

STATUTORY PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING

PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE LETHAM MAINS PRIMARY SCHOOL CATCHMENT AREA

THURSDAY 1 DECEMBER 2016

TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON

PRESENT:

Fiona Robertson, Head of Education
Chris Webb, Independent Adviser, Chair of Meeting
Eddie Reid, Team Manager, Property
Marshall Greenshields, Transportation Planning Officer
Andy Stewart, Principal Planner (Policy & Projects)
Sinead Moloney, Planner (Policy & Projects)
Richard Parker, Education Service Manager
Fiona Brown, Principal Officer, Education Business Unit
Pauline Smith, Principal Officer (Information and Research)
Karen Haspolat, Quality Improvement Officer
Rob Lewis, Senior Information Officer
David Gilmour, Web Officer
Anna Bennett, Business Support Officer
Katy Johnstone, Graduate Intern
Phil Denning, Education Scotland
Four parents/members of the public were in attendance:
Al Bryce, Jane Hobbs, Claire Young, Andrew Wilson

Chris Webb welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced himself and the Council Officers present.

He informed the attendees that the meeting was being recorded to allow the Council to have an accurate transcript of the meeting, any questions raised and views recorded to allow them to form part of the consultation exercise. It also allows any issues arising that are unable to be dealt with tonight to be answered at a later time.

A Google link is provided to allow questions to be raised that you may not wish discussed at the public meeting, this will feed into the Council and someone will respond.

He also gave a brief outline of the legislative framework within which the Council must work.

The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act came into force in 2010 and was amended in 2015. The Act, as amended, has established an open and transparent system for consulting changes to the school estate as proposed by councils. Once a council has taken the decision to consult in a proposal the Act requires all councils to follow the same basis sequence:

- The Council had to prepare a proposal paper, including any educational benefits. The Council had produced this.
- The Council then had to publish the proposal paper, advertise the fact and notify the mandatory consultees and Education Scotland.
- The consultation had to run for at least 30 school days and include a public meeting.
- Once the consultation period is over, the Council must send relevant papers to Education Scotland. Once these have been received HM Inspectors have three weeks to prepare a report on the proposal and send it to the Council.
- Once the Council has received the report from the HM Inspectors, it has to review the proposal and take account of the report by HM Inspectors and any representations you might make during the consultation period.
- The Council must then prepare and publish a final consultation report three weeks before the Council takes its final decision.

