

Penicuik Non Denominational Primary Schools Catchment Areas
Report by Mary Smith, Director, Education, Communities and Economy

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the Council's approval to implement the proposed changes to the catchment areas of the primary non-denominational schools in the Penicuik area. A copy of the consultation report is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. A copy of Education Scotland's report on the consultation is attached as Appendix 2 to this report. A file with copies of the representations made during the consultation has been placed in the Members' Library.

2 Background

- 2.1 A programme of catchment reviews was commenced in 2009/10 to address the mismatch between Midlothian's schools' capacities and the demand for pupil places and to ensure that the school infrastructure would support the implementation of Midlothian's Local Plan.
- 2.2 A preliminary community consultation covering all school areas across Midlothian resulted in catchment boundary changes to King's Park and Woodburn Primary Schools in Dalkeith, Gorebridge and Stobhill Primary Schools in Gorebridge and Bonnyrigg, Hopefield, Hawthornden and Lasswade Primary Schools in Bonnyrigg. These changes created a better balance between school capacity and demand for places in these areas and also established the catchment area for the new Burnbrae Primary School, which opened in October 2012.
- 2.3 In 2011/12 the Council consulted on a proposal to merge Beeslack Community and Penicuik High Schools and to operate the merged school on a split campus. 90% of the consultation responses were opposed to the merger and the operation of a split campus so Council decided to abandon the proposal.
- 2.4 In June 2013 officers obtained governance to undertake statutory consultation on proposals to revise the catchment boundaries of the five non-denominational primary schools in Penicuik, namely Cornbank St James, Cuiken, Glencorse, Mauricewood and Strathesk. That consultation concluded in April and the consultation report was published on 11 June 2014 and is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

- 2.5 There has been a period of 3 weeks for further consideration since the publication of the consultation report. In this time one inaccuracy in the consultation paper has been brought to our attention and an objection lodged on that basis.
- 2.6 The inaccuracy is in Proposal 3 of the consultation paper which states that there are no pupils attending Midlothian schools who reside in the rural area south-west of Mauricewood Road. This is no longer the case as there are now pupils residing at Mauricewood Steadings. This correction to the information contained in the consultation report is reflected in the proposals presented for approval in this report.
- 2.7 Education Scotland has carried out an independent and impartial consideration of the Council's consultation proposal and published its report on 11 June 2014, which is attached as Appendix 2 to this report. The inaccuracy noted above was brought to our attention after publication of Education Scotland's report.
- 2.8 The Education Scotland report summary states that the Council's case for realigning the catchment areas of Cornbank St James, Cuiken, Glencorse, Mauricewood and Strathesk Primary Schools is sound and has won the support of most stakeholders. It confirms that it will achieve a more balanced approach to school rolls, however, it identifies a number of issues raised by parents and staff to which the Council will need to give full consideration. While the principle of a review of catchment areas is broadly supported, significant opposition to the proposal to nominate Penicuik High School as the secondary school to enrol all P7 pupils resident in the Strathesk catchment area is noted, this includes the potential impact on Beeslack Community High School.
- 2.9 Representations have been made about children who are already attending, or registering to attend, one of the Penicuik schools and will become out of catchment with the implementation of these proposals. There have also been representations about younger siblings who will attend the schools in future years. A number of parents have also raised concerns about the proposals to change catchment areas as children move from nursery to primary school.
- 2.10 The transition arrangements the Council will put in place will minimise any such adverse effects. The Council will continue to prioritise the granting of placing requests for siblings of children already at a school. For pupils entering Primary 1 from August 2015 to 2018, the Council will prioritise the granting of placing requests for children who would have been in the catchment had it not been for the proposed changes. The Council will include attendance at nursery when considering priority for pupils entering Primary 1 in August 2015 and 2016 for the schools affected by these proposals. The effective date for changes affecting pupils entering secondary education will be deferred to August 2018. Thereafter the Council will continue to support parental choice, where there are school spaces available, via normal placing request procedures.

