

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	<b>Education, Culture and Sport</b>
DATE	<b>28 March 2013</b>
DIRECTOR	<b>Gayle Gorman</b>
TITLE OF REPORT:	<b>Capacity at St Peter's School</b>
REPORT NUMBER:	<b>ECS/13/20</b>

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To raise the Committee's awareness of immediate concerns in relation to St Peter's School which is currently over capacity and forecast to remain over capacity for the foreseeable future and provide options to address over occupancy in session 2013 and beyond.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

1. considers the options for providing additional accommodation at St Peter's School.
2. instructs officers to implement Option 2 (b) to provide additional accommodation on the St Peter's School site in temporary units and reconfigure the school boundary to maximize the amount of external play space available to the school.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of implementing the preferred option will be met from existing Education Culture and Sport budgets. The costs that will be incurred will include:

- minor external works to improve the existing play area;
- relocating the fence and bike sheds;
- leasing or purchase and installation of the temporary accommodation; and
- additional janitorial and cleaning costs.

### 4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no significant implications in relation to the proposal contained within this report. The proposal is supported by parents and staff as well as by the local diocese.

## **5. BACKGROUND/ MAIN ISSUES**

At the special meeting of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee on 7th February 2013, officers were instructed to undertake a review of denominational educational provision in the city.

This review will identify a long term sustainable strategy for denominational education provision in the city. However there are specific issues at St Peter's School which need to be resolved by the start of the new school session in August 2013.

### **School Capacity**

The methodology for calculating the current 'functional/working capacities' for primary schools was agreed by Committee in January 2010 and is based on the number of classroom spaces in the school with an average of 30 pupils per class. However, the true capacity of a school could be significantly lower than this.

St Peter's School is:

- operating a number of composite classes. The overall capacity of the school is therefore reduced as composite classes have a maximum of 25 pupils compared to 30 or 33.
- one of the ten schools in regeneration areas where the City Council's policy of capping primary 1 (P1) and primary one/two composite (P1/2) classes at 18 which further reduces the overall capacity of the school.

In 2012, the capacity of the school to accommodate the number of in zone pupils in the August intake came under pressure. This was highlighted in the report to Education, Culture & Sport Committee on 7th June 2012. The preferred option at the time was to remove the cap of 18 in P1 and P1/2 classes.

The current arrangement will not, however, provide sufficient capacity to accommodate the anticipated intake of 38 in zone P1 pupils before any out of zone placing requests, including 7 sibling requests, are considered.

### **Existing Accommodation at St Peter's School**

The school is currently operating in two buildings which are both located on the same site: the main school building and part of the first floor of Old Aberdeen House.

The school accommodation consists of:

- 7 x Classrooms, 4 in the main building and 3 in Old Aberdeen House
- 2 x General Purpose (GP) rooms
- 1 x Gym / Assembly Hall

The entire ground floor of Old Aberdeen House is being used by the City Archivist and the Aberdeen Scientific Services (ASSL).

There are nine rooms on the first floor which are being used as follows:

- 3 x Classrooms of St Peter's

2 x rooms ASSL  
4 x Archive rooms

The school is currently operating 8 classes using the 7 classrooms and one of the GP rooms. The other GP room is the Library. It is 40 square metres (sqm) in size which is insufficient to accommodate a full class.

The school roll at each stage for August 2013 is forecast to be 226, as follows:

P1 45  
P2 35  
P3 38  
P4 28  
P5 26  
P6 24  
P7 30

Roll forecasts indicate that St Peter's School will require a total of 10 classrooms over the next three years as shown in the table below.

Year	School Roll	No of classes with P1 and P1/2 classes of 18	No of classes with P1 and P1/2 classes of 25
2013	226	10	9
2014	216	10	9
2015	219	10	10

Importantly, providing the school with a two classroom, temporary unit will enable the school to reinstate the cap of P1 and P1/2 classes at 18.

### **Options for increasing the capacity of the school are:**

#### **Option 1 Provide additional accommodation on site by increasing the number of rooms in Old Aberdeen House used by the school**

There are currently six rooms on the first floor of the building other than the three used as classrooms. Two of these rooms are used by the Aberdeen Scientific Services and four are used to house the City Archives. Taking forward this option would involve relocating one or both of these services.

It may be possible, in the longer term, to find alternative accommodation for the Aberdeen Scientific Services and/or the City Archivist, however in both instances, identifying suitable alternative accommodation would not be a straight forward matter.

