

Q&A – Portlethen Community Council

1. There are a number of inaccuracies and omissions within the document (see appendix 1), which we have informed you of several times. Why have these not been corrected?

These have been amended and the proposal document recirculated (on Tuesday 3/3).

2. One of the omissions was highlighted by an elected councillor prior to the document being circulated, and yet was not altered. Why not?

The information was received from Cllr Mollison after the proposal document was circulated.

3. Our belief that this has created an unfair bias within the proposal document has not been addressed. How can you justify letting this go unanswered?

4. In the Kincardine and Mearns Area Committee Report of 10th December 2020 re. the planning application for 176 houses, it states under section 6.8 “the most appropriate solution is to accommodate children from this development within an alternative primary school within the settlement that has adequate underlying capacity. The most likely option would be Fishermoss Primary School.” When did PPS become the preferred option? Who made that decision, and why?

Education has always stated that the rezone could be either to Portlethen Primary or to Fishermoss. If the rezoning has to take place, then Portlethen Primary would be the preference due to distance from Hillside.

5. The school roll at PPS has been forecast to fall over the last few years, yet it has in actual fact remained stable or slightly increased. How can this forecast be taken as accurate, when it has been shown to be wrong before?

Further to point 5 regarding the school roll forecasts:

In 2016, the roll in 2019 was predicted to be 199.

In 2017, the roll in 2019 was predicted to be 238.

In 2018, the roll in 2019 was predicted to be 251 – **257 in August 2019**

The actual roll in December 2019 was 263. **(263 on 16 December 2019)**

The school roll forecasts for PPS have been consistently underestimated.

Forecasts are subject to families making decisions that cannot be determined by statistics. The original prediction of 199 was based on the expectation that there would be an increase in pupils applying to attend Hillside as placing requests, before the increased number of in zone pupils at Hillside was established.

6. The ratio being used to calculate the potential number of pupils per household is 0.4. This has already been shown to be vastly underestimated for Hillside and has led directly to the current overcrowding and extension work. Why is this ratio being used again when it has been proven to be entirely inaccurate?

Whilst this ratio was exceeded in the past, we do consider this ratio to be appropriate.

7. The original plans for Hillside school which were available to the public showed the extension, which has only been built now the school is over capacity. This suggests that the roll forecasts were known to be inaccurate from the start. Why are the same mistakes being made again?

New build schools are designed to be extended if required in the future. However, this is always subject to budget phasing. The school was built with a larger core facility.

8. Why is rezoning of the area of Hillside which is closest to PPS not being considered as an option, in the interests of social cohesion rather than division?

Those children are already attending Hillside School, and we do not require children to move school with a rezoning. It can take up to 7 years for the full impact to take effect. It is the new houses that will have the greatest impact.

9. In the Education and Children's Services committee report of 30th January re. school roll forecasts, Portlethen Academy is forecast to be over capacity by 2024. Under section 4.20, table 11 it states "The increase in pupil numbers at Portlethen Academy is due to continued housebuilding." Why are further houses being considered, with this in mind? What plans are in place to deal with this?

This is mainly due to Chapelton which has a lower build out rate than aspired by the house builder.

10. Learning Estates considers that there are 12 classroom areas available at PPS and that the capacity is 342. The first floor contains open plan classrooms of 153.4 sqm. teaching space, which is detailed as four classrooms. According to the Aberdeenshire Primary School capacities review 2017, section 2.4 defines a standard sized classroom as "between 50sqm and 70sqm". This clearly demonstrates that 4 classrooms will not fit into the space. A capacity of 342 is based on a school with 12 standard sized classrooms (Aberdeenshire Primary School capacities review 2017, appendix 2). Why was this not picked up when the capacity was recalculated last year? When is Learning Estates going to recalculate the capacity and classroom spaces of PPS, based on this knowledge?

Further to point 10 regarding capacity and classroom spaces, the Scottish government recommendation of 1.7 sqm per pupil calculates a maximum of 90 children in the first floor open plan classroom. This further proves that four classes cannot be accommodated in the space. The capacity of PPS must be reassessed and the figures recalculated.

This relates to Room 32 which is 230.6 sq m/ 1.7 = 135 pupils. The capacity of Portlethen Primary School has been reassessed and remains at 342 pupils, this is also agreed with the HT.