- 2.11 Concern has been registered about the safety of walking routes to schools. The proposals have been reviewed by the Council's Road Safety Team, which has made recommendations for the development of some new routes to school, particularly in respect of areas of new housing development. They have also recommended a small number of alterations to ensure continuing safety of pupils' route to school in respect of the proposed catchment changes, which the Council will take forward and will communicate to the affected schools' communities well in advance of the changes coming into effect.
- 2.12 There is significant opposition to the proposals on the basis of the potential negative impact on the pupil roll of Beeslack Community High School. Representations have also been made about potential delays in the timing of the building of new houses, and the damaging effect on pupil numbers at Beeslack if the proposed changes are implemented too soon.
- 2.13 The intent of the proposals is to create catchments which will provide sustainable pupil populations for all Penicuik schools and simultaneously create capacity for pupils arising from new housing development. There is a risk that the timing of the changes will accelerate the reduction in pupil roll at Beeslack Community High School. This risk is reduced by deferring the effective date for changes affecting pupils entering secondary education to August 2018. This also allows time to carry out and implement a review of secondary school catchments across Midlothian.
- 2.14 The proposed changes to the catchment areas of the Penicuik non-denominational primary schools have been reviewed having regard to all relevant representations made and to Education Scotland's report. The proposals presented for approval in this report are:
1. Extend the catchment boundary of Cornbank St James Primary School, to include the houses in the residential area known as Broomhill and the residential area to the north-west of Cuiken Primary School, the residential area known as Valleyfield, Marchwell Cottage and the affordable housing part of development site H16 "North West Penicuik", with effect for pupil enrolment from August 2015.
 2. Adjust the catchment boundary for Cuiken Primary School to include the existing houses in the Cuikenburn and upper Deanburn areas, housing development site D "Deanburn" and the part of housing development site H16 "North West Penicuik" which is bounded by Mauricewood Road, with effect for pupil enrolment from August 2015 .
 3. Transfer the rural areas south-east of Peebles Road and south-west of Mauricewood Road, excluding Mauricewood Steadings, Old Mains and Rullion Cottage, to Cuiken, the area within the grounds of Beeslack High School to Glencorse and the land between Mauricewood Road and Belwood Road to Mauricewood, with effect for pupil enrolment from August 2015.

4. Transfer the Belwood part of housing development site H16 "North West Penicuik, to Mauricewood Primary School, with effect for pupil enrolment from August 2015.
5. Vary the arrangements for the transfer of Strathesk pupils to secondary school so that in future all Strathesk pupils transfer to Penicuik High School, with effect for pupil enrolment from August 2018.
6. Defer the effective date for changes affecting pupils entering secondary education to August 2018.
7. Extend transition arrangements for those affected by these changes to give consideration to attendance at the associated nursery for those enrolling in Primary 1 in August 2015 and 2016.
8. Extend transition arrangements for pupils entering Primary 1 from August 2015 to August 2017, to prioritise the granting of placing requests for children who would, except for these catchment changes, have been in catchment.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Resource

This report has no direct financial implications. However, achieving better balance in school rolls across the Penicuik primary schools will help control the cost per pupil, improve school occupancy and minimise the investment required in additional school capacity for pupils arising from new housing development in the Penicuik area.

3.2 Risk

This report addresses the risk of some Penicuik primary schools having insufficient capacity to provide places for all catchment pupils while other schools in the area have spare capacity. The proposals in this report raise the risk of accelerating the fall in pupil roll at Beeslack Community High School by transferring some of its current catchment to that of Penicuik High School. This risk has been reduced by deferring the effective date of the changes on secondary aged pupils for 3 years, which will allow time to implement a review of secondary school provision across Midlothian.

3.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☒ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☒ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☐ Sustainable growth
- ☒ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

3.4 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

This work is a part of the Single Midlothian Plan's key priority of Early Years, providing sufficient capacity at catchment schools to present every child with the opportunity to attend the school which serves their community, and supports improvement in pupil attainment and achievement.

3.5 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Providing sufficient capacity at catchment schools to provide every child the opportunity to attend the school which serves their community supports the preventative approach by improving achievement and attainment of pupils and increasing their prospects of progressing onto positive destinations.

3.6 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The consultation process has included consultation with parents, staff and pupils of the schools affected as well as trade union and community representatives.

3.7 Ensuring Equalities

This report proposes no change to policy affecting any equality groups. The proposals in the report are intended to improve the equality of access for all pupils to a place at their catchment school.

3.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

3.9 IT Issues

There are no IT issues arising from this report.

4 Recommendations

It is recommended that Council approve the implementation of the proposed changes to the catchment areas of the non-denominational schools in the Penicuik area as detailed in paragraph 2.14 of this report.

Date July 2014

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Consultation on Non-Denominational Primary School Catchments in Penicuik

Consultation Report

11 June 2014



Consultation Report

Proposed revision of the catchment boundaries of:

Cornbank St James Primary School
Cuiken Primary School
Glencorse Primary School
Mauricewood Primary School
Strathesk Primary School

Proposal to change the arrangements for transfer to secondary school for pupils of Strathesk Primary School.

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1. Summary of the proposals

Midlothian Council has consulted on proposals to revise the catchment boundaries of Cornbank St James, Cuiken, Glencorse, Mauricewood and Strathesk Primary Schools. The proposals took account of feedback from the preliminary community consultation, covering all school areas across Midlothian, which took place between October and December 2009 and the consultation on secondary school provision for Penicuik, which was undertaken in May and June 2011.

