



CONSULTATION REPORT

This Consultation Report has been compiled in response to the recent public consultation on the proposal to create a new primary school in the Tillydrone area in order to alleviate capacity pressures at both Riverbank School and St. Peter's School. The document summarises the responses received on the proposals set out below and Aberdeen City Council's response to the verbal and written comments submitted by interested parties, in compliance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended.

Proposals:

Option A

- To construct a new school building on the site of the former St. Machar School and former Tillydrone School, to relocate St Peter's School to this new building, and to create a new shared campus on this site, incorporating St. Peter's School, a new stream non-denominational school, and early education and childcare facilities; and:
- To create a new primary school zone to be served by the new non-denominational school, with effect from August 2019; and:
- To amend the existing Riverbank School zone to allow for the creation of the new school zone, with effect from August 2019; and:
- The new school building to be operational with effect from 1st January 2020, or as soon as possible thereafter.

Or:

Option B

- To construct a new 3 stream non-denominational school building with early education and childcare facilities on the site of the former St. Machar

School and former Tillydrone School, and to relocate Riverbank School to this new building; and:

- **To relocate St. Peter's School into the current Riverbank School building; and:**
- **The new school building and relocated schools to be operational with effect from January 2020, or as soon as possible thereafter.**

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

1. METHODOLOGY

This consultation was conducted in the accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended. All requirements of the legislation have been met.

2. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

2.1 Public Events

Prior to the commencement of the statutory consultation period, Officers organised a number of community engagement meetings with the Riverbank and St. Peter's School communities in May 2016. These meetings were held to informally engage and discuss options to create additional school capacity for both denominational and non-denominational education in the area. A number of public consultation events were held during the consultation period to discuss the proposals. The table below details the number of attendees at each public meeting:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Venue</i>	<i>Recorded Attendees</i>
29 th November 2016	7- 8 pm	St. Peter's School	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 28 parents / guardians• 3 members of school staff• 3 community members• 5 Aberdeen City Council officers
30 th November 2016	7- 8 pm	St. Peter's School	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 17 parents / guardians• 1 pupil• 2 representatives of the Diocese of Aberdeen• 2 members of school staff• 5 community members• 5 Aberdeen City Council officers
1 st December 2016	7- 8 pm	Riverbank School	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 parents / guardians• 2 members of school staff• 3 community members• 2 Aberdeen City Council officers
7 th December 2016	3.30 – 4.30pm	St. Peter's School	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 18 parents / guardians• 17 members of school staff• 2 representatives of the Diocese of Aberdeen• 2 community members• 3 Aberdeen City Council officers
8 th December 2016	3.30 – 4.30pm	Riverbank School	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6 parents / guardians• 3 members of school staff• 5 community members• 3 Aberdeen City Council officers

2.2 Comments Received

The following written submissions were received:

<i>Format</i>	<i>Number of submissions</i>
E-mail	30
Letters	2
Comment Forms	147
Posters/submissions from Pupils	88

The submissions, anonymised as necessary, are available on the Council's website: <http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/Tillydrone-OldAberdeen/>

2.3 Alternative Proposals:

Within the responses received during the consultation period, a number of alternative proposals were put forward, and these are summarised below:

Option C: To build a 3 stream denominational school with early education and childcare facilities on the former St. Machar/Tillydrone primary school site. This option was proposed by the St. Peter's School Parent Council as a solution to the current and future capacity issues at St. Peter's School but which would also allow children from the Riverbank zone to opt to attend the new school which would help ease the capacity pressure forecasted for future years. It was also expressed that this option would allow a more diverse school to evolve in the future.

Option D: Extend Riverbank to a 3 stream school and build a new 2 stream school for St. Peter's School on the former St. Machar/Tillydrone school site with early education and childcare facilities. The option was suggested by an advisor to the RC Diocese.

Option E: A new St. Peter's School on the Dunbar Halls site, Old Aberdeen. This option was proposed by the Old Aberdeen Community Council as it would retain the school in Old Aberdeen and close to the existing site. It was stated that this site was the preferred and most supported site at the pre-consultation meetings in May 2016.

Option F: To build/expand on the existing site of St. Peter's School. This option was expressed by some respondents who felt a desire to preserve the unique ethos and excellent school that St. Peter's School stood for in the community. It was also felt that due to the close proximity to the University and its highly valued reputation, a lot of University staff opted for St. Peter's School irrespective of that fact that it was a denominational school.

Option G: To explore building the new school in the Seaton area as it was suggested that there was a lot of available land in this part of the city.

Reference was made to the rising rolls at Seaton School and the difficulties of enrolling local children at Seaton nursery.

2.4 Issues Raised

2.4.1 General Comments on Option A (creation of a new shared campus)

With regards to Option A, the creation of a new shared campus to relocate St Peter's School to this new building, a new 1 stream non-denominational school, and early education and childcare facilities; respondents to the consultation were generally unsupportive of this option. It was noted that whilst the staff of St. Peter's School and the Diocese of Aberdeen were positive about Option A, parents of pupils at the school were strongly opposed to this option. Stakeholders from Riverbank School also had strong concerns about potential future divides in the Tillydrone community, if Option A was to be pursued.

Comments received on these proposals at the public meetings and through written submissions are summarised as follows:

2.4.2 Comments unsupportive of Option A:

Several respondents commented that Option A wouldn't allow enough space for St. Peter's School to grow and flourish and become a more diverse school. It was felt that providing a bigger school uniquely for St. Peter's School would mean that more applications from either non-faith or other faiths could be received thereby creating a more diverse school. Some people had expressed that whilst they were not Roman Catholic, they had chosen St. Peter's School as they believed the ethos of a catholic education was holistic and inclusive and something they wished for their children to experience. It was also expressed that the Council should be expanding and promoting the excellent model of St. Peter's School which is highly regarded by the pupils and families. There were concerns about future capacity issues at the proposed Shared Campus and how this might result in only RC children being able to access future education at St. Peter's School.

Issues around segregation were expressed as divides between denominational and non-denominational schools could become more visible with a Shared Campus school model. Two schools with distinct identities and religions sharing one building and common facilities could magnify and divide the communities. It was felt that although this model of school has been developed elsewhere in Scotland and Northern Ireland, it was felt that it wouldn't be appropriate for Aberdeen where a sectarian attitude is currently not present. Some respondents felt that a "Shared Campus" school could mean that the catholic community could not exhibit religious imagery throughout the school leading to an "impoverished faith based community which would impact on St. Peter's School maintaining its unique ethos as a Catholic/faith-based school.

Comments were received around fears that a Shared Campus could increase tensions between communities which could create incidents around bullying

and racial tensions and inhibit the denominational children to express their beliefs and practices.

