

Aberdeen City Council

Dyce / Bucksburn Secondary Provision Feasibility Study May to July 2024

End of Feasibility Study Report October 2024

Introduction

The Council carried out a feasibility study between May and July 2024, to assess the requirements and potential options for the long term provision of secondary education to serve the communities of Dyce and Bucksburn. A summary of the brief for the feasibility study is included at Appendix A, below. To help inform the outcomes of the feasibility study, comments and feedback were invited from school communities on the options available, and the potential impact of these options.

This paper provides a summary of the feedback received from stakeholders, and the key themes which have emerged from the feasibility study.

Feasibility Study Summary

The study involved a detailed review of the existing secondary school provision serving Dyce and Bucksburn. Data was gathered on Dyce Academy and Bucksburn Academy, including each building's layout, condition, accessibility, overall size of the site, and how spaces are currently being used. This information was used to assess the extent to which these buildings will continue to meet the needs of Dyce and Bucksburn for secondary education provision in the future, and whether any improvements or changes may be required.

The available options for making changes were then identified and assessed in detail. These options included looking at the potential for providing more of a balance of pupil numbers between the two schools, and also the opportunities for making improvements to the existing facilities at Dyce Academy, including the possibility of extending and / or refurbishing the building where this may be required.

Analysis of the information gathered during the feasibility study and stakeholder engagement will be used to further assess all available options, and the impact these may have on stakeholders and school communities. This will assist in the development of an outline business case, to set out the advantages and disadvantages, and any cost implications of each option, before finally recommending a preferred option to be taken forwards.

Feedback from Stakeholders

The feedback submitted by stakeholders throughout the feasibility study has been invaluable, and has been used to help shape the direction of the study and in assessing how viable each option is likely to be. The key messages from stakeholders which have helped to influence the study include:

- **Rezoning and Transport concerns:** Many respondents expressed concerns about rezoning, and the impact this may have on pupil numbers at Dyce Academy. A significant number of respondents opposed rezoning Stoneywood pupils to Dyce Academy, due to the inconvenience and travel distance involved, whilst some respondents suggested that any rezoning should only include the areas of the current Stoneywood catchment which are in close proximity to Dyce Academy, to minimise any additional travelling distance for pupils.
- **Capacity and Infrastructure:** Numerous respondents highlighted that Dyce Academy is not big enough to accommodate more pupils, although some recognised the value in increasing the capacity at the school to raise the number of pupils on the school roll, as this would help to provide all pupils with greater curriculum choice. Several respondents suggested that improvements would need to be made to the Dyce Academy facilities before implementing any rezoning plans, to ensure the school can adequately support additional

pupils. Some respondents suggested that a new, separate school should be built, to relieve pressure on both Bucksburn Academy and Dyce Academy.

- **Quality of Education:** A number of respondents expressed a view that there are different standards of education at the two schools, and therefore opposed the idea of rezoning. Concerns were also raised about the prospect of larger class sizes and the negative impact this may have on the quality of education provided.
- **Community and Convenience:** Many parents expressed a preference for Bucksburn Academy due to its proximity to their homes and the ability for children to walk to school. Respondents also emphasized the importance of keeping children within their local community and with their friends, to maintain social connections and support networks.

Emerging Priorities

The information gathered from the site investigations, and the above important messages received from stakeholder feedback, will be used to inform an outline business case, which will set out the possible options for making any changes to the long term secondary education provision for Bucksburn and Dyce. From the feedback received, it is recognised that any options to be considered will need to take account of the potential impact of travel time and travel distances for pupils, if changes are to be made to school catchment areas, and that there would be a requirement to extend and make improvements to Dyce Academy, if the size of the school catchment, and therefore pupil numbers at the school, are to increase.

Next Steps

Given that the options to be considered are for the longer term, where there is no intention to recommend any immediate changes to the schools, and to help manage staff resources in delivering other aspects of the School Estate Plan, the Education and Children's Services Committee agreed in September 2024 that work on the options for secondary education provision at Dyce and Bucksburn would be paused for the current school year. It is therefore expected that a report on the outcomes of the feasibility study, and recommendations for next steps, will be presented for committee approval in Summer 2025.

Appendix A – Feasibility Study Brief

Below is a summary of the Feasibility Study Brief. This outlines the objectives of the project, and the options which were to be considered during the feasibility study:

Project Objectives

The options identified through this feasibility study must be aimed at achieving the following:

- Provide an opportunity to re-balance pupil numbers between Bucksburn Academy and Dyce Academy, for example by proposing changes to the catchment areas for the two schools
- Provide opportunities to improve the suitability of the Dyce Academy building
- Reduce the expected number of pupils requiring a place at Bucksburn Academy in the long term (10 years and beyond)

Options to be included in the Feasibility Study (not exhaustive)

To achieve the objectives outlined above, the feasibility study will focus on the available options for providing suitable pupil capacity on the Dyce Academy site, to support potential proposals to change the catchment areas for Dyce Academy and Bucksburn Academy (also known as rezoning). This could be achieved through extending the Dyce Academy building to create additional capacity, to allow part of the existing Bucksburn Academy catchment area to be moved to the Dyce Academy catchment area.

Options to extend the Dyce Academy school building will also incorporate opportunities to improve the suitability of the school, through refurbishing existing facilities. Required areas for improvement highlighted within the most recent suitability survey of the school include:

- General accessibility for those with mobility difficulties (internal and external spaces)
- Lack of pupil social spaces (internally and externally)
- Heating and ventilation in practical teaching areas
- Requirement for separate assembly and sports halls

Additional options may be identified and added to this list as the feasibility study progresses.

Scope of Feasibility Study Report

The feasibility study will result in a written report which addresses the following:

- A description of each identified option, including sketch drawings where applicable
- The costs associated with each option;
- The benefits and limitations of each option;
- The challenges each option presents;
- Timescales for each option being delivered;
- Temporary arrangements for accommodating pupils during construction work, if required;
- Planning and Building Warrant constraints