



## **Educational Services**

### **Consultation Report**

**Report on the outcome of the statutory consultation relating to the proposed changes to the catchment areas for Muirhead Primary School, Troon and Struthers Primary School, Troon**

**November 2015**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 The Leadership Panel of South Ayrshire Council at its meeting of 16<sup>th</sup> June 2015 agreed to undertake a consultation on proposed changes to the catchment areas for Muirhead Primary School, Troon and Struthers Primary School, Troon.

1.2 The proposal document was made available to all consultees as prescribed by the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010 and a copy of the proposal document is available on the Council's website at [www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/consultations). The consultation process ran from 24<sup>th</sup> August 2015 to 9<sup>th</sup> October 2015, a period of more than 30 school days as required by statute.

1.3 As part of the consultation process, the Educational Services directorate undertook the following activities:

- Placed a consultation advert in the local paper.
- Publicised the consultation exercise and public meeting through letters to parents/carers,
- Held a public meetings at the following locations:

Tuesday 8th September 2015 in Muirhead Primary School at 7.00pm

Wednesday 9th September 2015 in Struthers Primary School at 7.00pm

- Copies of the proposal document were available from both primary schools, Troon library, Troon customer contact centre, the County Buildings, Ayr and the Council's website.

## **2.0 Considerations**

The proposals that were issued for consultation focussed on specific changes to the catchment boundaries of both schools. The details of the proposed changes were fully explained in the proposal document that was issued for consultation. The main reasons for the changes were; new housing at North East Troon, changes in pupils demographics, safe walking routes to school and to better align the school catchment areas.

2.3 If approved the changes will be implemented immediately following a decision by the Council and will be incorporated into the 2016/17 primary registration and secondary school transfer arrangements which will begin in January 2016. Any placing requests received during the 2016 registration period for children who may be affected by the proposed changes will be re-designated as catchment children.

## **3.0 Outcome of the Consultation**

The consultation was undertaken in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and all prescribed consultees were given an opportunity to participate in the consultation process and submit views on the proposal. In addition to this, other individuals and groups with an interest in the proposal were also given an opportunity to participate and submit their views.

### **3.1 Overview of responses to consultation**

3.1.1 Overall the response to the consultation proposal was very low. A total of 10 written responses were received and a summary is shown in Appendix 1.

4 of the responses supported the overall proposal to change the catchment areas and 5 disagreed.

- 3.1.2 2 people attended the public meeting at Muirhead Primary on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2015 and 6 people attended the public meeting at Struthers on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2015. A note of the points raised and views expressed at the public meeting are listed in Appendix 2.
- 3.1.3 Consultation was also undertaken with children at Muirhead Primary School and Struthers Primary School. The schools used the consultation guidelines "Participants not Pawns" issued by Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People and the outcomes from the consultations are listed in Appendix 3.

### **3.2 Summary of the main points and views expressed during the consultation**

The main issues/views arising out of the consultation are listed below along with a response from the Director of Educational Services.

- 1) View expressed: What is the expected increase in the number children arising out of the new housing development?

*Response: The North East Troon development has agreed planning permission for 680 units and it is anticipated that up to 190 non-denominational children will arise out of the development.*

- 2) Question raised: Why change the catchment areas for new housing?

*Response: The new housing development is immediately adjacent to Struthers Primary School and the majority of new houses will fall within its catchment area. It make sense to rezone the remaining area of the development to Struthers Primary school as it will be nearer for parents and will encourage children to walk to school.*

- 3) Question raised: What assurance can be given that provisions will be put in place early on to plan for and construct the expansion with minimal disruption to pupils and to ensure that additional facilities are in place prior to the school nearing its maximum capacity

*Response: The long term impact of the development on Struthers Primary School has been considered and although there is capacity available at the school for growth it is anticipated that the school will need to be extended at a future date to provide an additional hall and a small number of additional teaching spaces. The timing of the work will very much depend on the rate of house building and when children appear at the school. Current indications are that the additional teaching spaces will not be required until about 2020 although the Council will closely monitor the progress of the development and plan works accordingly.*

*South Ayrshire Council has extensive experience in the management of school improvement projects. A number of recent improvements have successfully been completed at Struthers Primary School with little disruption to children's learning and we are confident that any extension works can easily be undertaken in a similar fashion.*

- 4) View expressed: Earn Road and the East end of Spey Road are much closer to Struthers Primary.

*Response: One of the main problems is that the schools are very close to each other and the distance between them is well within the statutory walking distance of 2 miles.*

*However the proposals also seeks to create catchment areas which encourage children to walk to school.*

- 5) View expressed: Struthers Primary is not bigger than Muirhead Primary.