The Penicuik area is served by five non denominational primary schools:

| Primary School | Houses in Catchment | Pupils Resident | Current Class Capacity | Pupil Operating Capacity | Pupil Roll Census 2013 |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Cornbank | 1,037 | 157 | 12 classes | 300 | 235 |
| Cuiken | 1,914 | 262 | 9 classes | 225 | 234 |
| Glencorse | 411 | 42 | 4 classes | 100 | 21 |
| Mauricewood | 1,640 | 379 | 16 classes | 445 | 354 |
| Strathesk | 2,410 | 389 | 14 classes | 350 | 326 |
| Total | 7,412 | 1,229 | 55 classes | 1,375 | 1,170 |

The Penicuik area also has a Roman Catholic primary school, Sacred Heart Primary School, and two non denominational secondary schools, Beeslack Community High School and Penicuik High School.

Penicuik High School's associated primary schools are Cornbank St James, Cuiken and Strathesk. Penicuik has capacity to accommodate 900 secondary pupils. The roll as at September 2013 was 566 pupils. Beeslack Community High School's associated primary schools are Glencorse, Mauricewood and Roslin. Beeslack has capacity to accommodate 860 secondary pupils. The roll as at September 2013 was 780 pupils.

Strathesk Primary School is part of Penicuik High School's Associated School Group. It was formed in 2007 from the combination of Eastfield and Ladywood Primary Schools; Eastfield had been a feeder school for Penicuik High School and Ladywood for Beeslack Community High School. Since 2007, pupils from Strathesk have had the choice to enrol at Beeslack, if they reside in the area which was previously the catchment of Ladywood Primary School. This arrangement was put in place to ease the transition difficulties arising from the merger of the two primary schools. Strathesk is the only Midlothian primary school which has arrangements to transfer its pupils on to two secondary schools.

The Midlothian Local Plan contains provision for new houses in Penicuik on the development sites detailed in the table which follows. Much of the planned housing development for Penicuik is in the current catchment areas of Glencorse and Mauricewood Primary Schools, which do not have the capacity to accommodate the projected pupil product. There is no planned development in the catchment of Cornbank St James Primary School, which has considerable spare capacity, and none in the catchment of Cuiken Primary School, which has the potential to be extended.

| Housing Developments | Catchment | Site Reference | Proposed Units | Primary Pupil Product |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| North West Penicuik (Belwood) | Glencorse | H16 | 163 | 46 |
| North West Penicuik (Affordable) | Mauricewood | H16 | 160 | 45 |
| North West Penicuik (Mauricewood) | Mauricewood | H16 | 66 | 18 |
| North West Penicuik (Nursery) | Glencorse | H16 | 62 | 17 |
| Greenlaw Mains | Mauricewood | C | 458 | 128 |
| Deanburn | Mauricewood | D | 109 | 31 |
| Dalmore Paper Mill | Glencorse | M231 | 120 | 34 |
| | | | 1,138 | 319 |

The Council proposed to adjust the catchment areas of the Penicuik non denominational primary schools, so that the pupil population, including the projected pupils from new housing, is distributed to make best use of the proposed capacity, including planned extensions, available at the five non denominational primary schools.

The revised catchment boundaries for the primary schools would make the following transfers of current housing stock:

- the residential area known as Broomhill and the residential area to the north-west of Cuiken from Cuiken to Cornbank St James;
- the residential area known as Valleyfield from Strathesk to Cornbank St James;
- Marchwell Cottage from Glencorse to Cornbank St James;
- the residential areas at Cuikenburn and upper Deanburn from Mauricewood to Cuiken;
- the rural areas south-west of Mauricewood Road and south-east of Peebles Road to Cuiken, the area within the grounds of Beeslack High School to Glencorse and the land between Mauricewood Road and Belwood Road to Mauricewood.

The catchment review would also transfer the following areas of planned housing development:

- Site D, Deanburn, to Cuiken Primary School;
- North West Penicuik (Belwood) part of site H16 to Mauricewood Primary School;
- North West Penicuik (affordable) part of site H16 to Cornbank St James Primary School;
- Remainder of site H16 North West Penicuik to Cuiken Primary School.

The Council also proposed to vary the arrangements for the transfer of Strathesk pupils to secondary school so that in future all Strathesk pupils transfer to Penicuik High School.

2 Consultation Findings

2.1 Representations made on the proposal during the consultation period

In total 102 written representations were made on the proposed catchment changes.

