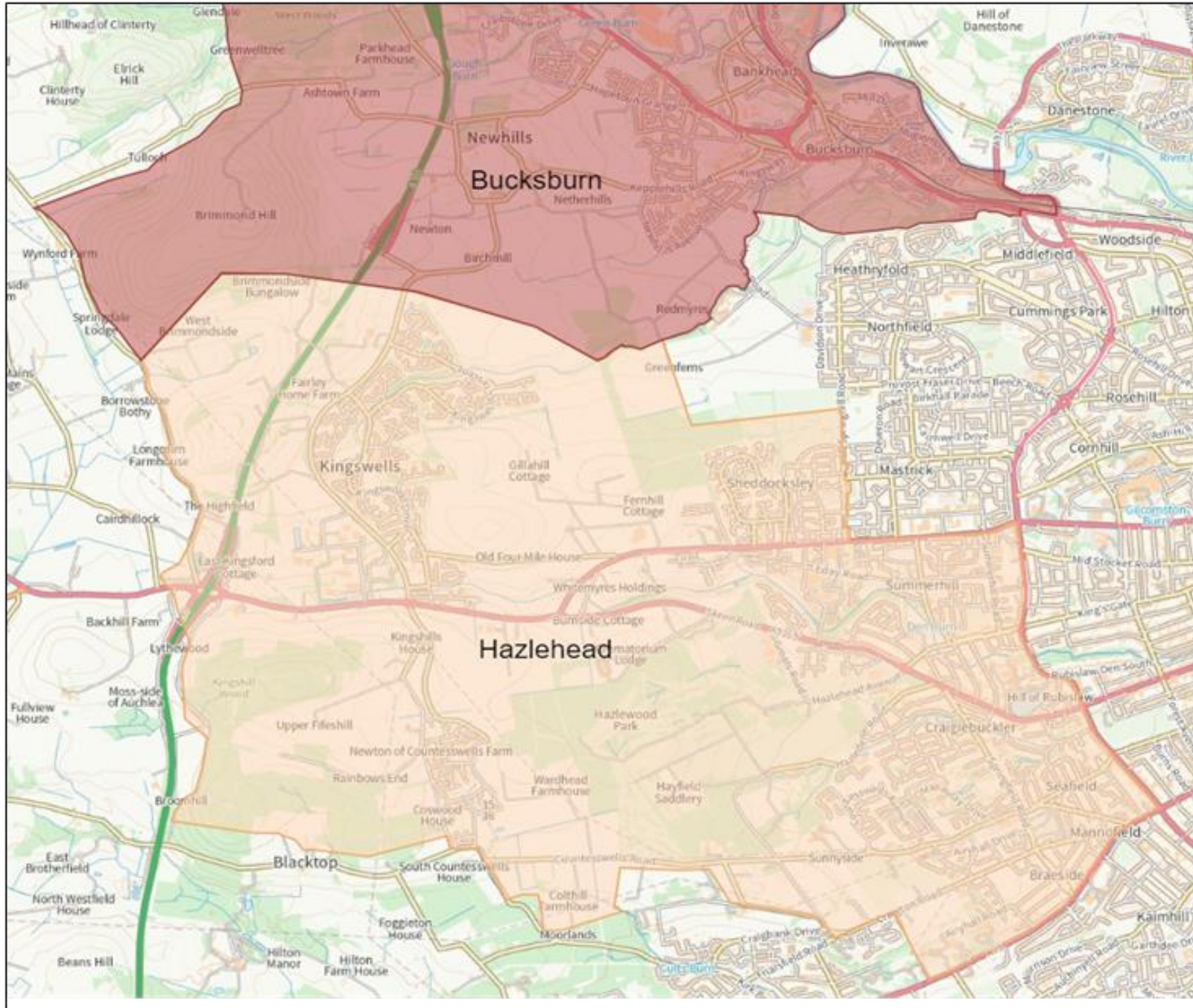
**Eleanor Sheppard**  
**Executive Director - Families & Communities**  
**May 2024**

Map 1: Current Catchment Areas





Map 2: Proposed Catchment Areas



REPORT FROM EDUCATION SCOTLAND



# Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeen City Council to build a new Hazlehead Academy Campus and alter secondary school catchment areas for Hazlehead, Countesswells and Kingswells.**

May 2024

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by His 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 a proposal by Aberdeen City Council to build a new Hazlehead Academy Campus and alter secondary school catchment areas for Hazlehead, Countesswells and Kingswells. 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' view. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it alongside any relevant considerations the council received and then prepare its consultation report. The council's 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 consultation report at least three weeks before it takes its final decision. With all proposals the council needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and 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 children and young people in the council 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 meetings held on 20, 21 and 26 March 2024 in connection with the council's proposals;
- 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; and
- visits to the site of Countesswells School, Kingswells School, Hazlehead Academy and Bucksburn Academy, including discussion with relevant consultees.

## 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 public consultation ran from 26 February until 22 April 2024. Copies of the proposal were made available to stakeholders and on the council website. Three public meetings were held in Countesswells School, Kingswells School and Hazlehead Academy. These were attended by 63 stakeholders in total. An online survey gathered 156 responses, most of which were from parents. Six email written comments were also received. In addition, notes were gathered from a discussion at

Kingswells Parent Council about the consultation. Of the online survey responses, 75 agree and 81 disagree with the proposal. Most parents from Kingswells and Countesswells Schools and the majority of parents from Bucksburn and Hazlehead Academies who completed the survey disagree with the proposal. The proposal is a change to the council's original plans to build a new secondary school in Countesswells. The council state this is due to a reduction in housing developments in the area. Stakeholders acknowledge a change in the speed of housing developments. However, many are concerned that the number of children in the area may grow faster than council predictions. Therefore, that the capacity of a new Hazlehead Academy may be exceeded within a few years of it being built. A minority of respondents questioned whether two smaller schools, at Hazlehead and Countesswells, would still be better than one larger school.