Archives require specialised storage and handling in line with "The British Standard for the Exhibition and Storage of Archival Documents". The accommodation in Old Aberdeen House is equipped with specialised shelving and a dedicated, gas fire-suppressant system.

Aberdeenshire Council jointly funds the Archive service and would need to be included in any future discussions as would the Keeper of the Records of Scotland

who oversees the Public Records (Scotland) Act which imposes a duty on public authorities to make proper provision for the storage of, and access to, their archive records.

As with the City Archives, Aberdeen Scientific Services (ASSL) has very specialised requirements, including laboratories, large pieces of expensive equipment and secure storage.

There would also be considerable costs involved in taking forward this option which would involve:

- identifying suitable accommodation and equipping it to meet service requirements;
- undertaking the work that would be required to relocate the service; and
- undertaking the work that would be required to make the vacated accommodation suitable for school use in time for the beginning of August, 2013.

Whilst this would be a solution that would be acceptable to staff and parents of the school, it would not be possible to deliver this option for August 2013.

## **Option 2 Provide additional accommodation on site in temporary units**

The option to provide a double classroom, re-locatable unit on site was not taken forward in 2012 due to the restricted nature of the site and providing temporary accommodation on site would have reduced the amount of outdoor play space available to the school. The preferred option at that time was to lift the cap of 18 pupils in P1 and P1/2 classes and maintain the maximum outdoor space available. In August, however, this measure will not be sufficient to accommodate the projected P1 intake of in-zone pupils.

The whole site, including entrance paths, school building and playgrounds is 3,930 sqm. Outside play space available to the school is 2,150 sqm of which the hard standing is 1,340 sqm.

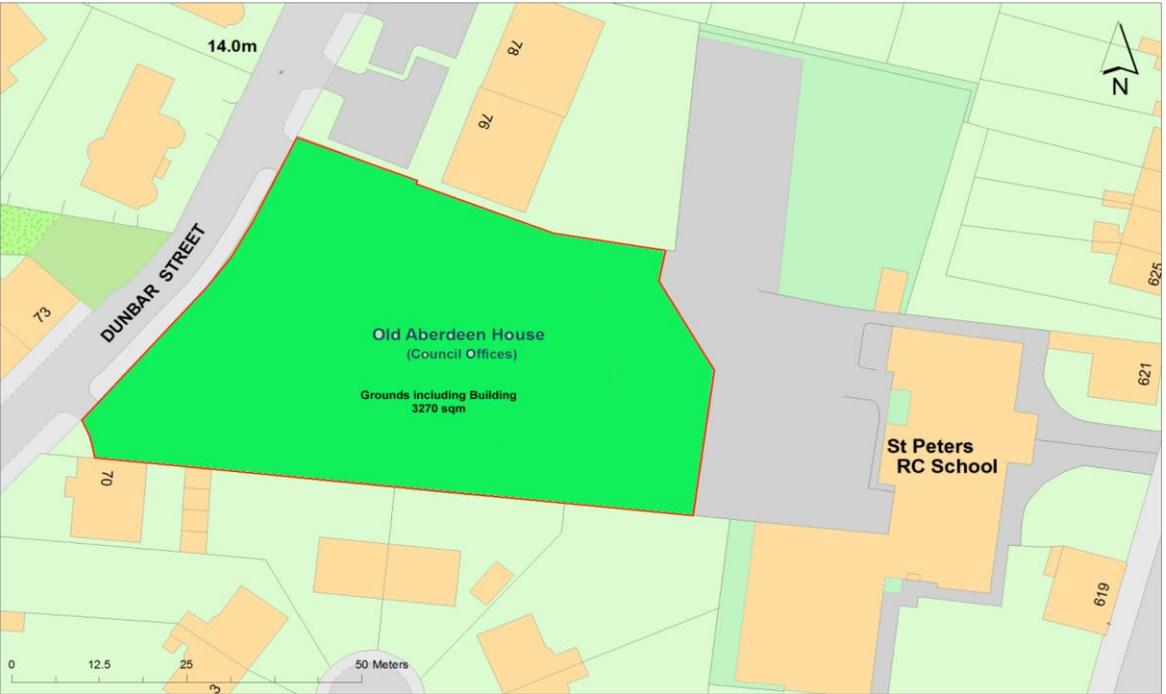
The Schools Premises (General Requirements and Standards) (Scotland) Regulations 1967 (and updated) specifies that a school with 141 - 315 pupils should have a site no smaller than (6070 sqm).

Providing additional accommodation on the existing site would reduce the amount of already limited outdoor play space available to an increased school population.