Proposal 1

Extend the catchment boundary of Cornbank St James Primary School, to include: the houses in the residential area known as Broomhill and the residential area to the north-west of Cuiken Primary School, currently in the catchment of Cuiken; the residential area known as Valleyfield, currently in the catchment of Strathesk Primary School; Marchwell Cottage, currently in the catchment of Glencorse Primary School; and the affordable housing part of development site H16 “North West Penicuik”, 160 proposed units, currently in the catchment of Mauricewood Primary School.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|-------------------|------------------|----------------|
| strongly agree | 25% | 22 |
| agree | 22% | 20 |
| disagree | 3% | 3 |
| strongly disagree | 9% | 8 |
| no opinion | 40% | 36 |
| | 100% | 89 |

Proposal 2

Adjust the catchment boundary for Cuiken Primary School to include the existing houses in the Cuikenburn and upper Deanburn areas, and housing development site D “Deanburn”, 109 proposed units, currently in the catchment of Mauricewood Primary School. Allocate to the Cuiken catchment 128 of the proposed units at housing development site H16 “North West Penicuik”, which currently sit across the catchments of Glencorse and Mauricewood Primary Schools.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|-------------------|------------------|----------------|
| strongly agree | 21% | 20 |
| agree | 21% | 20 |
| disagree | 7% | 7 |
| strongly disagree | 19% | 18 |
| no opinion | 31% | 29 |
| | 100% | 94 |

Proposal 3

Transfer the rural areas south-west of Mauricewood Road and south-east of Peebles Road to Cuiken, the area within the grounds of Beeslack High School to Glencorse and the land between Mauricewood Road and Belwood Road to Mauricewood.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|-------------------|------------------|----------------|
| strongly agree | 25% | 21 |
| agree | 19% | 16 |
| disagree | 5% | 4 |
| strongly disagree | 8% | 7 |
| no opinion | 43% | 36 |
| | 100% | 84 |

Proposal 4

Transfer the Belwood part of housing development site H16 "North West Penicuik", 163 proposed units, to Mauricewood Primary School, currently in the catchment of Glencorse Primary School.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|-------------------|------------------|----------------|
| strongly agree | 24% | 21 |
| agree | 26% | 22 |
| disagree | 7% | 6 |
| strongly disagree | 7% | 6 |
| no opinion | 36% | 31 |
| | 100% | 86 |

Proposal 5

Vary the arrangements for the transfer of Strathesk pupils to secondary school so that in future all Strathesk pupils transfer to Penicuik High School.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|-------------------|------------------|----------------|
| strongly agree | 18% | 17 |
| agree | 16% | 16 |
| disagree | 10% | 10 |
| strongly disagree | 40% | 39 |
| no opinion | 15% | 15 |
| | 100% | 97 |

2.1.1 Summary of written representations made during the consultation period

- These proposals are the common sense approach to the schools' issue in Penicuik.
- Younger siblings who are affected by the proposals should have placement requests granted.
- School catchments should not be altered to accommodate pupils from new housing developments to the detriment of pupils that would be attending schools based on the status quo.
- Mauricewood Primary School should not have more pupils added. A new primary school should be built within the new housing areas H16/H26/H25 to accommodate the increase in pupils arising from the new developments.
- Why are pupils from the houses at Milton Bridge being allowed to attend Mauricewood under the new proposals when the profoundly under-occupied Glencorse Primary is clearly closer?
- During a period when local authorities are facing severe financial pressures it's important that Midlothian make informed, long term decisions on the future of education within the Penicuik and south west Midlothian area rather than looking at short term fixes that are unlikely to resolve longer term issues and which are likely to resurface again in the future and potentially cost the authority more than had they made the right decisions at the outset, an example being Cuiken Primary School where housing areas identified in the Midlothian Local Plan were known before the new school was built and yet it was built as a nine classroom school.
- The catchment review should reduce Cuiken Primary School's catchment area so that the school would not need to be extended in the future, the special provision moved and much valued open space lost.
- The proposed catchment boundaries would create social divides between the Penicuik primary schools and in the Penicuik community. Having schools within the same area with vastly differing measures of multiple deprivation would have a negative impact on how the schools are viewed, affect how parents may wish to place their children and make coming together when the children reach high school more of a challenge.

- Cuiken should retain its current catchment and the Deanburn area should be considered for the Cornbank catchment. This would introduce a wider socio-economic mix to Cornbank School which would benefit all the pupils of Cornbank.
- As a parent at Cornbank I am worried about the additional children who will now come to Cornbank and hope the Council will be prepared to put in all the additional resources this will require, not just the number of teachers also additional support staff.
- At present, Cornbank has a relatively poor social mix that does not well represent that of Penicuik, owing to its position in the centre of an established and relatively affluent 1960s Wimpey estate. Cuiken, on the other hand, currently enjoys a good social mix from a catchment area that includes several housing sources. It represents Penicuik's population well and therefore educates its children in an appropriate social context. Under the proposals, Cuiken's social mix would be rendered far narrower and Cornbank's already-distorted social mix would be exacerbated. A slightly less tidy geographic solution would produce a far more desirable set of school characteristics and provide a more appropriate education to Penicuik's children.
- By transferring Valleyfield children away from Strathesk you are narrowing the socio-economic diversity of the catchment.
- The proposals as outlined will make the school rolls at Penicuik High School and Beeslack High School sustainable into the future, it makes sense to even out the pupils attending both High Schools.
- Pupils living closer to Beeslack Community High School than to Penicuik High School should be entitled to attend Beeslack.
- The proposal to move Strathesk pupils to Penicuik High School means that the travel time for some pupils will increase from 5 to 10 minutes to approximately 25 to 30 minutes and will require consideration in relation to safer routes to school.
- Ladywood strikes me as a poorer area of Penicuik and you will deprive those children who presumably come from modest income families a chance of being educated at a great school like Beeslack - strengthening the division between how the rich and poor are educated.
- Proposals 2 & 5 would reduce pupil numbers at Beeslack and consequently adversely affect the school's ability to support a broad general curriculum, to maintain the range of courses on offer in the senior school and increase the number of classes taught as bi-level