A query was raised whether the single stream non-denominational school proposed (217 capacity) would allow sufficient capacity for Tillydrone given the projected roll of 685 in 2023.

Several stakeholders felt that they wished for St Peter's to remain independent, "close knit", with their own rules, one Head Teacher etc. which would be hard to achieve if a Shared Campus was progressed. A general feeling was expressed that mixing a denominational and non-denominational school wouldn't work and shouldn't be progressed.

Questions posed about how the children would feel and cope moving to a Shared Campus option, new environment, new friends and new teachers. This was felt may have more of an effect on some children i.e. those with additional support needs. There was a feeling that class sizes could be bigger and would impact on the teaching and learning provided in the future.

Feedback from the Riverbank community expressed real concerns about the possible division option A would cause within the Tillydrone community. It was strongly expressed that following the merger of the former Donbank and St. Machar primary schools over 8 years ago which had created much tension and conflict, the community has spent a vast amount of energy in building and creating a more vibrant, successful and cohesive community that is now successfully represented at Riverbank school. The introduction of a new Tillydrone school alongside St. Peter's School would be detrimental and could have a huge negative split across the community. Concerns were expressed that whilst the St. Peter's School community is already in existence, the new Tillydrone school community would not be in existence until the new school opened in 2020 which would mean that relationship building between the two future schools could not be developed before then.

There were expressions from both the public meetings and in writing that the options presented were biased and in favour of Tillydrone. It was felt that the other site options discussed at the pre-consultation meetings in May 2016 were not considered and that the capacity issues at both schools should be tackled and resolved separately. It was felt that as over 80% of the St. Peter's School parents who attended the May meetings voted to opt for a new stand-alone school, both option A & B did not represent the views of the parents. There was discontentment around the lack of other possible options for St. Peters and that the alternative option C should be considered for further consultation.

Comments were received both at the public meetings and from the written submissions questioning the statistical/projected roll forecasts supporting the shared campus option. There was a feeling that the numbers have been wrong in the past and the Council needs to demonstrate the robustness of this data.

Some comments expressed concern about the disruption to the children's learning and friendships that would be caused by the new catchment zone associated with the Shared Campus option.

Questions were raised about how the Council would be able to resource the proposed Shared Campus in view of the current difficulties it is facing with teacher recruitment. It was noted that reference was also made to the additional costs of having two Head Teachers and Senior Management Teams.

A general comment was made as to why the Council should progress with a Shared Campus school when both communities were clearly unsupportive of this option.

2.4.3 Comments supportive of option A:

Some views expressed that this option (Shared Campus) would resolve the current capacity issues with an informed timeline and would allow opportunities for stakeholders to be involved in the planning of the new school whilst also incorporating St. Peter's School values, ethos, culture and traditions into a new building.

Comments were received which commented on the close proximity of the potential new school site to its St. Machar School site and how the closeness to the current St. Peter's School site would not pose too much of an additional journey for pupils and families, especially those families living in Seaton.

Respondents commented on the current links with Old Aberdeen Community and Aberdeen University and how they could be more easily maintained if option A was progressed. It was also noted that opportunities to continue to use Seaton Park for ongoing curriculum work with the children could also be maintained.

One submission believed that the integration of a Shared Campus would be down to the ethos created by the staff and community and felt it was important that St. Peter's School children, parents and staff deserved a new school to reaffirm its identity in the local community.

2.4.4 Comments on Option B (creation of a 3 stream non denomination school and the relocation of St. Peter's School into the current Riverbank School)

With regards to Option B, the creation of a new 3 stream non-denominational school for Riverbank with early education and childcare facilities; and to relocate St Peter's School to the current Riverbank School; respondents to the consultation were generally very supportive from the Riverbank stakeholders expressing the opportunities this would bring in maintaining the current strong and cohesive community links that had been built up since the merger of Donbank School and St. Machar School. However, St. Peter's School community were completely against this option. Comments received on these proposals at the public meetings and through written submissions are summarised as follows:

2.4.5 Comments unsupportive of Option B:

Comments were raised that due to the current condition of St. Peter's School and the fact that the pupils, families and staff have coped with this situation for the last number of years, it would only be right that St. Peter's School was provided with a new school building that could be designed according to their needs. It was very much felt that St. Peter's School deserves a new school rather than inheriting another school's premises and associated problems. Reference was made to the expanding roll and whether Riverbank could provide the long-term capacity for St. Peter's School as a lot of Non-Catholics opt to send their children to St. Peter's School due to its excellent reputation, ethos and values that are in high regard. It was also felt that this option would involve a longer wait for the St. Peter's School children as the necessary repairs and refurbishment work would only be carried out after the new school was built on the St. Machar primary school site.

Feelings raised that if St. Peter's School relocated into Riverbank school this would inhibit a lot of families from Seaton (who currently attend St. Peter's School) to continue to send their children to St. Peter's School due to the distance and lack of transport links from Seaton to Riverbank. It was felt that both St. Peter's School and Seaton School's roll could be affected by this proposed relocation in the future.

Several comments expressed dissatisfaction on how the two options were arrived at and how they didn't represent the initial options presented to the communities in May 2016 nor were they supported by the St. Peter's School Community. It was felt that the initial pre-consultation meetings were tokenistic. There was a feeling that the Council was trying to address two problems with one solution i.e. future capacity issues in Tillydrone and current capacity issues at St. Peter's School.

Some comments received about the current condition of Riverbank school and the need for future investment in order for it to be fit for purpose. It was generally felt that this option was not based on an appraisal of the needs of St Peter's and because the school building was now unfit for Riverbank it should not been seen as fit for purpose for St. Peter's School.

Some respondents commented that Riverbank was currently not over capacity and questioned the validity of the forecasted roll figures over the next five years. Some comments referred to the current premises having sufficient space to meet Riverbank's overall needs. It was felt given that as the St. Peter's School was currently over capacity and the roll was predicted to grow year on year, respondents felt there was a greater need to prioritise St. Peter's School to resolve this issue. Comparisons were made to the fabric of St. Peter's School which was deemed as not fit for purpose; references were made to poor condition of the current building and the constraints to the playground space. Comments on the lack of major capital investment over the years were felt to

have added to this problem. There was a request to be reassured that the current Option B was not decided as a “lower preference” because of St. Peter’s School being a RC school.

One respondent made reference to the history of anti-Catholicism in the United Kingdom, expressing a belief that the Council was unsupportive of St. Peter’s School requests and some respondents stated that this could suggest that “anti-Catholic” prejudice was operating in the Council’s decision-making process.