*Response: Struthers Primary School currently has a planning capacity for approximately 400 children whereas Muirhead Primary School has a planning capacity for 229 children.*

- 6) View expressed: The walking route from Earn Road to Muirhead Primary is not a safe route and there are no school crossing patrols.

*Response: The assessment of the safe routes to schools is undertaken by Road Safety Officers within the Ayrshire Roads Alliance who use national guidance to assess the routes. All routes are assessed on the basis that a child will be accompanied by a responsible adult and it is for parents to decide whether or not their child can walk to school on their own.*

*A recent assessment highlighted that the traffic flows and the number of children walking to school and crossing at the Deveron Road/North Drive junction were very small and did not meet the criteria for a school crossing patrol. The proposed changes to the catchment area will not result in a significant increase in the number of children using this route as most will use crossing points along Central Avenue.*

- 7) View expressed: All even numbers in Earn Road should remain within the catchment for Struthers Primary

*Response: One of the aims of the proposal is to create logical catchment areas that parents easily understand and where possible to zone the same street to the same school. This is not always achievable due to the length and geography of some streets and in these cases a suitable catchment change point will be identified.*

*The walking distance from Earn Road to either school is not significant but we will consider whether or not the street should be left within the Struthers catchment area.*

- 8) Question raised: Why did the Council wait until the new housing development started before it invested in Struthers Primary?

*Response: The recent investment in the school is not linked to the new housing. South Ayrshire Council has an ongoing investment programme for the school estate as part of its modernisation strategy and Struthers Primary had been identified. Further works are planned for the school which will coincide with the proposed extension work.*

- 9) Question raised: Will class sizes increase?

*Response: Class sizes in primary schools fluctuate all the time depending on the number of children at each stage and the class structures across the school. There is legislation in place which limits a primary 1 class at 25 and primary 2 and 3 classes at 30. An agreement with teacher trade unions also limits the overall class numbers for primary schools at 33. If it is a composite class then the limit is 25.*

- 10) Question raised: How will the proposal affect future children who already have a sibling attending current schools?

*Response: There will be no impact on parents of children presently attending both schools and any up and coming siblings. Parents affected by the proposed catchment*

*changes who already have children at the affected schools will have the choice of sending any siblings to their current catchment school or their new catchment school. Once parents have made this choice any further move would be managed under the Council's agreed placing request arrangements.*

- 11) Question raised: How will the proposals impact on the registration and enrolment arrangements for 2016/17?

*Response: The registration and enrolment arrangements for 2016/17 will remain unchanged. However, if the proposal is agreed any placing requests received that are affected by the changes will simply be re-designated as catchment children and given priority over any other placing requests to the schools.*

- 12) Question raised: Has the decision been made?

*Response: No, the Council has only agreed to consult on the proposal to change the catchment areas of both schools. Following the publication of this report, a further report will be produced and submitted to the Council's Leadership Panel on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2016. The report will include a copy of this report and recommendations for consideration and a decision by panel.*

- 13) View expressed: There are rumours that Muirhead Primary School is to close.

*Response: This is not the case and any such proposal would require separate statutory consultation with parents, children and any other stakeholders. South Ayrshire Council is only consulting on proposed changes to the catchment areas of Muirhead Primary and Struthers Primary.*

- 14) View expressed: To offset the catchment numbers it would be more sensible to take the odd numbers further up Deveron Rd to say Doon place.

*Response: We will consider revising the proposed catchment areas to keep more of Deveron road within the Muirhead Primary catchment area. Doon Avenue is approximately mid-way between both schools and would also be a logical catchment change point.*

- 15) View expressed: A production kitchen should be reinstated at Struthers Primary as the school roll is expected to increase due to new housing.

*Response: The Council removed the production kitchen service as part of an agreed efficiency package required to balance the Council budget and due to the low number of children taking school meals. The school kitchen is still available and the Council can consider reinstating a production service at a future date should the demand for school meals increase to a viable level. The Council's Facilities Management team will continue to monitor the dining arrangements at the school.*

- 16) View expressed: The revised catchment areas will be detrimental to both schools and will create a social divide.

*Response: The Council does not accept this view. Further analysis of the proposed catchment area for Muirhead Primary School indicates that the split between privately own houses and Council owned houses is approximately 63%/37% respectively. The breakdown is shown in the table below.*

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Property count in proposed Muirhead catchment area</b> | <b>873</b> |
| Total council built properties                            | 507        |
| Total council built properties sold                       | 317        |
| Total council built properties still council owned        | 190        |
| Total council built properties still council owned as a % | 37%        |
| Total council built properties privately owned as a %     | 63%        |

*This represents a healthy spit between both schools.*

- 17) View expressed: Feels that both schools should have a fair allocation of new housing.