2.3 During the public meetings, and in their written and online responses, stakeholders raised a number of other queries. Several stakeholders expressed concern about how large the new catchment area for Hazlehead Academy will be if the proposal is agreed. Stakeholders asked questions about school transport arrangements and whether the new school should still be called Hazlehead Academy. A few parents are worried about the potential additional costs of young people moving secondary school, such as buying a second school uniform. Several stakeholders queried what will happen if the new build does not run to schedule. A few stakeholders suggested wider school catchment changes. It may be helpful for the council to provide further information in its consultation report to help address questions and queries. For example, showing the full current catchment areas for both academies and information about the contingency plans for any delay in the build.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 HM Inspectors agree there are educational benefits to this proposal. There are growing pressures on the school roll at Bucksburn and Hazlehead Academies. Increasing the capacity of Hazlehead Academy and adjusting the catchment area to include Kingswells School will help to address these issues. The proposed new school should also provide an enhanced learning environment, such as having more digitally enabled and accessible spaces. It also provides the opportunity to expand the area available for the two city-wide provisions that are held in the school. These are for Gaelic Medium Education and the Scottish Football Association programme. The council should confirm that the proposed arrangements take account of there being suitable and sufficient capacity for immersion education for Gaelic. This would be for the city-wide catchment area that has been established. In so doing, they should consult Bòrd na Gàidhlig as required by the 2010 Act on a change of arrangement for Gaelic.

3.2 Almost all stakeholders, that met with HM Inspectors, agree that a new school building would be of benefit to young people attending Hazlehead Academy. Children and young people are clear about the need for the new school to be welcoming and inclusive. They suggest that a new school should include aspects such as quiet spaces for those who may struggle to learn within larger classes and adequate outdoor space for both sports and socialising with friends. Staff at Hazlehead Academy who spoke to HM Inspectors are positive about the opportunities that a new school building would open up, such as increased space to support young people with additional support needs (ASN). Extending the catchment of Hazlehead Academy may increase the numbers of young people who have barriers to learning and require additional support to reach their potential. If the proposal is agreed the council will need to ensure that there is the correct level of accommodation and staffing to support this and to meet the duties in the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Act. A few stakeholders are concerned about safety and noise, given the proposal for the new school to be built near the existing school. Stakeholders would welcome the council providing further details about the school design. All stakeholders, who spoke to HM Inspectors, would like to be consulted on the designs for the new school should this proposal be accepted.

3.3 Children at Kingswells School, who spoke to HM Inspectors, have mixed views about the proposal to rezone their school from Bucksburn Academy to Hazlehead Academy. Those who have

older siblings who are currently at Bucksburn Academy are not sure if they would prefer to go to the same school as them, or move with their friends. They are aware that the council state that if the proposal is accepted then all young people from the Kingswells catchment already attending Bucksburn Academy will be able to continue to do so. Also that their younger siblings will be able to choose to go to Bucksburn Academy. Young people and their parents are clear that for young people to be able to do this, the school transport currently used to get to Bucksburn Academy would need to continue.

3.4 Parents who spoke to HM Inspectors at Kingswells School raised concerns about the travel arrangements to school if this proposal is agreed. There are active travel routes for young people to use between Kingswells and Hazlehead. These include crossing a busy roundabout and main roads. Parents are aware that part of the Kingswells area will be eligible for free school transport. They would like the council to consider widening the eligible areas to include the whole village. They also questioned if public transport could be improved to support young people getting to school and attending out of school activities. If the proposal is agreed the council will need to review the travel arrangements to make sure there are safe routes to school for all young people.

3.5 Headteachers and staff at all four schools, that met with HM Inspectors, are confident in delivering effective transition arrangements for young people moving from primary school to either of the secondary schools. The headteacher and staff at Hazlehead Academy are also confident they can provide effective transition from the existing school building to a new school site. Stakeholders, that spoke to HM Inspectors, are concerned about arrangements if the new Hazlehead Academy opens part of the way through the school year. In particular, they are worried that young people could start S1 at Bucksburn Academy and then move to Hazlehead Academy. HM Inspectors agree this may be stressful for the young people, as well as challenging for both academies. HM Inspectors suggest that, if possible, this should be avoided by the council.

## 4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree there are educational benefits to this proposal. If it is agreed, the change to school catchments and a new, larger Hazlehead Academy will help to address secondary school capacity issues in the area. The new school should provide an enhanced learning environment. It also offers the opportunity to provide more suitable accommodation for the city-wide programmes which run at the school, and for those young people with ASN. However, the council will need to continue to liaise with relevant stakeholders to address their concerns. This includes the potential for longer term capacity issues across the wider area, travel and transition arrangements. If this proposal is agreed, the council will need to work with Hazlehead and Bucksburn Academies to ensure the transition for those at Kingswells School is well supported and straightforward. The council should continue with their plans to involve stakeholders in the design and development of any new school.

**HM Inspectors**  
**May 2024**