and tri-level sets. As course options reduce, the school will struggle to continue to attract the numbers of pupils to the school who come as a result of the school's excellent reputation, which will have further implications for the school roll.

- There is no guarantee that the capacity created at Beeslack by the proposals will be taken up by pupils coming from the proposed housing developments. If they do, it will be several years before the potential pupils need secondary education.
- It is not right to allow children from outside Penicuik greater rights to Beeslack than people who live within such close proximity.
- It's a shame that Penicuik has 2 high schools, if there was just one new high school it would be brilliant for the community and the pupils. The young people of Penicuik deserve to have the same level of high school facilities as other young people in Midlothian.
- I understand that the Lasswade School is almost at capacity. Couldn't the Loanhead community use Beeslack as their secondary, therefore increasing its roll? This would leave Lasswade free to accept more young people from the ever increasing housing around Bonnyrigg.
- There are two really good, high-achieving schools in Penicuik. Don't address a specific problem in one by undermining the other. Link these proposals with the consultation at Loanhead primary schools and allow Loanhead children to be given the choice to go to Lasswade High School or Beeslack. Linking these two consultations will more proactively manage the decline in Penicuik High School by actually purposefully managing the 'swap' of pupils from Beeslack to Penicuik High.
- To have staff focused, at this crucial time of the year, on yet another proposal which appears to undercut their attempts to bring in CfE and devalue the teams that have delivered significant learning experiences for pupils over many years unquestionably further reduces the sense that the staff are valued by the Council. This proposal appears to suggest we can commit Beeslack to a slow decline in what can be offered over the medium term and that will be fine. It is not! I recognise the reality that is proffered: "they are professional teachers and will do a professional job whatever" - they are but, nonetheless, quality human resources should be better managed than this proposal suggests.

- It is my understanding that a transition period would be incorporated, however it would make more sense to implement proposal five only if/when the new housing provides Beeslack HS with the same number of pupils. A similar policy would also be useful for the Deanburn changes, just so that there isn't an immediate reduction in the first year roll at Beeslack, instead there is a steady switch over to pupils from new housing.
- Proposal 2 along with Proposal 5 will need to be re-addressed as part of the secondary catchment review for the whole of Midlothian, as mentioned in the public meetings and should therefore be withdrawn from the consultation.
- Delay the changes to the primary catchments until the provision of secondary schools across a wider geographic area is properly assessed.
- Consider extending the catchment area of the Penicuik secondary schools to the outlying rural areas in the catchment of Moorfoot Primary School.

2.1.2 Summary of oral representations made at the public meetings held on 11th and 20th March 2014

- Concern was expressed about the lack of social housing in the Cornbank St James proposed catchment, perpetuating the perception that middle class children go to Cornbank and working class children go to Cuiken. It was suggested that there needs to be a balance between owner-occupied homes and council houses to prevent a 'them and us' situation. It was suggested that the proposal be altered to allow children living in the Broomhill area to continue to go to Cuiken and not be included in the Cornbank St James proposed catchment.
- Concern was expressed about the lack of social balance at Cuiken and Cornbank if the proposals went ahead. Middle class children would go to Cornbank while children from social housing would come to Cuiken. Worries were expressed about polarisation and the fact that a good social mix at school helps attainment.
- It was suggested that changing the proposal to include Deanburn in the Cuiken catchment and instead make it part of Cornbank might help address the social mix issue.