*Response: The North East Troon development is directly adjacent to Struthers Primary School and the design layout of the development will include safe walking routes to the school. To zone some of the houses to Muirhead Primary School would result in children having to walk much further, passing by Struthers Primary school on the way. This arrangement is already in place in for children resident on the North West area of Deveron Road resulting in many parents making placing request to Struthers Primary School. The proposal aims to better align the schools' catchment areas taking cognisance of where families live, encourage children to walk to school and to resolve some of the placing request issues. This approach is supported by Education Scotland.*

- 18) View expressed: Concerned about closing the gap in terms of attainment and improving outcomes for children at Muirhead Primary School. There needs to be a healthy mix of children to support this.

*Response: South Ayrshire Council's schools work well for almost all children who make very good progress in their learning. However, there is still a gap for children who live in the least and most deprived areas. This attainment gap is unacceptable. Our main priority in our schools is to close this gap by focusing our efforts on reducing the impact of deprivation on educational outcomes for these children.*

*Muirhead and Struthers Primary schools are successful primary schools offering a wide range of high quality education experiences for children. The schools already have a mix of children attending the schools through successful placing request. The data included in the proposal document indicates that 38% of the children attending Muirhead Primary School are by placing request compared to 44% of children attending Struthers Primary School. The majority of the placing requests at Struthers Primary are from parents of children who are zoned for Muirhead but live closer to Struthers Primary School which supports the Council's proposal for a realignment of the catchment areas. Parents however will continue to have the legal right to send their child to a school of their choice using the placing request arrangements.*

*Consideration will be given to adjusting the proposal so that more private housing remains in Muirhead Primary's catchment area while still delivering the aims of the proposal.*

- 19) View expressed: The value of my house will reduce if it is re-zoned to Muirhead Primary?

*Response: There is no evidence to support this view.*

- 20) Question raised: Parking is very difficult at Struthers Primary. Will parents from the new housing use Deveron Road to access the school?

*Response: The road layout within the new development will include a drop off area at the back of the school which parents can use.*

- 21) Question raised: Will parents take the opportunity to move their children now?

*Response: It is not anticipated that there will be any immediate movement children between the schools. Parent could easily have made a placing request to either of the school and is an indication that parents are happy with the school that their child is attending. Parents who wish to move their child still have to make a formal request to the Council who will consider the educational impact on the child before making a decision on whether or not to agree it.*

- 22) View expressed: Filling one school first would suggest that Struthers is first choice and Muirhead is second.

*Response: This is not the case. Children are allocated a specific school using defined catchment areas and children within the designated catchment area will always be given first priority in the allocation of places. Struthers Primary already has space available and will be able to accommodate many of the new children from the housing development.*

- 23) View expressed: Concerned about dropping roll at Muirhead Primary and staff job security. Suggested alternative catchment areas (see map 2).

*Response: School rolls fluctuate from year to year and the Council has agreed arrangements in place to manage any adjustments to the staffing entitlement of schools. The number of children due to attend Muirhead Primary is expected to fall before increasing again. The projected fall is not linked to the proposed changes to the catchment areas and simply reflects the typical changes in the school rolls. Having considered the alternative catchment areas suggested by the staff at Muirhead Primary School the Educational Services directorate are of the view that there is no logical basis for the setup and would result in similar issues that exist with the present catchment areas. However, consideration will be given to adjusting the proposal so that more private housing remains in within the Muirhead Primary's catchment area while still delivering the aims of the proposal.*

- 24) Question raised: Do children who attend the nursery class get priority if they want to go to the primary school?

*Response: No, there is separate admissions criteria for nursery schools which is available on the South Ayrshire Council website at [www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/nurseries-and-childcare/](http://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/nurseries-and-childcare/).*

- 25) Question raised: The access point for half of the new houses must be from Loans Road - could they be kept in Muirhead Primary's catchment?

*Response: All the access roads into the new development will be off of Kilmarnock Road and not Old Loans Road. The housing development is immediately adjacent to Struthers*

*Primary School and zoning part of it to Muirhead Primary School would result in children having to walk much further to get to their catchment school passing Struthers Primary on the way. This will result in parents having to make a placing request to Struthers Primary.*

- 26) View expressed: Placing requests from Muirhead Primary School to Struthers Primary School may increase in the long term.

*Response: There is no evidence to support this view. Parents make placing requests for many reasons and experience has shown that in previous years Muirhead Primary has gained from placing requests from Struthers Primary.*

### **3.3 Consultation with Children**

Children were also given the opportunity to take part in the consultation process and their responses to the proposals were mixed. The children at Struthers Primary School were very supportive of the proposal whereas the children from Muirhead Primary raised a number of concerns and some children suggested alternative catchment areas (see map1). A copy of the responses from the children of both schools is attached as Appendix 3 and below is a summary of the responses along with a response from the Educational Services directorate.

- 1) Children at Struthers Primary School were concerned about the potential loss of some of their playground.

