

PROPOSAL TO RELOCATE DUNS PRIMARY SCHOOL AND INCORPORATE A LOCALITY SUPPORT CENTRE FOR BERWICKSHIRE FOR PUPILS WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS IN THE NEW SCHOOL

1. Background

1.1 Council approval for the project to relocate Duns Primary School was gained at its meeting of 29 October 2009.

1.2 The project to replace Duns Primary School will comprise relocating the primary school into the former Berwickshire High School. Preliminary work to assess the feasibility of relocating the primary school was undertaken as part of the Council's 3 former High Schools Property Rationalisation Project to determine the future use of 3 former High School sites including the one at Duns. From this work it transpired that the former High School would potentially be a very good fit for a new Duns Primary School. Furthermore, following engagement with the local Councillors, the school staff, Community Groups, local Community Councils and the community in general as part of this project, there was strong community support for relocating the primary school accordingly. As a consequence, this project was reflected in the Local Plan Amendment 2009 for Duns. As the Council already owns the former High School and its site, implementation of the project should be relatively straight-forward with no additional land to buy and no requirement for planning consent for change of use. Furthermore, the former High School is listed and with the most architecturally sensitive parts being re-used as a school, the prospects of obtaining listed building consent for any alterations are much better as this use would almost certainly be more sympathetic than attempting to put the building to an alternative use.

1.3 One of the recommendations within the Transforming Children's Services report approved by Scottish Borders Council in December 2008 was:-
"that a multi-agency Locality Additional Needs Centre with suitable accommodation is set up in each of the Authority's 5 areas. "

1.4 Currently within Berwickshire specialist provision is based at two sites – Chirnside Primary School for children with complex needs and Coldstream Primary School for children with communication needs.

1.5 In addition, other children with specific needs require to travel to provision in other parts of the Scottish Borders. This can cause distress for families having to consider their already vulnerable child being transported for several hours a day, especially in poor weather conditions. Additionally, moving children to provision in other parts of Scottish Borders has a significant annual travel cost to the council.

1.6 The current base for children with complex needs at Chirnside is not fully accessible and is contributing to capacity issues for the school.

1.7 The relocation of Chirnside Specialist Provision to the new Duns Primary School would release spare capacity in Chirnside PS which would significantly decrease demand for capital for extension within schools' work stream.

1.8 The relocation of Coldstream Specialist Provision to the new Duns Primary School would release spare capacity in Coldstream PS which would significantly decrease demand for capital for extension within schools' work stream.

1.9 At their meeting on 27 November 2012 the council's Education Committee considered and approved a report initiating the statutory consultation on the proposal to relocate Duns primary School in accordance with The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. As a result the following actions were agreed and implemented:-

- an educational benefits statement was prepared (attached as Appendix 1 to this paper)
- a proposal paper was published
- notice of the proposal was given to the relevant consultees and invite representations
- a public meeting was held
- the proposals were reviewed

Key stakeholders engaged in the consultation were:-

- The School Parent Council
- Parents
- Primary School parents who may be affected
- Pupils
- Staff
- Unions
- Community users of the school
- Local Community Council

2. The consultation process

2.1 The consultation process commenced on 4 February 2013 and ended on 15 March 2013. The proposal paper including the educational benefits statement was published on the council website and the key stakeholders as outlined in paragraph 1.9 were contacted by letter. Local ward Elected Members were also briefed.

2.2 There were 8 responses to the proposal on the council website. In general those who responded seem to support the proposals to relocate the school and understand the arguments put forward under the educational benefits statement. There was some frustration from the written submissions that parents had not yet had the opportunity to look at detailed plans for the relocated school. Many of the comments from the consultation were around the detail of the location, issues to do with pupil transport, road safety and concerns about the long term capacity of the re-located school. Also further clarification around the proposed location of the Jim Clark museum on the site was required. All these issues will require to be picked up in the next stages of the planning process, ensuring that parents are fully engaged. The department, along with the Head Teacher, will consider how best to do this over the coming months.

2.3 On Monday 25 February a public meeting was held in Duns Primary School attended by around 100 people. The Director of Education presented a resume of the proposal paper and the educational benefits statement. Once again the general view was one of support for the proposal although again there was some frustration at the lack of detail as to the proposals for use of the former Berwickshire High School site. This included concerns around capacity, traffic management and pupil safety. Again these issues will require to be picked up in the next stages of the

planning process, ensuring that parents are fully engaged. The department, along with the Head Teacher, will consider how best to do this over the coming months.

2.4 There has been some consultation with pupils of Duns Primary School held on Monday 18 February 2013. This was with members of the Pupil Council who were given a short presentation about the background of the statutory consultation and asked for their initial views and thoughts. Members of the Pupil Council are planning ongoing dialogue and discussion with fellow pupils on this topic.