Some comments were made regarding the validity of the projected roll forecasts and reference was made to the erroneous predictions made in 2012 which forecasted St. Peter’s School roll to be at 108% but was in fact 130%. Respondents also questioned whether further research had been conducted to ascertain how many people wanted to attend either school in the future and how many were likely to be Catholic. Information was also sought on the number of applicants turned down year on year for P1 entry.

Concerns were expressed that parents may withdraw their children from St. Peter’s School in the future if the Council opted to recommend the relocation of St. Peter’s School to Riverbank School. It was felt this proposal would be detrimental to the St. Peter’s School community.

Several responses also commented on the point that a 3 stream school was required for St. Peter’s School in order to allow enrolment of not just Catholic children but children of all faiths and none. The importance of integration was expressed and that having a larger school with wider intake will ensure there is a more diverse school roll intake in the future which will provide a platform for successful integration long term.

There was a general opinion that although the Council should acknowledge and respond to the view of both communities equally, it must put first the needs of those who have been overlooked and overcrowded for too long. It was felt that the options presented to the two communities would create divisions and be unsupportive of growing inclusive neighbouring communities.

2.4.6 Comments Supportive of Option B:

There was a general feeling that Option B would keep the Tillydrone community together and ensure there was enough capacity to allow the school to expand and attract more families into the area. The option of having a large enough nursery that would feed into the new school was welcomed and ensure the children remain with friends throughout their early years and primary education.

Comments were made about Riverbank being the larger school and the fact it would make more sense to provide a 3 stream non-denominational school to cater for its future capacity needs whilst St. Peter’s School would have adequate capacity to grow if they relocated to Riverbank School.

A range of reflective comments were received about the merger of Donbank School and St. Machar Schools and the upset and divide it caused in the

Tillydrone community. People felt that Option B would ensure that this would be a step in the right direction.

One stakeholder asked whether St. Joseph's School had sufficient capacity to accommodate St. Peter's School as a whole.

Opinions expressed a view that it was better to separate both denominational and non-denominational schools to avoid future faith, religious and policy clashes between parents and pupils.

It was noted by stakeholders that the catchment zones for both schools would remain unchanged under Option B.

A comment was also received which stated that the a new school site would not pose a travel distance issue for the pupils of Riverbank School and for the 78 children who currently attend St. Peter's School and live in the Tillydrone area.

2.4.7 Comments from the children attending Riverbank and St. Peter's School:

The children's views were varied and most children expressed a desire for a new school near their current school. Some comments received from the St. Peter's Pupil Voice supporting the Shared Campus option included:

- Meeting new friends;
- Doing project work together;
- More learning opportunities;
- Two communities working together; and
- Shared clubs together

The majority of pupils from Riverbank expressed a wish to have a new school i.e. option B.

2.4.8 Response from the Riverbank Parent Council:

The response to the consultation from the Riverbank Parent Council (PC) noted a strong preference for Option B. The PC had taken pro-active steps to engage with the parents of the school to ensure their submission accurately reflected the broad views of the school community. The PC felt that Option B would ensure that the Riverbank School community continued as a whole. It was felt that this option would be the only option to provide a long term solution to the capacity issues forecasted for Riverbank.

The PC response also felt that the existing Riverbank building would be a suitable replacement school for St. Peter's School and would adequately cater for their current capacity issues and future roll projections.

Option A was deemed inappropriate due to the impact it could have on the community and it was felt that it wouldn't fully address the growing capacity issues facing Riverbank alongside the educational requirements to meet the needs of the children within Tillydrone.

The PC concluded that the Option C proposed by St. Peter's School Parent Council (to build a new 3 stream denominational school on the former St. Machar primary school site) be disregarded as it would not resolve the initial aim of the consultation which was to address the capacity issue of both schools. It was also felt that it would not give the majority of local parents the freedom to choose the type of education that they would wish for their child.

2.4.9 Response from the St. Peter's School Parent Council

The PC presented information on a survey they carried out with the parents of St. Peters to reflect the views of the parents that Option A and B were too limited and did not meet the needs of the community. A 58.2% survey return indicated that 85% of the respondents felt that both Option A & B were not sufficient options for St. Peters.

The survey determined that the proposed Option C by the PC (3 stream denominational school on St. Machar school site with early education and childcare facilities) was the preferred choice of the parents (93.7% - 134 replies). Both Option A & B were ranked as a close second and third choice (69.5% and 66%) respectively should the Council decide to propose either of these options to be progressed.

The PC suggested that a 2 stream standalone St. Peter's School would also be a viable option if it was designed to allow future expansion.

In conclusion, the PC recognises that Option A would mean a new school for St. Peter's School which would resolve the capacity issues and allow for expansion over the next few years and would be closest to their current site. Should Option C be proven unviable, the PC would see Option A as the preferred choice over option B.

Following a meeting with Council officers on 9 December 2016, St. Peter's School Parent Council reaffirmed that they were not satisfied with either option A or B and required a purpose built premises for St. Peter's School in close proximity to their current location.

The PC agreed and understood that this could mean a delay in getting a new school and that the pupils and staff would be therefore required to remain in their present premises in the interim period. The PC were prepared to accept this in return for an interim solution to the current overcrowding and identifying the acceptable alternative options in the future.

2.4.10 Response from St Peter's Staff

The staff of St Peter's School stated that Option A (Shared Campus) would be their preferred option and would be supported for a variety of reasons including:

- Resolving the current and future accommodation issues;
- Maintaining the identity of St. Peter's School;
- Closer proximity to its current location and therefore less disruption for families

- Current links with Old Aberdeen community and Aberdeen University would be more easily maintained
- Opportunities for more collegial working, sharing best practice and learning through joint continuing professional development.
- Opportunities for the planning and design of the new school to meet the needs of current and future pupils.

It was expressed that Option B would cause greater disruption to two school communities. Issues of travel distance, daily routine for St. Peter's School children and families would be avoided if Option A was progressed. As Riverbank School has flourished and become a flagship Rights Respecting School with a fantastic ethos, it was felt that they should be allowed to continue to flourish on their current site with the new Tillydrone school on the Shared Campus to address the future capacity issues.

Staff stated that they would support the Option C proposed by the St. Peter's School Parent Council, but felt that this option could greatly change the dynamics of the school and may not address the capacity issues of Riverbank in the future. There was also a concern that the size of the 3 stream school roll with the addition of early education and childcare facilities may be too large for one school.

The staff reaffirmed their commitment in supporting the chosen option and making it work by bringing St. Peter's School values, faith and nurturing ethos to the new school. They welcomed the opportunity to further develop as a community of faith and learning in better premises.

2.4.11 Response from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Aberdeen

The Diocese noted that all participants had a shared goal and; to achieve the best possible educational future for the children, but noted that there was not a shared unified vision of how to get there. The Diocese commented on how both Riverbank School and St. Peter's School were both happy and excellent schools proudly serving their communities and each making legitimate demands for their children's future.