*Response: The site for Struthers Primary is very large and the playground can be increased if necessary to compensate for any loss due to extension works. This will be considered when the designs are being developed and staff, parents and children will be given the opportunity to participate in the design process.*

- 2) Muirhead children are concerned that Struthers is filling up and Muirhead isn't and would like more pupils to come to Muirhead.

*Response: The number of children in schools changes all of the time. Primary schools rolls have been falling for many years but many schools are now experiencing an increase in numbers. Although the school roll Muirhead Primary School is still falling the expectation is that this will not last and the roll will begin to increase.*

- 3) View expressed: Would like Muirhead to get bigger would there be any possibility that they would build houses in the Muirhead area

*Response: South Ayrshire Council's Local Plan identifies land on which new houses will be built currently. The Plan currently includes land for 8 houses within Muirhead Primary's catchment area. There are no other housing sites identified.*

- 4) View expressed: Filling up Struthers first does that mean Muirhead is "second hand"

*Response: No, there is no such thing as one school being given priority over another. The majority of children from the new houses will be entitled to go to Struthers Primary School and it makes sense for the remaining children to go as well due to the school being very close to children's homes.*

- 5) View expressed: There shouldn't be catchment areas because no-one sticks to them.

*Response: This is an understandable view but the Council has a legal obligation to identify a school for every child which is done by establishing catchment areas for schools. Parents also have a legal right to choose another school for their child which is known as a "placing request".*

## 4.0 Report by Education Scotland

The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and the amendments contained in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 requires HM Inspectors from Education Scotland to be involved in the formal consultation process. As part of this process HM Inspectors undertook a number of activities in considering the educational aspects of the proposal. A copy of Education Scotland's report on the educational aspects of the proposal is attached as Appendix 5.

### 4.1 Process

4.1.1 Inspectors considered 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;

4.1.2 In addition, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meetings held on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> September 2015 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 Muirhead Primary School and Struthers Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

### 4.2 Education Scotland summary

4.2.1 South Ayrshire Council's proposal has potential educational benefits for existing children and those who may attend the two schools in the future. It offers the potential to increase the number of children who can walk to school and to address placing request anomalies. In taking forward its proposal the council needs to engage meaningfully with the families and staff in Muirhead Primary School who raise some concerns about the potential changes to the demographics of their school.

### 4.3 Response to the main actions raised by Education Scotland

South Ayrshire Council welcomes the report by Education Scotland which acknowledges the potential educational benefits of the proposal. Officers from Educational Services have considered the content of the report and the actions highlighted in section 3. These are listed below along with proposals to address them.

4.3.1 **Paragraph 3.2:** The council needs to give greater emphasis to the educational benefit of keeping families together in its final report.

*Response: Keeping families together at primary school is very important. Young children look to older siblings for reassurance and support at school particularly during the early years of their primary education. The sibling relationships are emotionally powerful and form a child's first peer group. They can also provide a significant source of continuity throughout a child's lifetime and are likely to be the longest relationships that most people experience. Having siblings at the same school makes things much easier for parents to manage as they would find it extremely difficult to take their children to two different schools.*

**Paragraph 3.3:** The council could alleviate these concerns by giving a clearer indication of the timescales for the intended extension to the dining hall and learning spaces within Struthers Primary School.

*Response: Information about the impact of the new housing on Struthers Primary School is explained in paragraph 3.2 (3) including indicative timescales for the provision of additional teaching spaces.*

**Paragraph 3.4:** In taking forward its final report the council needs to work with parents, staff and children to address these concerns.

*Response: The Educational Services directorate recognises the concerns that some consultees from Muirhead Primary has with the proposed changes and will consider how best to address them before submitting any final report to Elected Members for consideration. This will include a further meeting with the stakeholders to discuss their concerns in more detail.*

## **5.0 Review of the Proposal**

The Director of Educational Services has considered the responses to the statutory consultation including Education Scotland's report and has provided an individual response to each of the points raised/views expressed.

The responses will help inform whether or not the proposed catchment changes should be amended to address the concerns raised by some consultees from Muirhead Primary. In considering this officers from the Educational Services directorate will have a further meeting with the consultees from Muirhead Primary before finalising the proposals and submitting their recommendations to the Leadership Panel for consideration and a decision.

## **6.0 Decision making process**

In accordance with the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010, this report will be published on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2015 and made available for further consideration for a minimum period of 3 weeks. Copies of the report are available at County Buildings, Ayr, Troon customer contact centre, both primary schools and Troon library. The report is also available on the Council's website at [www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/consultations).

A report will be submitted to the meeting of South Ayrshire Council's Leadership Panel on Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> February 2016 and will include a copy of the consultation report and recommendations for consideration and a decision.