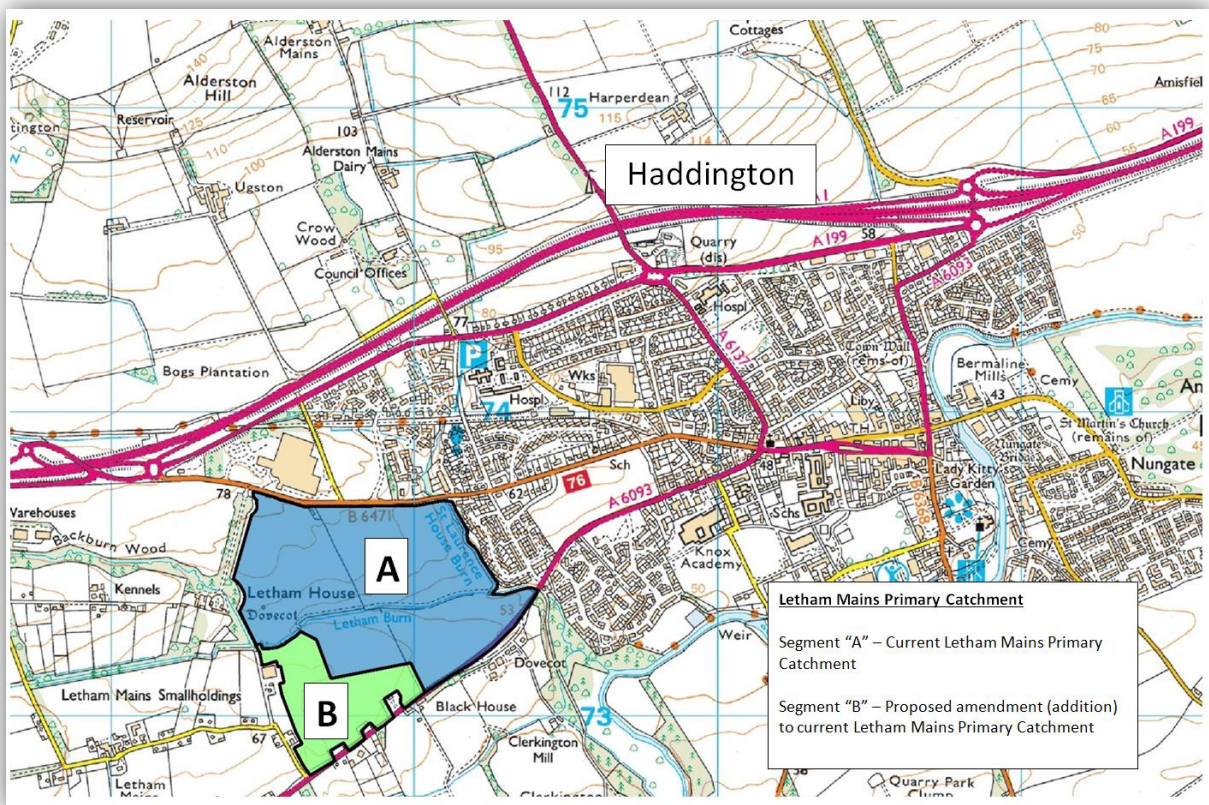
Purpose to give members of the public the opportunity to hear more about the proposal, ask questions about the proposal and have their views recorded as part of the consultation process.

Fiona Robertson then went on to explain the background to the consultation with regard to the proposal for the extension of the Letham Mains Primary School catchment area, to include the Letham Mains Expansion area (area “B”), currently in Haddington Infant School and King’s Meadow Primary School catchment areas.

- The Strategic Development Plan for South East Scotland (SDP) was approved by Scottish Ministers in June 2013.
- The SDP with its Supplementary Guidance on Housing Land requires the Local Development Plan (LDP) to ensure sufficient housing land is available to deliver 10,050 homes during the period 2009-2024 with 6,250 of those homes capable of being delivered across East Lothian in the period to 2019.
- To accommodate these strategic development requirements, East Lothian Council approved a Proposed LDP 2016 for representation on 6th September 2016.
- On 24th February 2015, approval was given by East Lothian Council to undertake consultations relating to the school estate (schools, catchment areas, locations) as necessary to support the emerging LDP.
- As part of the Proposed LDP 2016, the land at Letham Mains Expansion (area “B”) is one of the main development proposals in the Haddington Cluster – with a proposed allocation for development of circa 275 homes.