Option A: (Shared Campus)

The Church stated that they had been wary of the idea of a Shared Campus model since its inception, however feels that it may need to take a more positive eye to this idea and how it could be developed in Aberdeen. Having a strong presence of skilled teachers and visionary Heads Teachers coupled with loving and supportive families in both Catholic and non-denominational schools, it was felt that this would present a viable and positive option to deliver a school of manageable size and deliver the required increase in capacity.

Option B: (Relocation to Riverbank School)

It was felt that this option would present travel difficulties for current St. Peter's School parents, particularly those from Seaton who would need to cross several busy and congested roads to get to the Riverbank School building. The Church response suggested that Option B lacked sensitivity to the needs of the community surrounding the present Riverbank School. It was highlighted that

by placing a Catholic school in the place of a non-denominational school may not make sense to the local population.

The correspondence from the Bishop of Aberdeen also commented on 2 further options for possible consideration. These are set out in the following paragraphs.

Option C: (3 stream new build school on St. Machar site – proposed by St. Peter’s School Parent Council)

The Diocese had serious concerns around the staffing of such a large school and the long term implications for the continued provision of the three Catholic schools in Aberdeen. Comments were made on the importance and value of integration and diversity within the wider community and the need to ensure we avoid any parallel educational provision for a specific “new” group of incoming families.

Option D: (Extend Riverbank School to a 3 stream school and build a new 2 stream school for St. Peter’s School on the St. Machar school site - proposed by a Diocesan Education Adviser)

It was noted that this option would be the acceptable to the Diocese should it prove feasible to include this in any revised proposal. The Diocese concluded that Option A (Shared Campus) would be the preference of the RC Diocese of Aberdeen.

2.4.12 Response from Old Aberdeen Community Council

The Old Aberdeen Community Council expressed a wish to see St. Peter’s School remain at the heart of the Old Aberdeen community and believed that the two options were very much a “forced fit” which suit neither St. Peter’s School or Riverbank School and therefore the Community Council could not support either option. They had concerns about how the pre-consultation meetings were handled and stated a belief that the options presented were ill-conceived.

2.4.13 Response from the Tillydrone Community Council

The response received from the Tillydrone Community Council broadly mirrors the response from the Riverbank Parent Council, in that the Community Council members voted unanimously to choose Option B.

Reference was made to the delivery of education in Tillydrone over the last 8 years and the issues the community has been faced with i.e. shortage of nursery and primary places for local children, disruption during ongoing works at Riverbank School and the relocation of children’s lessons due to increased capacity at the school.

They felt that Option A would not be a suitable option as it would see siblings separated into two different buildings. Riverbank’s current capacity levels at

420 was felt to be a suitable building to accommodate the present and future school roll of St. Peter's School Primary school.

2.4.14 Education Scotland Report

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

In its report, Education Scotland noted that the two options provided by the Council within the proposal were of equal merit, and that they had strong educational benefits. The report suggested that either of the options should lead to important improvements in the quality of learning environments for children, and improved transitions for children from early learning and childcare settings to their Primary 1 year at school. The report also stated that revised school rolls would alleviate current pressures in both schools.

The report included a summary of the discussions held between stakeholders and HM Inspectors with regards to the proposals, and it was noted that whilst the staff and representative pupils of St Peter's School who spoke to HM Inspectors were positive about Option A (the shared campus option), parents of pupils at the school were strongly opposed to this option. The report noted that parents of St Peter's School pupils were also opposed to Option B, and that they had proposed an alternative Option C, to build a new 3 stream denominational school.

Stakeholders from Riverbank School who met with HM Inspectors, it was noted, were however supportive of Option B. The report highlighted the fact that these stakeholders had strong concerns about the splitting of the Tillydrone community, if Option A was to be accepted.

The report noted that the preference of the RC Diocese of Aberdeen was Option A, although the Diocese had also put forward an additional proposal to extend the existing Riverbank School and to build a new 2 stream denominational school on the St Machar site.

Finally the Education Scotland report recommended that the council should contemplate taking more time to consider the additional proposals which were put forward during the consultation, and provide stakeholders with a preferred option for consideration. It also noted that all responses to the consultation would need to be considered in the council's final consultation report, and that the council should work with the school communities to clarify its reasons for believing the current options in the proposal are the most reasonable and viable options available.

The report also noted that the council would need to set out the actions taken to address any inaccuracies from earlier versions of the consultation proposal document.

The Council's response to points raised by Education Scotland is set out in Section 3 of this document, below.

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

3.1 The following paragraphs provide responses to the significant points raised at consultation meetings and in written submissions received during the consultation period.

3.2 Issues Raised

School Forecasts:

There were a number of comments received both via the comments cards and during the public meetings as to how the school roll forecasts were devised and to how accurate they were in projecting future school rolls for both Riverbank and St. Peter's School.

The school roll projections are primarily used to assess the approximate impact of new housing and pupil population increases on the school estate. It is important to gauge whether a school is likely to go significantly over or under capacity, by how much, how quickly and for how long.

Officers have always been clear that pupil roll projections are best estimates which take on board all of the possible available data. There are numerous factors that can influence the long term accuracy of a school roll forecast and as such they are revised every year. Each new forecast updating and replacing all previous forecasts.

The methodology for calculating pupil forecasts for the three Roman Catholic schools in Aberdeen is complicated by the fact that their zones are large and extend into the Aberdeenshire Council area. It is difficult to estimate how many pre-school children that live in, for example, the St Peter's School zone are:

- Roman Catholic children who will enroll in P1 at that school, or
- Roman Catholic children who will not enroll in P1 at that school, or
- non-Roman Catholic children who will enroll in P1 at that school, or
- Roman Catholic and non-Roman Catholic children who do not live in the St Peter's zone but will enroll in P1 at that school.

Because of these difficulties, the P1 intakes at the three Roman Catholic schools are generally based on an average of the intakes in the previous three years rounded to the nearest 5 – where available updated pupil estimates for schools based on school placement applications, this figure can be revised to provide a more accurate P1 intake.

For city wide calculations, the year on year accuracy is generally within 98% - 99.5%, this has been true since at least as far back as 1997

3.3 Adequate space for St. Peter's School and Riverbank in a Shared Campus

Several comments raised the question if the proposed Shared Campus school would provide sufficient space for the two schools long terms. Using the school forecast figures over the next 5-8 years, officers have calculated that a 2 stream denominational primary and a 1 stream non-denominational (Shared Campus proposal) would provide sufficient capacity to meet the projected roll forecasts and also ensure the learning needs of both current and future pupils are sufficiently catered for.