## Proposed changes to catchment areas for Muirhead Primary and Struthers Primary: Summary of Responses

| Nos: | Category:                     | Date Response Received | Method of Response   | Response:   |
|------|-------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---|
| 1.   | Parent/Carer                  | 24.8.15                | Online Response Form | Agrees with proposed consultation.<br>A sensible and straight forward approach to catchment in the area.  |
| 2.   | Parent/Carer                  | 9.9.15                 | Online Response Form | Agrees with proposed consultation.<br>Agree that the proposed changes to the catchment boundaries are sensible in terms of geographical split and enabling more children to be closer to their school and encourage walking. Would like further information about the impact of new housing on Struthers Primary and that the any additional provision will be in place to minimise any disruption. |
| 3.   | Parent/Carer                  | 22.9.15                | Online Response Form | Does not agree with proposed consultation.<br>Has never understood why Earn Road and the East end of Spey Road have been included in the Muirhead catchment. These streets are close Struthers and offer a much safer route to school than trying to negotiate the bottleneck of traffic and pedestrians at the corner of Deveron Road and North Drive where there is no school crossing patrol.    |
| 4.   | Parent/Carer                  | 26.9.15                | Online Response Form | Agrees with proposed consultation.<br>Very happy with proposed changes!   |
| 5.   | Parent/Carer                  | 26.9.15                | Online Response Form | Agrees with proposed consultation.<br>Good news.  |
| 6.   | Children at Struthers Primary | 29.9.15                |                      | See notes in Appendix 3.  |
| 7.   | Parent/Carer                  | 02.10.15               | Online Response Form | Does not agree with proposed consultation.<br>Strongly disagree with the new catchment proposal. The distance from Earn Road to Struthers is approximately one minute walk via Tay Road this is a safe route recommended by SAC as there is no main roads to be   |

|     |                              |          |           |  |
|-----|------------------------------|----------|-----------|--|
|     |                              |          |           | crossed. From Earn Road to Muirhead would approximately take 7 to 10 mins walk crossing 4 main roads which are extremely busy at school times as there is no safe route recommended by SAC at this time also concerns about lack of school crossing patrols. Feels that they being victimised because of the new north east development. Asks that all even numbers in Earn Road should remain within the catchment for Struthers.   |
| 8.  | Local Member                 | 07.10.15 | Email     | <p>Does not agree with proposed consultation.</p> <p>Earn Rd and from the corner odd and even numbers and from 69 North Drive going North to number 99 odd numbers only should be included in the catchment of Struthers School this is a safe route and within 2 to 3mins of the School, if the catchment were to be Muirhead this would be a distance to travel and main roads to cross so would not be justifiable.</p> <p>To offset the numbers it would be more sensible to take the odd numbers further up Deveron Rd to say Doon place.</p> <p>Why are Dundonald Rd, Hunter Cres, Wilson Ave and Ottoline Drive not in the Muirhead catchment area?</p> |
| 9.  | Trade Union                  | 08.10.15 | Email     | A production kitchen should be reinstated at Struthers Primary as the school roll is expected to increase due to new housing.  |
| 10. | Parent                       | 08.10.15 | Letter    | <p>Disagrees with the proposal.</p> <p>Concerned that the revised catchment areas will be detrimental to both schools and will create a social divide.</p>   |
| 11. | Parent                       | 05.10.15 | Letter    | <p>Disagrees with the proposal.</p> <p>Concerned that it will have a negative impact on Muirhead Primary and that children at Muirhead Primary will mostly come from Council housing. Feels that both schools should have a fair allocation of new housing.</p>  |
| 12. | Children at Muirhead Primary | 09.10.15 | Pro forma | See notes in Appendix 3  |
| 13. | Staff                        | 09.10.15 | Pro forma | See notes in Appendix 4  |



**Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**  
**Proposed Changes to the Catchment Areas for Muirhead Primary and Struthers Primary**

**Notes from Public Meetings**

1. Public Meeting at **Muirhead Primary School**: 8<sup>th</sup> September 2015 at 7pm  
Total attendees: 2

**View expressed**

- How will this impact on the registration and enrolment arrangements for 2016/17?
- Has the decision already been made?
- The proposal may have an impact on the social mix of children at Muirhead.
- There are rumours that Muirhead Primary may close.

2. Public Meeting at **Struthers Primary School**: 9<sup>th</sup> September 2015 at 7pm  
Total attendees: 6

**View expressed**

- Why change the catchment areas for new housing?
- Struthers Primary is a better school than Muirhead Primary.
- Struthers is already bursting at the seams.
- Will class sizes increase?
- Struthers Primary is not bigger than Muirhead Primary.
- Do children who attend the nursery class get priority if they want to go to the primary school?
- How will the proposal affect future children who already have a sibling attending current schools?
- The value of my house will reduce if it is re-zoned to Muirhead Primary?
- Why did the Council wait until the new housing development started before it invested in Struthers Primary?
- When does the Council expect the school to be extended?
- Parking is very difficult at Struthers Primary. Will parents from the new housing use Deveron Road to access the school?
- Will the school kitchen re-open if the numbers increase?