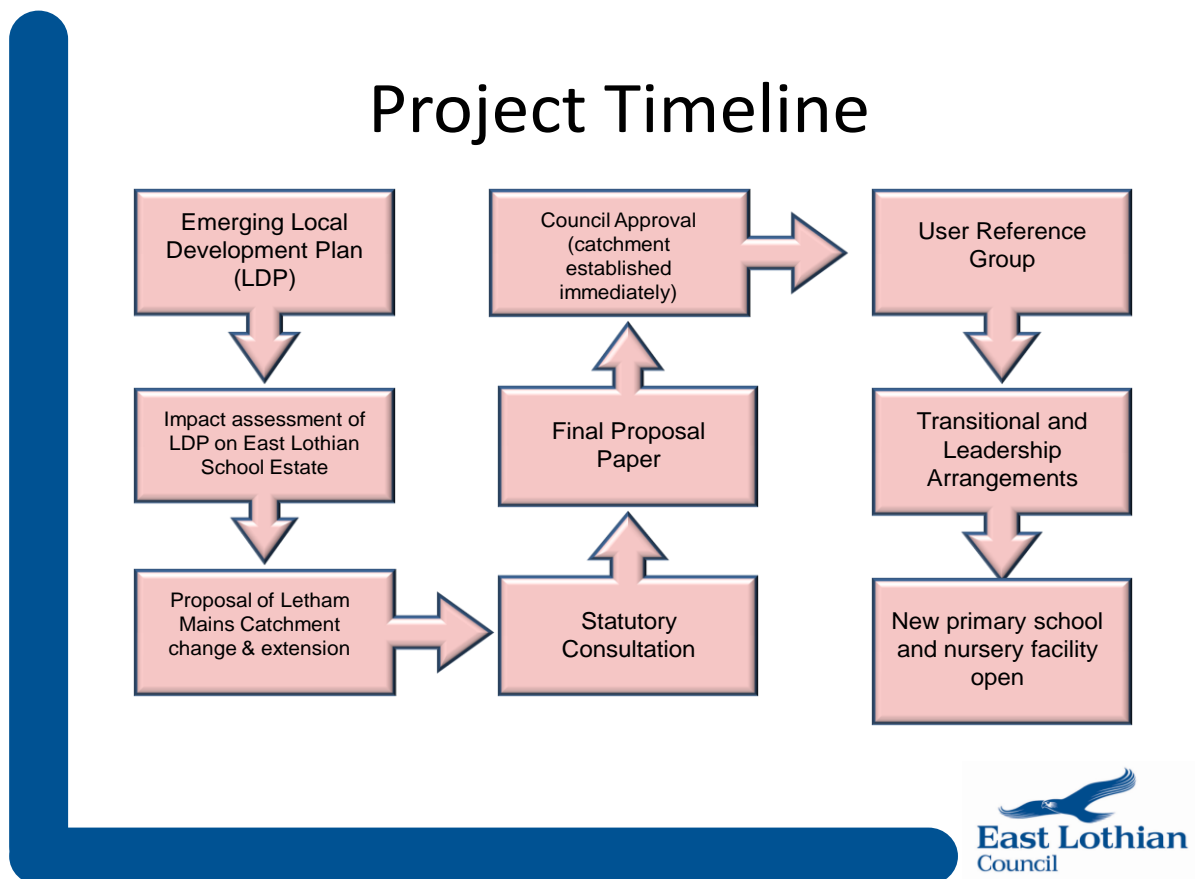
- The Letham Mains Expansion will form an extension of the original Letham Mains allocation (area “A”) – which is proposed to be allocated for a mixed use development, including circa 800 homes.
- The original Letham Mains Primary School catchment area (as defined by area “A”) was approved at Council Committee for Education on 15 March 2011.
- The proposed housing development at Letham Mains Expansion (area “B”), identified in the Proposed LDP 2016 will require the revision to the Letham Mains catchment area, to be delivered.
- The Letham Mains Primary School will also need to be further extended to accommodate the proposed expansion.

Map of proposed catchment area



- To accommodate the projected pupil population from the proposed allocations (areas “A” and “B”) the Council proposes to provide education capacity as follows:
- Expansion to the planned new permanent early learning & childcare and primary school capacity at the Letham Mains site.
- The Letham Mains Primary School will be established initially at King’s Meadow Primary School under a temporary “hosting” arrangement, until the permanent Letham Mains Primary School facility is delivered.
- Additional secondary school capacity will be provided at Knox Academy.

- The Letham Mains Primary School: The LDP projected pupil population for the original Letham Mains allocation (area “A”) and the Letham Mains expansion area (area “B”) requires a peak roll of 488 primary pupils (17 classes) and pre-school provision of 70 places.
- The school extension and catchment change will have educational benefits through: The alteration to the catchment areas will ensure that primary aged children from both the Letham Mains sites will be able to attend the school providing opportunity for those children to develop and sustain strong relationships both at school and at home.
- The removal of area “B” from Haddington Infant/King’s Meadow catchment area will relieve pressure at these schools where there would be significant capacity constraints.



Fiona Robertson asked if there were any questions.

Al Bryce – 2 pre-school children, soon to move to Gateside estate asked why these houses are not included in the catchment area for Letham.