- The timing of the building of the proposed extension to Cuiken was queried and concern raised about how the building work would impact on a middle section of school, which currently caters for special needs children from across Midlothian.
- It was asked if someone bought a house in the H16 area on the proposed catchment maps, that would, if given the go-ahead, feed into Cuiken, would the road network be sufficient to allow pupils to reach school safely.
- Strathesk parents should be left to decide which secondary school to send their children on to.
- The application process for making a placement request should be simplified.
- Proposal 5 does not make sense for residents in Ladywood, whose children currently go to Beeslack, as it will mean their children crossing a busy road and walking across town to get to secondary school.
- Council planning is 'ad hoc' with decisions made because of potential housing developments that may or may not be built, while denying people currently living in the area the chance to send their children to Beeslack.
- Concerns were expressed about the impact of these proposals on siblings who could be in two different schools and on parents who are choosing nursery and/or primary places now when the catchment areas may be different when their children start school.
- Concern was expressed about the suggestion that Loanhead pupils might eventually be accommodated at Beeslack Community High School. The majority of parents living in Loanhead want to send their children to the new school at the Lasswade Centre and there's no immediate issue regarding places available at Lasswade. Proposing to send Loanhead pupils to Beeslack in the future is 'jumping the gun' when there is still a debate to be had about secondary provision for Loanhead.
- The pupil balance between Beeslack and Penicuik would come about thanks to new housing developments built eventually, but it is unsatisfactory to make these changes now because of the sheer speculation and length of time this might take.
- We are taking a problem of more limited subject choices at Penicuik High because of smaller pupil numbers and transferring the issue to Beeslack by proposing to change the primary catchments. We might get to the point that Beeslack and Penicuik have similar pupil numbers but those numbers will limit subject choices for both schools. This could 'destroy' higher education in Beeslack if pupil numbers fall below a certain level.

- It was suggested that we remove proposal 5.
- It was suggested to delay any decision on proposal 5 until after some of the other consultations about other catchments have taken place.

2.2 Education Scotland Report Summary

The Council's case for realigning the catchment areas of Cornbank St James, Cuiken, Glencorse, Mauricewood and Strathesk Primary Schools is sound and has won the support of most stakeholders. It will achieve a more balanced approach to school rolls. However, a number of issues have been identified by parents and staff as outlined in this report. The council needs to give full consideration to these issues. While the principle of a review of catchment areas is broadly supported, there is significant opposition to the proposal to nominate Penicuik High School as the secondary school to enrol all P7 pupils resident in the Strathesk catchment area. This includes the potential impact on Beeslack Community High School. As a result, the Council needs to ensure it considers further this proposal to provide reassurances that it is the most reasonable option open to it.

2.3 Midlothian Council's response to representations made during the consultation period and to Education Scotland's report

Concerns have been registered about children who are already attending, or registering to attend, one of the Penicuik schools and will become out of catchment with the implementation of these proposals and about younger siblings who will attend the schools in future years. A number of parents have also raised concerns about the proposals to change catchment areas as children move from nursery to primary school.

The transition arrangements the Council will put in place will minimise any such adverse effects. The Council will continue to prioritise the granting of placing requests for siblings of children already at a school. For pupils entering Primary 1 from August 2015 to 2018, the Council will prioritise the granting of placing requests for children who would have been in the catchment had it not been for the proposed changes. The Council will include attendance at nursery when considering priority for pupils entering Primary 1 in August 2015 and 2016 for the schools affected by these proposals. The effective date for changes affecting pupils entering secondary education will be deferred to August 2018. Thereafter the Council will continue to support parental choice, where there are school spaces available, via normal placing request procedures.

Concern has been registered about the safety of walking routes to schools. The proposals have been reviewed by the Council's Road Safety Team, which has made recommendations for the development of some new routes to school, particularly in respect of areas of new housing development. They have also recommended a small number

of alterations to ensure continuing safety of pupils' route to school in respect of the proposed catchment changes, which the Council will take forward and will communicate to the affected schools' communities well in advance of the changes coming into effect.

Concern has been registered about the lack of social balance at Cuiken, Cornbank St James and Strathesk Primary Schools if the proposals are implemented. A theoretical study, using the current pupil roll as a model, has been undertaken to examine the impact of the proposals on the relative deprivation scores of the schools as measured by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). This demonstrates that the proposed changes on the SIMD profiles of Cornbank, Cuiken, Mauricewood and Strathesk are relatively small in the context of the range of SIMD for Midlothian schools.

Concerns of schools' staff have been registered about job security in the event of their school rolls falling. The intent of the proposals is to create catchments which will provide sustainable pupil populations for all Penicuik schools, however there is a risk that this may result in accelerating a reduction in school roll at one or more schools. The timing of the changes will be managed to minimise this risk. Overall jobs of school based staff are not being put at additional risk as a result of these proposals as, in the event of school rolls falling to a point where fewer staff are needed, normal Council redeployment procedures will apply.

Significant opposition to the proposals on the basis of the potential negative impact on the pupil roll of Beeslack Community High School has been registered. Further analysis of Beeslack's school roll shows that the roll has declined from a total of 960 pupils in the 2003 pupil census to a total of 780 pupils in the 2013 pupil census. The pupil roll at Beeslack is projected to continue falling by approximately 20 pupils each year until 2018. After that the roll is projected to grow gradually. The impact of these proposals, if not tempered by parental choice, would accelerate the rate of reduction by increasing the annual fall in pupil roll to approximately 40 pupils.