### Consultation with Children from Muirhead Primary and Struthers Primary

The views and comments from children are recorded below:

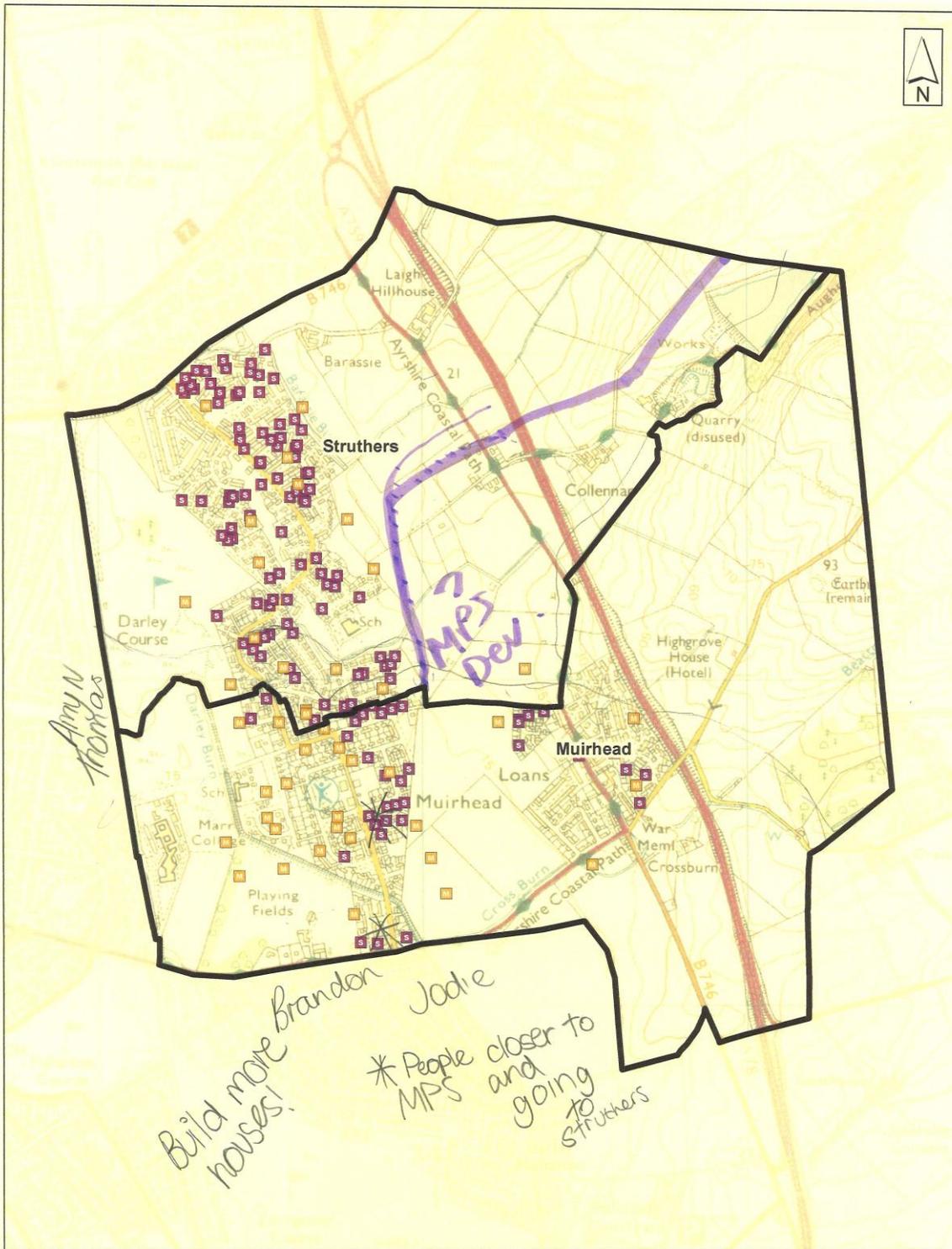
#### 1. Outcome of consultation with children at Muirhead Primary School

- Pupils are concerned that Struthers is filling up and Muirhead isn't. There are only 10 in our class and we would like more pupils to come to Muirhead
- Not fair on Muirhead but the dividing line may make it easier
- Would like Muirhead to get bigger would there be any possibility that they would build houses in the Muirhead area
- Filling up Struthers first does that mean we are "second hand"
- "There should not be a catchment area because no one sticks to it"
- "I think children from the new houses should be allocated to different schools – split the new houses"
- Suggested an alternative catchment arrangement (see **Map 1**)