11. What is the operational capacity of PPS, as opposed to the published capacity of 342?

There are a number of different terms used for capacity. Published capacity and planning capacity are the same thing. Operational capacity only comes into effect when the school is approaching capacity, and working capacity needs to be identified. The operational capacity is determined year on year and is dependent upon class configuration for each year group.

12. Figures from appendix a of “New build Primary Schools Aberdeenshire” (2012) detail the recommended space standard for the gross internal floor area of primary schools. For a school with 12 classes, capacity 325, it’s 2869 sqm. For a school with 13 classes, capacity 355, it’s 3040. At PPS (based on 2019 floor plan and 2013 figures, taking into account the space lost to the nursery and the removal of the huts) we have **2210.2 sqm** for potentially 12 classes and capacity 342. This also incorporates the Enhanced Provision spaces. How can this possibly be justified? How is this equitable?

The GIFA is not used to calculate the capacity of the school. We use the core facility – size of dining room and number of toilets according to Premises Regs, and 1.7sqm per pupil for classroom spaces.

**Portlethen Floor Plan - 1600.6 sqm educational accommodation (excluding temps)
1967 regulations**

342 pupils = 989 sqm of Educational Accommodation

434 pupils = 1,189 sqm of Educational Accommodation.

13. The huts are due for removal. There are only three general purpose spaces in the school, one of which is the dining hall and gym hall, and the other two are walkthroughs to classrooms and therefore not suitable for noisy activities such as music and drama. Why are the huts not being replaced?

Huts are due to be removed in Summer 2020. Acoustics can be assessed and panels can be added if deemed necessary.

14. PPS is the Enhanced Provision school for the cluster and has a higher proportion of children with need for this support than the other primary schools. Rising rolls will put pressure on facilities, staff and children. How will our children be safeguarded?

Staffing and facilities are separate for Enhanced Provision

15. The building at PPS is over 40 years old, with parts of it dating back to 1962. What are Learning Estates doing to make it fit for 21st century learning, especially with the prospect of a hugely increased school roll?

This is measured by the condition and suitability surveys, which are two separate assessments. Education are responsible for the suitability surveys, whilst Property carry out the condition assessments. The suitability of the school has been reassessed since the completion of the nursery expansion and the school is considered to be suitable for delivering the curriculum. The Head Teacher is in agreement with this.

16. Part of the developers’ contribution from Hillside was handed back to the developers. Why was this money not spent on our children’s education?

There are defined rules about how developer obligations can be spent. There are no funds that were secured for education that have been returned.

17. In the Kincardine and Mearns Area Committee Report of 10th December 2020 re. the planning application for 176 houses, under section 4.8 it states “a package of Developer Obligations has been agreed as follows... Education contributions towards Primary School re-zoning exercise.” Why is the developer not contributing to Primary and Secondary education, as they will be directly responsible for the increase in pupils and subsequent pressure put on the system?

Developer Obligations can only be secured for a school, if it can be evidenced that the pupils from those houses will put the school over capacity.

18. A considerable increase in vehicles taking children to and from school can be expected. A conservative estimate might be 100 cars for 176 houses. There is already very limited parking space at PPS and children's safety will be compromised. How will this be mitigated? How does this align with the Aberdeenshire Active Travel Plan?

In 2015 there were 411 pupils at PPS plus those from Hillside. The school roll will not reach this level.

If Build out Rate 0.5 = 88 children if all houses built in one year

For secondary at 0.3 = 52 pupils.

There are already many children who already attend PPS from the Hillside zone and parents are continuing to put in placing requests.

19. If the rezoning to PPS goes ahead, and as we predict (based on the very recent history of Hillside) the roll forecasts are vastly underestimated, what plans are in place to ensure the pupils at PPS are not disadvantaged? They have already suffered due to the delays in Hillside school being built, and the subsequent overcrowding. How can you assure us this will not happen again?

In a report to the Education and Children's Services committee on 7th February 2019 re. 2018 based school roll forecasts, section 2.12 states "Whilst working forecasts are maintained up to 2026, the appended forecasts do not extend beyond 2023, as, beyond this point, they become more speculative, based upon trends and assumptions, given that the P1 cohort for 2023 will be born during 2018." We can assume from this that roll forecasts beyond five years are not worth including. Why, then, are forecasts up to 2027 (edit 3rd March) included in the rezoning proposal (section 5.8, 5.15, 5.26), and potential capacity percentages stated? This is speculative and disingenuous.