2.5 Education Scotland visited Duns, Chirside and Coldstream during the consultation process and looked at the following issues:-

- 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
- the benefits which the Council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the Council's reasons for coming to these beliefs

They concluded: -

- I. The proposal from Scottish Borders Council to relocate Duns Primary School to a new location within the site of the former Berwickshire High School should have a positive impact on children's educational experiences.
- II. The current school buildings at Duns Primary School are in a declining physical state and opportunities to bring them up to an acceptable standard are not viable. Refurbishing the former Berwickshire High School, an architecturally listed building, is a well-considered and positive solution to the Council's phased plans to improve the school estate and manage changing school rolls efficiently and effectively. Re-designed, purpose-built accommodation will offer an improved learning environment for staff and children, with spaces that are versatile and flexible enough to accommodate different group sizes and will support a variety of teaching styles and learning activities.
- III. This proposal is also likely to improve the coordination and provision of specialist services for children with complex needs who live in Berwickshire. The creation of a Locality Support Centre on the single site is likely to lead towards better outcomes for the children, young people who attend it, along with their families. Learners will have access to a wider range of staff expertise and integrated services available to them, which can be used flexibly to meet their needs.
- IV. The Council needs to continue to engage with staff, children, their parents and carers and the residents of Duns, in order to keep them well informed and consulted fully about the proposed changes at future planning and design stages.

The full report from Education Scotland is available from Tuesday 7 May 2013 via www.educationscotland.gov.uk or a copy can be requested from Scottish Borders Council Education and Lifelong Learning Department.

3. Conclusions and next steps

3.1 As a result of this statutory consultation and on evaluation of the range of responses from the Council website, the public meeting and the Pupil Council, a report will be presented to Scottish Borders Council on 26 June 2013 recommending that the Council proceed with plans to relocate the current Duns Primary School to a new location within the site of the former Berwickshire High School.

3.2 Scottish Borders Council also intends to incorporate a Locality Support Centre for Berwickshire for children with additional needs within the proposed new Duns Primary School. As a result the current Specialist Provision at Chirnside Primary School and Coldstream Primary School will be closed.

3.3 The final report will detail the level of support from the statutory consultation for the re-location and will contain a strong commitment to continuing engagement and dialogue with the key stakeholders as we move towards the next stages of design and build. There will also be opportunities for additional parental and wider community engagement as the Council enters the statutory planning processes, particularly around the areas of concern identified within this consultation process.

3.4 The final report will identify some of the key issues of concerns raised in the initial consultation, car parking, traffic management and safe walking routes to the new school site. The concerns around the proposed location of the Jim Clark Museum in the vicinity of the refurbished primary school will also be addressed as detailed plans are developed.

Written responses to the final proposal are invited and should be sent to educationconsultations@scotborders.gov.uk by 24th May 2013.

Colin Easton
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RELOCATION OF DUNS PRIMARY SCHOOL

PROPOSALS PAPER

PROPOSALS

Scottish Borders Council intends to relocate the current Duns Primary School to a new location within the site of the former Berwickshire High School.

Scottish Borders Council intends to incorporate a Locality Support Centre for Berwickshire for children with additional needs within the proposed new Duns Primary School. As a result the current specialist provision at Chirnside Primary School and Coldstream Primary School will be closed.

This paper provides information on the proposals as part of the statutory consultation process contained within the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010. Responses are sought which will support the development of any subsequent recommendations on the proposed change of location of the school.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Duns Primary School

Council approval for the project to relocate Duns Primary School was gained at its meeting of 29 October 2009.

The project to replace Duns Primary School will comprise relocating the primary school into the former Berwickshire High School. Preliminary work to assess the feasibility of relocating the primary school was undertaken as part of the Council's 3 former High Schools Property Rationalisation Project to determine the future use of 3 former High School sites including the one at Duns. From this work it transpired that the former High School would potentially be a very good fit for a new Duns Primary School. Furthermore, following engagement with the local Councillors, the school staff, Community Groups, local Community Councils and the community in general as part of this project, there was strong community support for relocating the primary school accordingly. As a consequence, this project was reflected in the Local Plan Amendment 2009 for Duns. As the Council already owns the former High School and its site, implementation of the project should be relatively straight-forward with no additional land to buy and no requirement for planning consent for change of use. Furthermore, the former High School is listed and with the most architecturally sensitive parts being re-used as a school, the prospects of obtaining listed building consent for any alterations are much better as this use would almost certainly be more sympathetic than attempting to put the building to an alternative use.

1.2 Chirnside and Coldstream Specialist Provision

One of the recommendations within the Transforming Children's Services report approved by Scottish Borders Council in December 2008 was:-

“that a multi-agency Locality Additional Needs Centre with suitable accommodation is set up in each of the Authority's 5 areas “

Currently within Berwickshire Specialist Provision is based at two sites – Chirnside Primary School for children with complex needs and Coldstream Primary School for children with communication needs.