Concern has been registered about potential delays in the timing of the building of new houses, and the damaging effect on pupil numbers at Beeslack if the proposed changes are implemented too soon. The intent of the proposals is to create catchments which will provide sustainable pupil populations for all Penicuik schools and simultaneously create capacity for pupils arising from new housing development. There is a risk that the timing of the changes will accelerate the reduction in pupil roll at Beeslack. This risk is reduced by deferring the effective date for changes affecting pupils entering secondary education to August 2018. This also allows time to carry out and implement the review of secondary catchments across Midlothian.

2.4 Statement of how Midlothian Council has reviewed the proposal having regard to any relevant representations made during the consultation period and to Education Scotland's report

The proposal to Council will be to implement the proposals to change the catchment boundaries of Cornbank St James, Cuiken, Glencorse, Mauricewood and Strathesk Primary Schools as proposed, with effect for primary pupil intake from August 2015.

In consideration of the representations made during the consultation and in Education Scotland's report, the proposals have been reviewed as follows:

- transition arrangements have been reviewed and will be extended to give consideration to attendance at the associated nursery for those enrolling in Primary 1 in August 2015 and 2016
- transition arrangements have been reviewed and will be extended for pupils entering Primary 1 from August 2015 to August 2018, as the Council will prioritise the granting of placing requests for children who would, except for the catchment changes, have been in catchment
- the effective date for changes affecting pupils entering secondary education will be deferred to August 2018 and their implementation will be subject to the outcome of the review of secondary school catchments across Midlothian.

2.5 Time for further consideration

There will be a period of 3 weeks for further consideration before Council meets on 12 August 2014 to make a decision on whether to progress with the proposals, either in whole or in part.

Any further representations in respect of this report should be emailed to sandra.banks@midlothian.gov.uk by 4 July 2014.

Report by Education Scotland, addressing educational aspects of the proposal to change the catchment areas of Cornbank St James, Cuiken, Glencorse, Mauricewood and Strathesk Primary Schools and to nominate Penicuik High School as the secondary school to enrol all P7 pupils resident in the Strathesk catchment area.

Context

This report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act. The purpose of this report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of the council's consultation proposal. Section 2 of this report sets out the views expressed by consultees during the initial consultation process. Section 3 sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal and the 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 it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Midlothian Council proposes to change the catchment areas of Cornbank St James, Cuiken, Glencorse, Mauricewood and Strathesk Primary Schools and also Beeslack Community and Penicuik High Schools. The proposal sets out the details of the suggested future catchment areas of the Cornbank St James, Cuiken, Glencorse, Mauricewood and Strathesk Primary Schools. This includes areas of land where new houses may be built in the future. The proposal also makes Penicuik High School the enrolment secondary school for all P7 pupils resident in the Strathesk catchment area.
- 1.2 The report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act.
- 1.3 HM Inspectors undertook the following activities in considering the educational aspects of the proposal:
 - attendance at the public meeting held on 11 and 20 March 2014 in connection with the council's proposal;
 - 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;

- consideration of further representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal;
- consideration of further information on all schools affected;
- visits to the site of Cornbank St James, Cuiken, Glencorse, Mauricewood and Strathesk Primary Schools; and
- visits to the site of Beeslack Community and Penicuik High Schools.

1.4 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the named schools; any other users and children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper;
- 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
- benefits which the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

2. Consultation process

- 2.1 Midlothian Council undertook the initial consultation on its proposal with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. Two public meetings were held and staff from the education authority visited the schools concerned to discuss the proposed changes with the staff, children and young people. There was also an opportunity for stakeholders to give their responses through written and online submissions.
- 2.2 Overall, parents, children, young people and staff in all schools appreciated that it was a natural and necessary time to review the catchment areas in the town of Penicuik. They also expressed an interest in continuing to work with the council.
- 2.3 Overall, parents, children, young people and staff in all schools affected by proposals with regard to the future catchment areas of the Cornbank St James, Cuiken, Glencorse and Mauricewood and Strathesk Primary Schools were content with the consultation process and most supported it. They recognised that there was a need to review how well catchment areas are meeting the evolving needs of the town of Penicuik. However, some of those consulted did have some concerns which they felt needed to be addressed to ensure successful implementation of the proposed catchment areas. In raising these concerns, parents acknowledged that the council has specified that proposed changes will take effect with new pupil enrolments from

August 2015. Some parents considered the proposal from the perspective of the current cohort of pupils in the Penicuik schools. They were particularly concerned that siblings could be in two different schools and saw this as having challenges for managing childcare. Other parents felt that their child had started the early curricular level in a nursery at a particular primary school. They would like reassurances that this early learning would be continued within the same primary school. Staff in some of the primary schools highlighted that their school rolls would decrease as a result of the proposed catchment areas. However, the rolls could increase again if the proposed building of houses goes ahead. For staff, the lack of concrete plans for the proposed housing raised concerns about the security of their jobs. All of the primary schools currently have capacity for the proposed catchment alignments. However, in some of the primary schools, should the proposed building of houses go ahead, primary schools would require extensions to their accommodation. In such circumstances, staff would like to be consulted on the nature of future extensions to their school's accommodation.