#### 2. Outcome of consultation with children at Struthers Primary School

- New catchment lines look much fairer as this will mean that streets will now be more together and people can go to the same school.
- I am zoned for Muirhead but my close friends who are living across the road from me came here so I wanted to come here and be with them.
- I am meant to go to Muirhead, I think it is my catchment school but I live closer to Struthers and now I am older I walk to school. It is better if we go to school near to us.
- There can be a lot of cars and if we change the zones maybe more people will walk.
- I think it will make going to school safer.
- I live in the new houses and as more houses are built there is going to be a bridge and paths to get to school safely and I can go on my bike.
- If we have more children this will need more teachers and more space and I am worried about that especially in the gym hall.
- We have had a small school and I am not sure if I will like it being bigger.
- A bigger school will mean we get more things and more space and that will make the school better.
- I am not sure if we will lose a lot of our playground and have the same space to play if the school is bigger.
- The new catchment makes more sense to me.

Map 1: Alternative catchment area suggested by children at Muirhead Primary School.



**Proposed Struthers & Muirhead Catchments with Pupils**  
 Scale 1:15,000

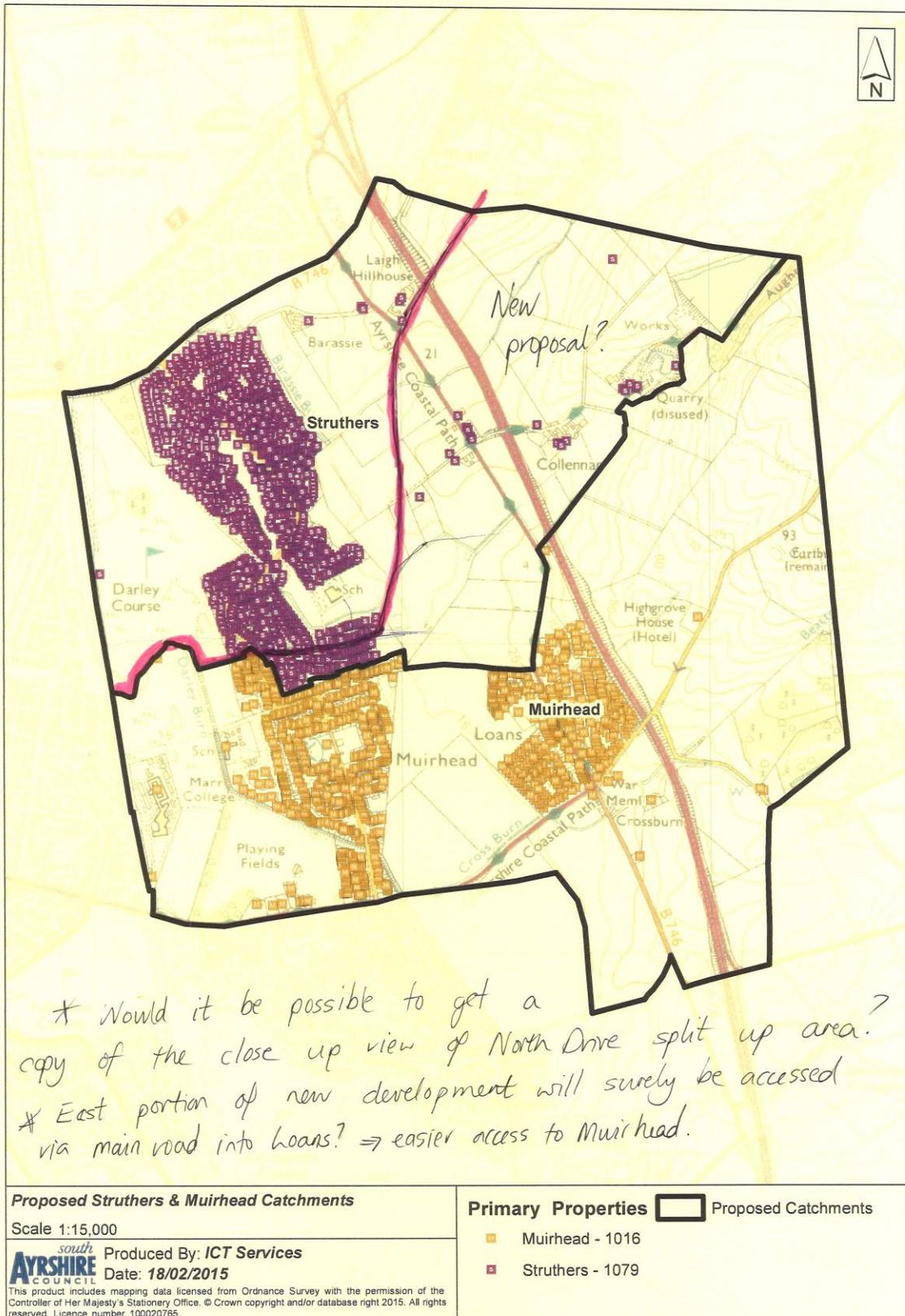
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 Date: **23/02/2015**  
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|         | Struthers | Muirhead |
|---------|-----------|----------|
| Within  | 114       | 81       |
| Outwith | 47        | 40       |