In addition, other children with specific needs require to travel to provision in other parts of the Scottish Borders. This can cause distress for families having to consider their already vulnerable child being transported for several hours a day, especially in poor weather conditions. Additionally, moving children to provision in other parts of Scottish Borders has a significant annual travel cost to the council.

The current base for children with complex needs at Chirnside is not fully accessible and is contributing to capacity issues for the school.

The relocation of Chirnside Specialist Provision to the new Duns Primary School would release spare capacity in Chirnside PS which would significantly decrease demand for capital for extension within schools' work stream.

The relocation of Coldstream Specialist Provision to the new Duns Primary School would release spare capacity in Coldstream PS which would significantly decrease demand for capital for extension within schools' work stream.

2. EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS STATEMENT

- 2.1 A relocated Duns Primary School incorporating a Berwickshire Locality Support Centre will solve a range of issues which currently impede the delivery of a modern curriculum.
- 2.2 The relocated school will provide a learning environment which provides a range of spaces which are versatile, flexible enough to accommodate a variety of group sizes and support a variety of teacher delivery styles and learning activities and outcomes. It will support the diversity of activities associated with the Curriculum for Excellence and be able to respond efficiently to changing needs in the future.
- 2.3 The relocated school would dispense with the existing temporary classroom accommodation on the current primary school campus. This will improve the day-to-day operation of the school and also help promote a strong ethos for pupils, staff and parents. For staff particularly it will help develop teamwork and collegiality.
- 2.4 The relocated school will be in close proximity to Berwickshire High School increasing opportunities for developments within the 3-18 curriculum enabling even closer partnership working and smooth transitions between stages
- 2.5 The relocated school will be inclusive to the community as a whole and provide a welcoming and amenable facility. The facility must also offer ease of circulation and appropriate space for mobility for users with disabilities, both within the school building and externally.
- 2.6 The relocated school will offer a welcoming and comfortable environment for all users and provide the optimum quality of light, ventilation and heating.
- 2.7 The school will be a source of pride to both the school community and the town as a whole. The new school and its location should preserve this and be at the heart of the community. Next to Berwickshire High School and the community's sports facilities and as part of an integrated facility with Cultural Services, the relocated school will be in a unique position to become the Learning and Cultural Centre of the community.
- 2.8 The relocated school will provide safe access for pedestrians and vehicles, reducing congestion to the surrounding area and making it safer for children to enter their school.

- 2.9 The design of the new school will ensure the necessary facilities are provided to meet the curricular guidelines for Physical Education and to promote active, healthy lifestyles generally. The close proximity to outdoor sports facilities would enhance greatly the school's ability to provide both its statutory PE provision but also enable a wider range of extra curricular activities to be developed.
- 2.10 The school facilities and resources will be available to the wider community, not just at evenings and weekends, but throughout the school day when appropriate. The school design will allow areas to be easily segregated and directly accessed during and out with school hours. The design will also allow for separation between the community and pupils/staff for safety.
- 2.11 A number of key current Health and Safety issues within the existing school buildings will be addressed. This will allow staff time and resources to be dedicated to curriculum development and learning and teaching.
- 2.12 The provision of an Educational Support Centre in a single location within the Berwickshire Learning Community will improve the co-ordination between the various specialist services in a more integrated manner for children whose needs are complex.
- 2.13 A new Locality Support Centre will achieve better outcomes for children, young people and their families. It will take place in the context of contributing to the reduction of placements in establishments out with the Borders and will also reduce the cost of transport to other Additional Support Needs (ASN) provision in the Borders.
- 2.14 A new Locality Support Centre will provide better access to services for children and young people who may have had to travel to Langlee, Wilton Centre (Hawick), Spectrum Support Centres (Hawick and Innerleithen) and those who may require to be placed out with the Borders. A new locality Support Centre will create a single facility which will enable staff and resources to be more efficiently deployed and create better links with the local schools. In doing so it will provide a service that is accessible to more young people and families without the need to travel excessive distances.
- 2.15 The new Support Centre will redirect current expenditure in a more sustainable manner and seek to reduce long term costs to the Council.
- 2.16 A Berwickshire Locality Support Centre raises the likelihood of parents choosing the available provision rather than seeking placement outside the Borders.
- 2.17 There is significant practitioner expertise within Berwickshire in supporting pupils with complex needs, but provision for these pupils is currently compromised by the poor quality accommodation/physical infrastructure available.
- 2.18 Berwickshire has the expertise in the Locality Team of Integrated Children's Services, working with our partners in NHS. Appropriate physical provision would maximise that expertise and produce significant savings.
- 2.19 Maintaining children and young people in Berwickshire will maximise the potential for re-integration to mainstream and better transition planning.

It is proposed that Duns Primary School be relocated to the site of the former Berwickshire High School.

It is proposed that a new Berwickshire Locality Support Centre for children with additional needs be established within the relocated Duns Primary School and the current centres attached to Coldstream and Chirnside Primary Schools be closed.