- 2.4 Overall, those consulted were divided on the proposal to nominate Penicuik High School as the secondary school to enrol all P7 pupils resident in the Strathesk catchment area. All stakeholders at Penicuik High School supported the proposal as the school roll would increase. They saw this as being beneficial to the school, particularly for its potential to expand the range of subjects that could be offered at the senior stages. While staff and children at Strathesk Primary School supported the proposal, about half of the parents consulted were not in favour of Penicuik High School being the designated school that their children would transfer to for their secondary education. For these parents, their homes were much closer to Beeslack Community High School. To go to Penicuik High School would mean that young people would be walking adjacent to a busy main road to the other side of the town. As a result, parents were anxious about children's safety near this road. They also talked about the inconvenience of transporting their children to after school clubs at Penicuik High School compared to the nearby Beeslack Community High School. All those consulted at Beeslack Community High School raised significant concerns with the proposal to name Penicuik High School as the associated secondary school for P7 pupils resident in the Strathesk Primary School as they considered the plans to be less well thought out. In presenting their concerns, stakeholders were very keen to highlight their desire to engage with the council in discussing the option. All those consulted at Beeslack Community High School had concerns that the proposal had the potential to reduce their school roll. Although new housing may be built within the catchment area of Beeslack Community High School, these plans were too tentative to give any reassurances that Beeslack Community High School's roll would not be affected in the long-term.

3. Educational aspects of the proposal

- 3.1 The proposal to amend the catchment areas of Cornbank St James, Cuiken, Glencorse, Mauricewood and Strathesk Primary Schools is of overall educational benefit as it will improve the distribution of places in schools for children in Penicuik across the five primary schools. The council states that this will lead to more viable rolls in these schools and assist with delivering a broad curriculum that takes forward the principles of Curriculum for Excellence. The council has also endeavoured to take account of housing to be built at some time in the future for Penicuik. However, the lack of a clear timeline for the proposed housing developments makes the proposal less convincing. In its final consultation report, the council needs to make clearer any implications for staffing should school rolls decrease. The council also needs to provide reassurances about the nature of proposed extensions to accommodation. A number of parents have concerns about the proposals in relation to a change of establishment as their children move from nursery to the primary stages. Should the proposal be accepted, the council needs to provide parents with reassurance on how their children will be supported to ensure continuity and progression of their learning when moving from nursery to primary school. It should also provide reassurance to parents on how the principles of Curriculum for Excellence will be implemented at the secondary stages should staffing be reduced.
- 3.2 The proposal highlights that children at Strathesk Primary School will enjoy a better transition by enrolling at Penicuik High School. The two schools already collaborate to support progression in what children learn as they move from primary school to secondary school. They organise events and activities to help children in P7 prepare for going to secondary. However, a number of parents do not fully recognise the benefits of these transition arrangements. Additionally, the geography of the proposed Strathesk catchment area is such that some children live closer to Beeslack Community High School than Penicuik High School. These parents stated their intention to continue to send their children to Beeslack Community High School. The council needs to describe more clearly in their final consultation report the transition arrangements for children moving from P7 to secondary school. This includes arrangements for children from Strathesk Primary School who may still go to Beeslack Community High School.
- 3.3 The consultation highlights that the proposed changes to the catchment areas will result in sustainable numbers and curriculum for both Beeslack Community and Penicuik High Schools. Those consulted at Penicuik High School look forward to such benefits. The stakeholders of Beeslack Community High School are still to be convinced of the educational benefits of this proposal. In particular, the council needs to address stakeholders' concerns that the proposal could lead to a decrease in the school roll with any pending increase being based on whether new housing goes ahead. All stakeholders expressed a willingness to engage with the council in exploring options. In its final consultation report, the council needs to set out more clearly

why it regards enrolling at Penicuik High School all P7 pupils resident in the Strathesk catchment area as the most reasonable option open to it.

- 3.4 Parents have concerns around safe routes to school, in particular with regard to those young people who may have to walk adjacent to a busy main road should this proposal go ahead. In its final consultation report the council needs to outline how these concerns will be addressed as well as having clearer plans on access routes to schools.

4. Summary

The council's case for realigning the catchment areas of Cornbank St James, Cuiken, Glencorse, Mauricewood and Strathesk Primary Schools is sound and has won the support of most stakeholders. It will achieve a more balanced approach to school rolls. However, a number of issues have been identified by parents and staff as outlined in this report. The council needs to give full consideration to these issues. While the principle of a review of catchment areas is broadly supported, there is significant opposition to the proposal to nominate Penicuik High School as the secondary school to enrol all P7 pupils resident in the Strathesk catchment area. This includes the potential impact on Beeslack Community High School. As a result, the council needs to ensure it considers further this proposal to provide reassurances that it is the most reasonable option open to it.