There were some concerns raised that class sizes would become larger if a Shared Campus school was built. The Council needs to adhere to the statute pupil numbers for each year group and a larger school roll does not necessarily result in larger classes as there is a greater resource allocation based on the number of pupils which increases the flexibility of Head Teachers when considering resource deployment.

3.4 Lack of Options for St. Peter's School

Reference was made on several occasions (both at the public meetings and via email) regarding the lack of suitable options for St. Peter's School and how the Council derived these options following the pre-consultation meetings held in May 2016.

Pre consultation meetings were held with both the Riverbank and St. Peter's School communities in May 2016. The purpose of meetings was to engage and discuss options to create additional school capacity for denominational and non-denomination education. At these meetings, a number of potential sites in the area were displayed to promote discussion and gauge the views of the communities at the early stage of the process. It was clearly explained by officers that all of the sites were caveated by the fact that due diligence had still to be carried and therefore would require further investigations and consultation with the relevant statutory bodies.

Following consultation with the Council's Planning, Roads and Design Team, a robust options appraisal was carried out and sites were discounted on the basis that they would not be a viable for the development of a new 3 stream school.

This work therefore ruled out the preferred site of the St Peter's School Parent Council, the former Dunbar Halls site, as not being a suitable site. Officers carefully reviewed the feedback from these meetings and whilst the feedback indicated that St. Peter's School community was not in favour of a Shared Campus, an additional option (Option B) was proposed for consultation in order to provide an alternative option for St. Peter's School to remain in a separate building whilst providing additional capacity long term.

3.5 Future Staffing Issues

It is the accepted that there are currently some significant challenges regarding teacher recruitment in Aberdeen. Other local authorities in the north east of Scotland are experiencing similar difficulties. The Council is working hard to

recruit teachers to work in our schools, and a number of innovative initiatives have recently been introduced to help increase the numbers of teachers applying for jobs within the city. This work will continue as the new schools are planned and built, to ensure that they will be sufficiently staffed at the time of opening. The Council will continue to explore all avenues to attract high quality teachers to the City and will strive for the excellent education its children deserve.

3.6 Priority Communities

The Council remains accountable and responsible to ensure it can deliver a high quality schools estate which supports the best quality of education and learning for its pupils. All proposed options and changes are carefully considered and evaluated taking cognisance of available resources and budgets to ensure the ongoing successful operation of all our schools.

The Council has a zero tolerance policy on any form of racism and strongly refutes any allegations to this effect when proposing and deciding on options for development. The Council strives to achieve the best solutions and outcomes for its communities and is committed to achieving the best options going forward.

3.7 Disruption to current Children's school arrangements

It was noted that should Option A be adopted by the Education and Children's Services Committee that any changes to the Riverbank school zone would apply only to families applying for places at the school for the first time; children already attending the school would not be expected to move to a different school as a result of these proposals.

Similarly, any children living in the area to be rezoned to the new school who have not yet reached school age when any changes are implemented, and who have older siblings who are already attending Riverbank School at that time, would have the option to also attend Riverbank School, in order to keep family groups together.

3.8 Suitability of Riverbank for St. Peter's School

With regards to the suitability of Riverbank School to accommodate pupils from St. Peter's School, the suggestion by some respondents that the school is inadequate for this purpose is not accepted. The building includes a recent modular extension comprising modern classrooms, general purpose space, and toilet and cloakroom facilities. Its current capacity of 420 would cater for St. Peter's School expanding roll.

It is however accepted that the distance issue for pupils living in Seaton would need to be addressed and this could in time, it was felt, result in a fall in the school roll at St. Peter's School, which could adversely affect its long term viability and increase the roll levels at Seaton Primary School which also has high occupancy levels.

It is recognised that St Peter's School has established close links with the University of Aberdeen and is an attractive factor for academic staff and students. The proposed relocation to the existing Riverbank School building could have associated consequences in maintaining these links. The representation of views from the Old Aberdeen Community Council also made reference to the negative effect of losing a local school which is held in such high regard if this option was pursued.

3.9 Online Comments Survey

An issue was raised regarding the presentation of the questions contained in the online comments form. It was suggested that respondents could only indicate support for either option A or B. It was also suggested that respondents couldn't indicate if they were not in favour of either option nor propose an alternative option.

After consultation with Aberdeen City Council's Research Team, the survey was revisited and additional information was added to ensure complete **clarity on the issues raised**.

3.10 Correction of inaccurate data

In the early stages of the public consultation it became apparent that some of the data within the proposal document, which related to the current roll and capacity of St Peter's School, was inaccurate. The original version of the proposal document stated that the school roll was 296, and that the school was at 150% of its capacity. The actual roll at the school was 256, and this represented 130% of the school's capacity.

The figures were corrected and an amended version of the document was published on the Council's website. Officers determined that this correction was not a material change, in that both sets of figures showed that the school was significantly over-capacity, and that a replacement building for St Peter's School was therefore necessary. For these reasons no further action was deemed necessary as a result of this incorrect data being discovered.

3.11 Alternative proposals

A number of additional proposals which were submitted to the Council during the consultation process and these have been fully considered by officers during the composition of this report.

Officers will continue to work closely with staff, pupils and the parent communities of the two affected schools, to explain any decisions resulting from this consultation, and to share the rationales behind them.

The Council's Response to Option C: build a new 3 stream denominational school

The proposal to build a new 3 stream denominational school (Option C), as an alternative to building a shared campus school or a non-denominational school, was investigated by officers, who concluded that such an option would not help to sufficiently address the lack of pupil capacity at Riverbank School.

Whilst it was suggested that this option might lead to some pupils from the existing Riverbank School catchment zone choosing to attend the new denominational school instead, which would then result in a reduction in the numbers of pupils at Riverbank School, officers felt it unlikely that the level of this reduction would be sufficient to fully address the capacity issues at Riverbank School. Moreover, if the new denominational school was to reach its own capacity in future, children from the Riverbank school zone who do not hold a baptism certificate would not be guaranteed a place at the school, due to the way in which places at denominational schools are allocated.

Finally, officers concluded that whilst it is accepted that more capacity is required for the existing St Peter's School (the school's current capacity is 198 places), the pupil roll forecasts for the school (and also the other denominational schools in the city) are not sufficiently high enough to warrant building a new 3 stream (651 places) school for denominational pupils only; it is unlikely that there would be sufficient demand in the city for such an increase in denominational places.

For the reasons described above, officers determined that the alternative Option C could not be taken forwards as a viable option.

