RELOCATION OF DUNS PRIMARY SCHOOL

PROPOSALS PAPER

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

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

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

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Duns Primary School

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

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

1.2 Chirnside and Coldstream Specialist Provision

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

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

Currently within Berwickshire specialist provision is based at two sites – Chirnside Primary School for children with complex needs and Coldstream Primary School for children with communication needs.
In addition, other children with specific needs require to travel to provision in other parts of the Scottish Borders. This can cause distress for families having to consider their already vulnerable child being transported for several hours a day, especially in poor weather conditions. Additionally, moving children to provision in other parts of Scottish Borders has a significant annual travel cost to the council.

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

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

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

2. EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS STATEMENT

2.1 A relocated Duns Primary School incorporating a Berwickshire Locality Support Centre will solve a range of issues which currently impede the delivery of a modern curriculum.

2.2 The relocated school will provide a learning environment which provides a range of spaces which are versatile, flexible enough to accommodate a variety of group sizes and support a variety of teacher delivery styles and learning activities and outcomes. It will support the diversity of activities associated with the Curriculum for Excellence and be able to respond efficiently to changing needs in the future.

2.3 The relocated school would dispense with the existing temporary classroom accommodation on the current primary school campus. This will improve the day-to-day operation of the school and also help promote a strong ethos for pupils, staff and parents. For staff particularly it will help develop teamwork and collegiality.

2.4 The relocated school will be in close proximity to Berwickshire High School increasing opportunities for developments within the 3-18 curriculum enabling even closer partnership working and smooth transitions between stages.

2.5 The relocated school will be inclusive to the community as a whole and provide a welcoming and amenable facility. The facility must also offer ease of circulation and appropriate space for mobility for users with disabilities, both within the school building and externally.

2.6 The relocated school will offer a welcoming and comfortable environment for all users and provide the optimum quality of light, ventilation and heating.

2.7 The school will be a source of pride to both the school community and the town as a whole. The new school and its location should preserve this and be at the heart of the community. Next to Berwickshire High School and the community’s sports facilities and as part of an integrated facility with cultural services, the relocated school will be in a unique position to become the learning and cultural centre of the community.

2.8 The relocated school will provide safe access for pedestrians and vehicles, reducing congestion to the surrounding area and making it safer for children to enter their school.
The design of the new school will ensure the necessary facilities are provided to meet the curricular guidelines for physical education and to promote active, healthy lifestyles generally. The close proximity to outdoor sports facilities would enhance greatly the school’s ability to provide both its statutory PE provision but also enable a wider range of extra curricular activities to be developed.

The school facilities and resources will be available to the wider community, not just at evenings and weekends, but throughout the school day when appropriate. The school design will allow areas to be easily segregated and directly accessed during and out with school hours. The design will also allow for separation between the community and pupils/staff for safety.

A number of key current health and safety issues within the existing school buildings will be addressed. This will allow staff time and resources to be dedicated to curriculum development and learning and teaching.

The provision of an educational support centre in a single location within the Berwickshire Learning Community will improve the co-ordination between the various specialist services in a more integrated manner for children whose needs are complex.

A new locality support centre will achieve better outcomes for children, young people and their families. It will take place in the context of contributing to the reduction of placements in establishments out with the Borders and will also reduce the cost of transport to other ASN provision in the Borders.

A new locality support centre will provide better access to services for children and young people who may have had to travel to Langlee, Wilton Centre (Hawick), Spectrum Support Centres (Hawick and Innerleithen) and those who may require to be placed out with the Borders. A new locality Support Centre will create a single facility which will enable staff and resources to be more efficiently deployed and create better links with the local schools. In doing so it will provide a service that is accessible to more young people and families without the need to travel excessive distances.

The new Support Centre will redirect current expenditure in a more sustainable manner and seek to reduce long term costs to the Council.

A Berwickshire locality Support Centre raises the likelihood of parents choosing the available provision rather than seeking placement outside the Borders.

There is significant practitioner expertise within Berwickshire in supporting pupils with complex needs, but provision for these pupils is currently compromised by the poor quality accommodation/physical infrastructure available.

Berwickshire has the expertise in the Locality Team of Integrated Children’s Services, working with our partners in NHS. Appropriate physical provision would maximise that expertise and produce significant savings.

Maintaining children and young people in Berwickshire will maximise the potential for re-integration to mainstream and better transition planning.
3. PROPOSAL

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

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

4. CONSULTATION

This Proposal Paper has been made available to all interested parties including:

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

The Proposal Paper is available on SBC Website www.scotborders.gov.uk

Hard copies are available at the Council Headquarters at Newtown St Boswells, Duns Primary School, Chirnside Primary School, Coldstream Primary School, Duns Library and Contact Centre.

A Public Meeting will be held on Monday 25 February within Duns Primary School commencing at 6.00 pm.

Written responses are invited and should be sent to:-

educationconsultations@scotborders.gov.uk

or in writing to Duns PS Consultation, C/O Director of Education & Lifelong Learning, Scottish Borders Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose, TD6 0SA.

The closing date for responses is Noon on 15 March 2013.

5. CONSULTATION TIMELINE

This is attached as Appendix 1.

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address above. E&LL’s Communications Unit can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies. Contact the E&LL Communications Unit at Council Headquarters on 01835 826592 or email at
Appendix 1 – Consultation Timeline

1) Publish report and proposals
   4 February 2013

2) Consultation period including public meeting
   (4 February 2013 – 15 March 2013)

3) HMI produces report commenting on proposals and consultation process
   (18 March 2013 – 5 April 2013)

4) Local Authority consider consultation responses and HMI report

5) Revised report and proposals published
   12 April 2013

6) Revised report published for final comment
   (15 April 2013 – 3 May 2013))

7) Report and recommendations considered by council
   30 May 2013

Current legislation allows Scottish Government to “call in” any decision from a local authority. This must be done within three weeks of the council decision. The local authority then has a further three weeks to make representations to Scottish Government is the council decision is called in.