### Views expressed by staff at Muirhead Primary School

- Concerns about segregation - council/private houses which impacts on the social dynamic of the school
- Concerns about closing the gap in terms of attainment and improving outcomes. You need a healthy mix of pupils to support this
- Concerns about dropping roll and staff job security
- Unclear with regards to the initial impact - will parents take the opportunity to move their children now?
- Understand logically where the line sits but the impact for Muirhead could be huge (offered new proposed alternative - see **Map 2**)
- Filling one school first would suggest that Struthers is first choice and Muirhead is second
- Access point for half of the new houses must be from Loans road - could they be kept in our catchment?
- Placing requests from Muirhead to Struthers may increase in the long term

**Map 2: Alternative catchment area suggested by staff at Muirhead Primary School.**



## Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by South Ayrshire Council to change the catchment areas for Muirhead Primary School Troon and Struthers Primary School Troon.

### 1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments contained in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of South Ayrshire Council's proposal to change the catchment areas for Muirhead Primary School Troon and Struthers Primary School Troon. 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 a copy of 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. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all legislative obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

#### 1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the school; 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 meeting held on Wednesday 8 September 2015 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 Muirhead Primary School and Struthers Primary School including discussion with relevant consultees.

## **2. Consultation Process**

2.1 South Ayrshire Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*.

2.2 The statutory consultation period ran from Monday 24 August 2015 to Friday 9 October 2015. The proposal document was posted on the council website and paper copies were available from schools, council offices and local libraries. Public meetings were held on the 8 and 9 September 2015 in Muirhead Primary School and Struthers Primary School respectively at which the background and rationale for the proposal was explained. The council received 13 responses during the consultation period of which five were opposed, four were in agreement and the rest were neither for nor against the proposal.

## **3. Educational Aspects of Proposal**

3.1 The proposal gave details of the rationale for the catchment area changes. One of the main drivers is the new housing development at north east Troon. The site has an estimated capacity for 680 units and the proposals for the new housing have been in development for many years. The location of the development mainly falls within the catchment area for Struthers Primary School. Approximately 20% of the development falls within the catchment area of Muirhead Primary School. The housing development however is much closer to Struthers Primary School than it is to Muirhead Primary School. The proposal therefore provides the council with the opportunity to better align the schools' catchment areas with where families live.

3.2 The majority of South Ayrshire Council's school catchment areas have been in place for many years including those for Muirhead Primary School and Struthers Primary School. Within the current catchment arrangements, a proportion of children who live closer to Struthers Primary School are zoned for Muirhead Primary School. This results in a number of parents submitting placing requests for their child to attend the school nearest to their home. The proposal seeks to offer a more logical catchment area arrangement. The proposal does offer some educational benefits in that more children would be able to attend the school nearest their home and therefore may be more likely to walk using safe routes to school. The proposal states that, should the catchment areas be revised, it will not affect any children already attending Muirhead Primary School or Struthers Primary School or any siblings who may attend at a future date. The council needs to give greater emphasis to the educational benefit of keeping families together in its final report.

3.3 Stakeholders and community members from Struthers Primary School who met with HM Inspectors were generally in favour of the proposal. It was recognised as being a reasonable way to resolve the placing request issues and would result in children who lived across the road from each other being zoned for the same school. A few concerns were voiced by the group of parents who met with HM Inspectors about whether the existing school accommodation has the capacity to take all the children from the new housing developments. The council could alleviate these concerns by giving a clearer indication of the timescales for the intended extension to the dining hall and learning spaces within Struthers Primary School.

3.4 Parents from Muirhead Primary School, who met with HM Inspectors did not agree with the proposed changes and wished to suggest an alternative catchment design. There was a strong feeling that the proposal would adversely affect the school roll and social mix of the school population. Staff and children held a similar view. In taking forward its final report the council needs to work with parents, staff and children to address these concerns.

#### **4. Summary**

South Ayrshire Council's proposal has potential educational benefits for existing children and those who may attend the two schools in the future. It offers the potential to increase the number of children who can walk to school and to address placing request anomalies. In taking forward its proposal the council needs to engage meaningfully with the families and staff in Muirhead Primary School who raise some concerns about the potential changes to the demographics of their school.

**HM Inspectors  
Education Scotland  
October 2015**