The Council's Response to Option D: extend Riverbank school on its existing site

The proposal to extend Riverbank school on its existing site and to build a new 2 stream denominational school on the St Machar School / Tillydrone School site (Option D) was also considered by officers, who determined that building a suitable extension to Riverbank School would be a relatively complex project, which could not be done whilst pupils and staff were occupying the building.

Given that the time required to complete such a project would be considerably longer than a school holiday, this would therefore require a full decant of the school, with pupils and staff being moved elsewhere for the duration of the project. Officers determined that there is no suitable alternative building available within the Tillydrone area to and to use alternative facilities would likely result in a multi-site decant across the city at significant cost.

In addition, the funding which has been set aside for the construction of a new school in Tillydrone / Old Aberdeen is limited, and is unlikely to be sufficient to adequately extend Riverbank School as well as constructing a new 2 stream denominational school.

For the reasons outlined above, officers concluded that the alternative Option D could not be taken forwards as a viable option.

The Council's Response to Option E: build a new St. Peter's School on the Dunbar Halls

The proposal to build a new St. Peter's School on the Dunbar Halls site in Old Aberdeen was duly considered by officers and was also discussed at the public meetings as this site was the preferred of the school community following the pre-consultation meetings held in May 2016.

Following a robust option appraisal process, this site was not deemed suitable as issues were raised around the poor roads infrastructure in the vicinity of the site and planning officers commented on the likely build difficulties as the site is within the Old Aberdeen Conservation Area. This option wouldn't address the capacity issues at Riverbank School and the site is also not in Aberdeen City Council's possession.

For the reasons outlined above, officers concluded that the alternative Option E could not be taken forwards as a viable option.

The Council's Response to Option F: build/expand on the existing site of St. Peter's School

This alternative option was investigated by officers, who concluded that due to the size and constraints of the site would not be a viable option to be progressed. This option would also not help to sufficiently address the lack of pupil capacity at Riverbank School.

For the reasons outlined above, officers concluded that the alternative Option F could not be taken forwards as a viable option.

Option G: building the new school in the Seaton area

The proposal to explore building the new school in the Seaton area was considered by Officers who concluded that this option would not be feasible for the following reasons.

The available land in the Seaton area is classed as "Green Belt" which would mean if we got consent from Planning to approve a new build we would be required to replace this green space elsewhere within the local area.

Building in the Seaton area would not help address the capacity issues at Riverbank as this area would be out of the Riverbank School Zone.

For the reasons outlined above, officers concluded that the alternative Option G could not be taken forwards as a viable option.

3.12 Revised Proposal

Having considered the comments received during the consultation process, officers have concluded that the following revisions to the original proposals are appropriate:

- That a new 3 stream non-denominational school building with early education and childcare facilities is constructed on the site of the former St. Machar School and former Tillydrone School, and to relocate Riverbank School to this new building;
- That the new school building will become operational with effect from January 2020, or as soon as possible thereafter;
- That St Peter's School remains at its present site and officers to assess how best to alleviate short term capacity pressures at St. Peter's School;
- That officers carry out an options appraisal to determine the long term future of education provision at the existing St Peter's School site and the possibility of building a new St. Peter's School on a new location, subject to a suitable site being identified in the school zone and sufficient capital funding becoming available.

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

- 4.1 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: the written representations that have been received by it during the consultation period; oral representations made to it at the public meetings in November and December 2016; and Education Scotland's report.
- 4.2 In terms of Section 10(2) (e) of the said Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, the Consultation Report requires 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 revised the original proposal which was issued for public consultation with the revised proposal set out in the Recommendation Section (below).

5. RECOMMENDATION

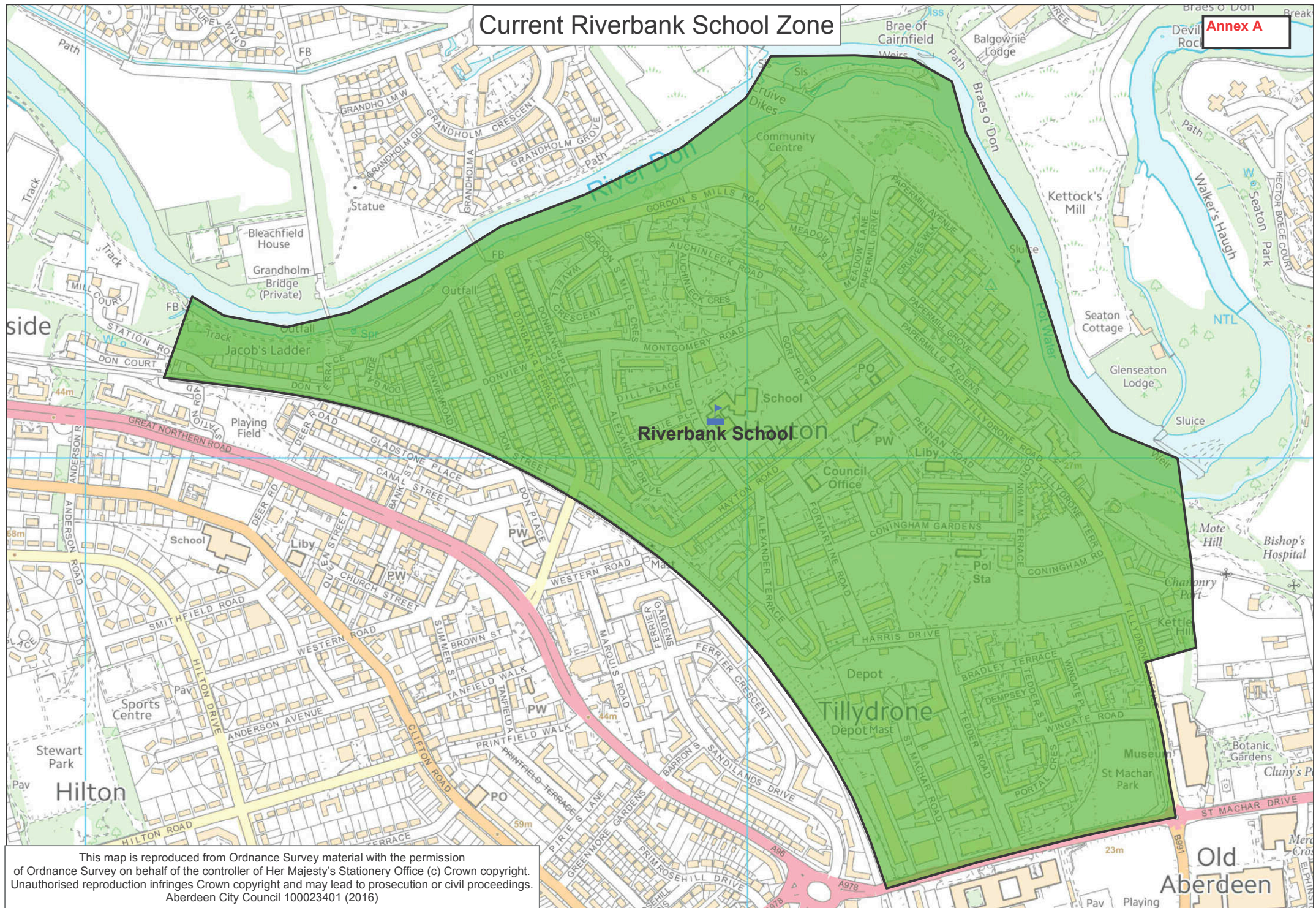
- 5.1 It is recommended that the Education and Children's Services Committee agree to implement the proposals to:
- **That a new 3 stream non-denominational school building with early education and childcare facilities is constructed on the site of the**

former St. Machar School and former Tillydrone School, and to relocate Riverbank School to this new building;