**St Peters School site**



**Old Aberdeen House site**



Providing additional accommodation on the school site is only viable if the outside play space available to the school can be increased. Increasing the outside play space could be achieved by redefining the boundary of the site whilst maintaining vehicular access to Old Aberdeen House for service users.

The whole site (Old Aberdeen House and St Peter’s School) is 7,470 sqm.

	Sqm
Aberdeen House site	3,349
Outside space	2,190

Existing school	4,200
Outside space	3,025
Hard standing	1,340

Redefining the boundary of the site will have an impact on users of both buildings and it will need to be done so as to maintain access to Old Aberdeen House for staff and service users.

Costs would be incurred in taking forward this option. These would include:

- leasing and installing temporary accommodation;
- relocating the fence to create a new boundary to the front of the site;
- relocating existing bike sheds; and
- making good the play ground affected.

### There are two alternatives to consider

Alternative (a) Increase the outside play space by 880 sqm to 3,905 sqm.



This alternative would align the boundary of the school to the front of Old Aberdeen House. The boundary of the school between the School and Old Aberdeen House would be repositioned as shown in alternative (a) above. The exact positioning of the fence between the School and Old Aberdeen House would have to be agreed with users of Old Aberdeen House.

Alternative (b) Increase the outside play space by 1,040 sqm to 4,065 sqm.



The pedestrian access to the school is currently by way of a fenced off footpath that crosses the car park. This alternative would align the boundary of the school along the route of the pedestrian crossing. This alternative would mean that the current exit gate would be within the boundary of the school and entrance to and exit from the site would be through one gate rather than two.

As with option (a) the exact positioning of the fence between the School and Old Aberdeen House would have to be agreed with users of Old Aberdeen House.

In implementing either of these proposals it will be necessary to ensure that access to Old Aberdeen House is maintained for staff and service users.

There are also two fire exits from the Archive on the North side of Old Aberdeen House which need to be taken into account.

Both alternative (a) and (b) are acceptable to staff and parents of the school and can be delivered in time for the new school session in August 2013.

The preference is alternative (b) as this will provide a greater play space than alternative (a) and will also improve the safety of pedestrian access to the site.

### **Option 3 Provide accommodation off site in another Primary School in the ASG**

The nearest Primary Schools in the ASG are: Seaton  
Riverbank  
Sunnybank  
Kittybrewster

## Woodside

There is not enough space available at any of the above schools to be able to create two classrooms to accommodate St Peter's School pupils.

There is space at Kittybrewster School in rooms that are currently used by the Family Learning Service and the Pupils Support Service however, the roll at Kittybrewster is rising and these rooms will be needed by the school in 2014.

Taking forward this option would involve identifying suitable alternative accommodation for the existing services, located in Kittybrewster School.

Costs would be incurred in taking forward this option and it would only be tenable for one year.

### **Option 4 Provide accommodation off-site in another denominational Primary School**

Legal Services advise that it would be possible to enroll children in St Peter's and then transport them to accommodation at another denominational school. There is currently capacity in Holy Family School to accommodate one class. It would not be appropriate to move the P1 intake to another school therefore the P7 and some or all of the P6 pupils could be relocated. This would mean two transitions for the pupils involved, firstly to the new site and secondly to their zoned secondary school.

From an educational, social and practical perspective it would be preferable for pupils across the entire age range to remain on a single site and this is highly likely to be the parental preference.

Pupils benefit from learning and playing alongside children across the age range, older children gain from the experience of caring, supporting and mentoring younger pupils and younger pupils benefit from learning from older positive role models. Pupils in the upper stages look forward to the time when they are the senior pupils within their school, when they are given opportunities to take on additional leadership opportunities. This would be seriously compromised if they were situated on another site.

Taking forward this option would require the provision of transport to pupils who would be accommodated in another school from St Peter's. There would be significant costs incurred in providing transport. Costs would depend on the number of children being transported.

It would be possible to deliver this option for August 2013.

### **Option 5 Provide additional accommodation off site at St Machar Academy**

St Machar Academy currently has accommodation in two units located outwith the main school building that could be made over to St Peter's. St Machar Academy is in close proximity to St Peter's School and is within walking distance of the majority of children that would be affected.

As with option 4, from an educational, social and practical perspective it would be preferable for pupils across the entire age range to remain on a single site and this is highly likely to be the parental preference. Pupils benefit from learning and playing alongside children across the age range, older children gain from the experience of caring, supporting and mentoring younger pupils and younger pupils benefit from learning from older positive role models. Pupils in the upper stages look forward to the time when they are the senior pupils within their school, when they are given opportunities to take on additional leadership opportunities. This would be seriously compromised if they were situated on another site.