Fiona Robertson replied with a prepared clarification:

When Letham Mains Catchment was originally established and agreed at Council in 2011, the land north of Letham Mains, at Gateside was at that point, allocated for Business and

Industry use and was not included as part of the catchment establishment consultation. Since then, planning consent has been granted for mixed use including housing.

The school campus site at Letham Mains is not of a sufficient size to include a larger catchment.

To increase the size of the school site would require the Council to purchase more land, which would in turn reduce the number of houses that could be built.

There would be significant costs to Council to purchase more land to increase the school site and to enlarge the size of the school facility to accommodate pupils from out-with the Letham Mains development, as these would not be funded by the developer.

Al Bryce also asked if the Council is ignoring the educational benefit for children who will be living in Gateside who would form friendships with children from Letham catchment.

Fiona Robertson replied that children from Gateside would form relationships with children within the community and catchment area that they are part of.

He then commented that his children would effectively be walking past Letham Mains School to go to a school further away. He asked about the possibility of transport being provided for children from Gateside.

Marshal Greenshields replied that there is no provision for transport and there would be encouragement for children to walk and cycle to school.

Al Bryce asked how long it should take primary school children to walk to school.

Marshal Greenshields replied that the catchments are set and were agreed prior to Gateside being built. As the new Letham school is not built yet children from Gateside will be travelling to their catchment school.

Al Bryce then asked if there was any point in the consultation if no changes can be made.

Fiona Robertson replied that the intention is to change the catchment and in order to have an effective local development plan there must be an education solution in place in order to bring that local development plan forward.

Chris Webb replied that from a national prospective the Council is bound by law to deliver best value in delivery of services so that means there are constraints on what the Council can do sometimes because of that requirement and if a cost neutral situation would then become not cost neutral.

Al Bryce asked if timing was an issue regarding the consultation – running the consultation before there are people living in Gateside who may wish to have a say on the consultation.

Fiona Robertson replied that the consultation is in line with the Local Development Plan, but members of the public could then put forward their comments on the issues which must then be included in the consultation process and taken back to Council.

Chris Webb confirmed that the public have the right to comment on the proposal or submit alternatives which the Council must then give due consideration to and reply to why this would not be viable if that is what they decide. Council has a duty in the final report to state why the decision they make is the most reasonable and viable option that provides the best Education options and best value. They must demonstrate that any counter proposal is not viable or reasonable.

Parent of child attending Haddington Infants but works at King's Meadow commented on the interim accommodation at King's Meadow is bursting at the seams and asked how children will be accommodated during the hosting period?

Fiona Robertson responded that there is capacity at the school within the hosting timeframe to accommodate the Letham Mains pupils and this will not be breached during the hosting period. She then introduced Pauline Smith who confirmed that King's Meadow Primary School has a planning capacity of 504 pupils. The roll projections for King's Meadow, which take into account new housing with consent, shows that there is a period of time up to about 2020 where there is capacity at the school for the Letham Mains pupils to be temporarily hosted. Pauline also clarified that when new housing sites are built out, pupils don't appear all at once en masse, they appear in stages over time. The pupil roll for Letham Mains in the first year of house build may have no pupils at the start of the academic session in August then over the following months, may have one or two pupils arising from the development with that pupil number growing from there over time as the development is built out.

The parent stated that she had experienced a transition herself which was awful with huge classes; the school was bursting at the seams and did not allow for pupils who may have been struggling to cope due to crowds.

Fiona Robertson reiterated that it was very important for the Transition Leadership Group to be in place before the build is completed to deal with managing the situation and also enable the children to be involved with the design and build of areas before moving into the new school. If the school was due to move in August then there would be a longer lead in time for the new staff to enable everything to be in place.

Parent of 2 boys commented that one child had experienced St Mary's transition and found it difficult, capacity within the school was an issue and the constraints on the dining room proved difficult, with children having to eat in classrooms, children also had to move to undertake certain activities as no room within the normal areas. King's Meadow is an open plan school and this has an impact on noise levels. This is not acceptable or conducive to Education.