- That the new school building will become operational with effect from January 2020, or as soon as possible thereafter;**
- That St Peter's School remains at its present site and officers to assess how best to alleviate short term capacity pressures at St. Peter's School;**
- That officers carry out an options appraisal to determine the long term future of education provision at the existing St Peter's School site and the possibility of building a new St. Peter's School on a new location, subject to a suitable site being identified in the school zone and sufficient capital funding becoming available. Further, that officers to present the findings of this options appraisal exercise to a future meeting of this Committee in 2017.**

Current Riverbank School Zone

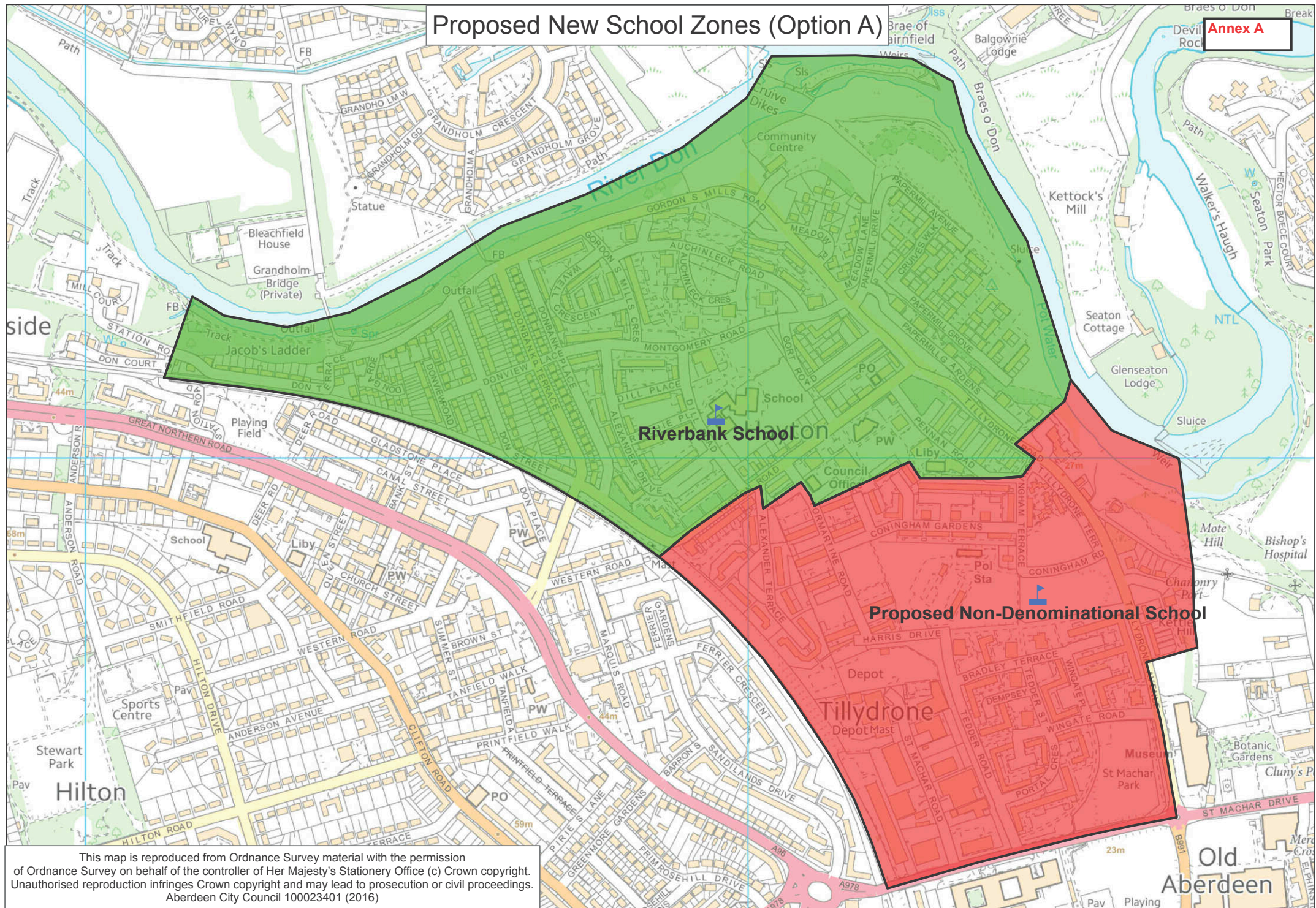
Annex A



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Proposed New School Zones (Option A)

Annex A



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REPORT FROM EDUCATION SCOTLAND

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeen City Council in relation to St Peter's RC School and Riverbank School.

The council's proposal document contains two options:

Option A - *to construct a new school building on the site of the former St Machar School and former Tillydrone School, to relocate St Peter's RC School to this new building and to create a new shared campus on this site, incorporating St Peter's RC School, a new one-stream non-denominational school, and early education and childcare facilities; to create a new catchment area for this school, and amend the current catchment area for Riverbank School.*

Option B - *to construct a new three stream non-denominational school building with early education and childcare facilities on the site of the former St Machar School and former Tillydrone School, and to relocate Riverbank School to this new building; whilst relocating St Peter's RC School to the current Riverbank School building.*

Both options are proposed to be operational from January 2020, or as soon as possible thereafter.

1. Introduction

This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by HM Inspectors in the Council 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 Aberdeen City Council's proposal to offer two options in relation to St Peter's RC School and Riverbank School.

1.1 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 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 meeting held on 8 December 2016 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 Riverbank School, St Peter's RC School, and discussion with relevant consultees including representatives of the Diocese.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 Aberdeen City 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 Aberdeen City Council's proposal relates to the need to address pressure on school rolls at St Peter's RC School and Riverbank School, both of which are either over capacity or nearing capacity.