St Peter's School is within the catchment zone of St Machar Academy although pupils are zoned to the secondary school nearest their home address.

The majority of pupils leaving St Peter's in the past two years and in the coming two years all live in the St Machar Academy catchment zone. However, in August 2012, only 3 of the 23 pupils who left S Peter's and who were zoned to St Machar Academy actually went on to St Machar Academy.

Taking forward this option would incur modest costs to create a separate playground area at St Machar Academy.

It would be possible to deliver this option for August 2013.

#### **Option 6 Provide additional accommodation on another site**

Provide additional accommodation on another site locally. This could either be by identifying accommodation in other buildings nearby or by locating temporary units on a nearby site

Discussions with the University are ongoing regarding possible assistance which they may be able to provide to help alleviate accommodation issues.

#### **Option 7 Relocate the entire school into another building.**

The only accommodation currently available that would be large enough to accommodate primary school pupils is the former Braeside Infant School. This accommodation was enhanced to create a decant facility for Airyhall and Kaimhill Schools as part of the 3Rs project. However, this building is the other side of the city from the existing St Peter's and would have significant transport implications and costs.

It is proposed to use the accommodation at Braeside in part or in full to accommodate the pupils that are anticipated from the Countesswells development until such time as a new school is built as part of that development.

Taking forward this option could therefore only be a short term solution.

Considerable costs would be incurred in transporting children across the city and in bringing the accommodation, particularly externally, up to a suitable standard for use again as a school.

The school could not be accommodated in the Braeside building on a permanent basis and another solution would have to be developed before 2016.

This is option is not viable.

### **Summary**

- Option 1 Provide additional accommodation on site by increasing the number of rooms in Old Aberdeen House used by the school  
It would not be possible to deliver this option for August 2013.
- Option 2 Provide additional accommodation on site in leased temporary units  
Alternative (a), increasing the outside play space by 880 sqm  
Alternative (b), increasing the outside play space by 1,040 sqm  
It is possible to deliver either alternative of this option for August 2013.
- Option 3 Provide accommodation off site in another Primary School in the ASG  
It would be possible to deliver this option but only on a temporary basis.
- Option 4 Provide accommodation off site in another denominational primary school. It would be possible to deliver this option for August 2013.
- Option 5 Provide additional accommodation off site at St Machar Academy  
It would be possible to deliver this option for August 2013.
- Option 6 Provide additional accommodation on another site.  
Discussions with the University are ongoing regarding possible assistance which they may be able to provide to help alleviate accommodation issues.
- Option 7 Relocate the entire school into another building.  
This is option is not viable.

### **Preferred Option**

The preferred option is alternative (b) within option 2.

This will provide accommodation on the St Peter's School site in temporary units and keep the whole school community together on one site. The reconfigured school boundary will maximize the external play space available to the school. This option can be delivered by August 2013.

## **6. IMPACT**

This report relates to 'Aberdeen – the Smarter City – Programme for Aberdeen City Council 2012-17', particularly in relation to the following priorities:

Smarter People (Social and Human Capital)

- We will provide a high quality education service within our schools and communities which will improve attainment and life chances of our children and young people to achieve their full potential in education, employment or training.
- Working with our third, public and private sector partners, we will provide opportunities for lifelong learning which will develop knowledge, skills and attributes of our citizens to enable them to meet the changing demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Again, working with partners, we will create a City of Learning which will empower individuals to fulfil their potential and contribute to the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of our communities.
- We will aim to have a workforce across the city which has the skills and knowledge to sustain, grow and diversify the city economy.

### **Equal Opportunities**

Equal opportunities issues are addressed within the arrangements in place for admitting pupils to schools including those arrangements which pertain to pupils who cannot be immediately due to the school being at capacity at a given time

## **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Report & minutes of the Education, Culture and Sport Special Committee on 7 February 2013, which considered the report on the Review of the Nursery and Primary School Estate.
- Report & minutes of the Education, Culture and Sport Special Committee on 28 October 2010, which considered the report on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Secondary School Provision, ECS/10/096.
- Report & minutes of Education, Culture and Sport Committee, 24 March 2011, ECS/11/018
- Property Asset Management Plan 2009 (Non-Housing)
- Education, Culture and Sport Service Asset Management Plan 2011
- A Study of Implications for Educational Provision arising from Development in North West Aberdeen, October 2011

## **8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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