2.3 The Statutory Consultation Period took place from 24 October 2016 until 9 December 2016. Five public meetings took place on 29, 30 November and 1, 7, 8 December at St Peter's RC School or Riverbank School. Copies of the consultation document were made available to stakeholders and in the affected schools, public libraries in the vicinity of the schools affected, the council offices and posted on the council's website. The council offered an online survey to which 114 responses were received. Twenty respondents (17.54%) supported the proposal Option A (the shared campus, new school and re-zoning of Riverbank); 94 responses (82.46%) did not support this option. Thirty respondents included comments in their response to this question.

2.4 Seventy-nine respondents (69.30%) supported the proposal Option B (relocation of St Peter's RC School to Riverbank and relocate Riverbank School to a new build on the former St Machar School / Tillydrone site), with 35 respondents (30.7%) not supporting this option. Sixty-five respondents included comments in their response to this question.

2.5 Twenty-eight additional responses were submitted by email. Of these 28 additional responses three respondees supported Option A, two respondees

supported Option B and 23 respondents either did not indicate a preference to support either Option A or B, or supported a different proposal. Many comments which were submitted with the survey or separately by email stated that respondents did not agree with either option and that neither option served the needs of both schools satisfactorily.

2.6 A selection of posters and paper submissions from school children were collated and summarised, where children shared mixed views, with overall 24 supporting Option A and 62 supporting Option B.

2.7 During the consultation period parents of St Peter's RC School identified an additional proposed option to the consultation, 'Option C' and undertook a survey of the St Peter's RC parent community. This proposed 'Option C' is for the council to consider building a three stream denominational school on the site of the former St Machar School and Tillydrone School, to include early education and childcare facilities. The responses to their own parental consultation indicate that this additional proposed option has strong support from the parent community of St Peter's RC School. This 'Option C' has not been part of the council's formal proposals and has therefore not been consulted with all stakeholders.

2.8 The submission from the Diocese contains an additional proposal of an 'Option D', to extend the current Riverbank School to become a three stream school and build a new two stream denominational school on the St Machar site.

2.9 The council and stakeholders alerted HM Inspectors that St Peter's RC School and Riverbank School's Parent Councils were planning to convene a joint meeting to consider joint responses to the proposals. These responses were not available at the time of HM Inspectors writing this report.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 Overall, each option within the proposal has equal merit and a number of potential educational benefits for current and future learners. Either should lead to important improvements in the quality of learning environments for children, along with improved transitions for children from early learning and childcare settings to P1 at school. Revised school rolls will alleviate current pressures in both schools, particularly St Peter's RC School which is already operating at 130% of capacity, with a current roll of 256 and a working capacity of 198. Additionally, the council have classified this building as category 'C', poor quality. One class in St Peter's RC School is currently operating in a classroom with no natural lighting and no running water. If no changes were made at St Peter's RC School the roll could rise to 322 by 2020. The school's current working capacity is set at 198 pupil places. Option A and B would increase the school's capacity to 420. Riverbank school has a working capacity of 420 pupil places, with the current roll being 386 (92% capacity). If no changes were made at Riverbank School the roll could rise to 593 by 2020. Option A would offer a school capacity of 420 (with part of the catchment being removed to the shared campus) and Option B would offer a school capacity of 651.

3.2 Senior Managers, staff and representative pupils who met with HM Inspectors at St Peter's RC School were positive about Option A of the proposal (shared campus). Parents were strongly opposed to Option A and Option B, citing their preferred proposed alternative 'Option C' of a new three stream denominational school, about which they had undertaken

their own consultation and had received strong support from their school community. Parents shared that, at pre-consultation meetings, council officers had proposed four different options for possible locations for a new St Peter's RC School; however they were disappointed that none of these options were contained within this proposal. Stakeholders at St Peter's RC School shared concerns that Option B would discourage children and families from attending St Peter's RC School if it were to move to the current Riverbank School location, as it is too far away from their current site, particularly for families in the Seaton area.

3.3 Riverbank School is a merger of the former Donbank and Tillydrone Schools from eight years ago. Senior managers and representative parents from Riverbank School who met with HM Inspectors were positive about Option B of the proposal. Staff and pupils shared mixed views about Option A or B. Stakeholders shared strong concerns regarding the splitting of the Tillydrone community if Option A were to go ahead and their catchment area was split. Stakeholders shared experience of the challenges of their merger of two former schools and the amount of work undertaken with the school community over the last eight years, to now become one school community and are proudly one of the very few schools in Scotland to have achieved Level 2 Rights, Respecting School status for the second time.

3.4 Considering the two options in the consultation document, the preference of the RC Diocese of Aberdeen is 'Option A', the shared campus. However, the submission from the Diocese contains an additional proposal of an 'Option D', to extend the current Riverbank School to become a three stream school and build a new two stream denominational school on the St Machar site, which they feel would be equally acceptable. With this proposal, the Diocese outline that Riverbank School could remain on its original site as one increased capacity school, whilst providing a new St Peter's RC School.

3.5 The council identified that in an early version of the consultation report there was an error in the table for the school roll and capacity of St Peter's RC School (Table 2). In the original document the roll was stated as 296 instead of 256 and the capacity as 150% instead of 130%. In its final consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address this inaccuracy.

4. Summary

- Overall, the options provided by the council within the proposal are of equal merit and have strong educational benefits. Either option should lead to important improvements in the quality of learning environments for children, along with improved transitions for children from early learning and childcare settings to P1 at school. Revised school rolls will alleviate current pressures in both schools, particularly for St Peter's RC School. However, the alternative options put forward by stakeholders during the consultation have added further complexity and stakeholders have not had time to provide HM Inspectors with full evidence.

- In the best interests of stakeholders, the council needs to contemplate taking more time to consider other proposals put forward during the consultation and provide stakeholders with a preferred option for consideration. For example, during the consultation period parents of St Peter's RC School identified an additional proposed option to the consultation, 'Option C' for the council to consider building a three stream denominational school on the site of the former St Machar School and Tillydrone School, to include early education and childcare facilities. The submission from the Diocese contains an additional proposal of an 'Option D', to extend the current Riverbank School to become a three stream school and build a new two stream denominational school on the St Machar site. In addition to this, the council and stakeholders alerted HM Inspectors that St Peter's RC School and Riverbank School's Parent Councils were planning to convene a joint meeting to consider joint responses to the proposals. These responses were not available at the time of HM Inspectors writing this report. In taking forward its proposal, the council will need to consider all of the responses in its final report and work with individual school communities to clarify its reasons for believing the current options in the proposal are the most reasonable and viable options open to it.
- In its final consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address any inaccuracies from earlier versions of the consultation proposal.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
December 2016**