Eddie Reid commented that he was aware of some acoustic issues but plans are in place for this to be dealt with but he was not aware of pressure on the dining room.

Parent replied to say that children had to eat in classrooms and her son had to move to another facility to access PE sessions.

Eddie Reid replied to state that this would be taken up with the Head Teacher to address use of space.

Fiona added that she had spent two full days in King's Meadow and reiterated that there is capacity within the school but acknowledged that it is really important to manage the transition and consider PE facilities and any impact the hosting may have. This will be discussed with the design team, to discuss where children will be based, along with ages of children which will also need to be considered and how this is managed in determining the make-up of class groups as the pupils start to move into the area.

The parent then asked if Knox Academy would be prepared to accommodate all the additional children expected.

Fiona Robertson replied that there is a plan for Knox Academy to be extended to accommodate the rising number of children and that all facilities would be taken into consideration, not just classrooms, including science labs, PE facilities in light of all housing developments taking place currently and proposed.

A Parent living in Letham Mains Small Holdings with child at King's Meadow – currently out of catchment asked if they will still be out of catchment for the new school.

Pauline Smith confirmed that the houses at Letham Mains Small Holdings would be out-with the Letham Mains catchment area and would remain within the Haddington Infant and King's Meadow Primary school catchment areas.

Parent stated that they received a letter a few years ago stating that their children would go to the Letham Mains school, this will mean that they are crossing over the catchment area for Letham and walking 1.5 miles to King's Meadow. Is there an opportunity to change the catchment for their children?

Pauline Smith confirmed that only one existing property, Gateside Cottage, that falls within part of the original Letham Mains allocation and catchment boundary and no other existing properties fall within the proposed revised Letham Mains catchment area. Chris Webb emphasised his previous point regarding putting forward alternative proposals and that the consultation process allows you to put these forward for consideration.

Parent stated it made sense for these children to be able to attend the closest school rather than walking to one some distance away.

Chris Webb replied that an idea can be put to the consultation before it is finalised, if this turns out to be an anomaly that can be fixed it might be, but he was unable to say that it would be. It would have to be included in the final consultation document and the Council would be duty bound to explain why it chose not to then implement that in its final consultation.

Parent stated that they are currently far enough away from King's Meadow to be able to request transportation but they choose not to so it would appear to make sense that they go to the new school.

Andrew Wilson resident at Letham Mains Small Holdings asked 2 questions:

- 1. Why for the purposes of this consultation have the Council chosen as designations area A/B when the local development plan identifies these as HN1 and HN2 as it makes it much more difficult to follow.**

Fiona Robertson replied that for the purposes of this consultation Area A is the existing catchment area and B is the proposed expanded area. It was just for the purposes of this proposal to make it easy to understand rather than having to read through the whole Local Development Plan.

Pauline Smith added that HN1 and HN2 are referenced in the proposal paper and equate it to area A and area B on the maps of the catchment areas.

He replied that this tends to exclude discussion of other areas such as Gateside, which also has an HN designation, it focuses on the areas which are already part of the proposal and the purpose of the consultation is to consider some minor alternatives to that and focusing on area A and area B only focuses on the agenda the Council has. He would ask that HN1 and HN2 are used.

Fiona Robertson stated that for the purposes of this evening and the proposal exercise 'A' and 'B' are used. She also stated that the Council must consult on a relevant proposal and this is the proposal, and that the public can reply to the proposal with their views and they are entitled to respond on this matter which the Council must then respond to. When the final report is produced you will be able to see that the Council has responded to any comments. Chris Webb mentioned best value and Fiona Robertson explained that the Council understands that altering or extending the proposal would result in the purchase of further land, the change in sizes of schools and these are the implications as to best value and keeping a viable school roll at King's Meadow Primary, Haddington Infant and Letham Mains Primary.

- 2. Significance of the hosting arrangements and the disruption – time period is critical and can someone confirm the expected start day, month and year of the hosting arrangement and the expected end day, month and year of the arrangement**

Fiona Robertson explained that the hosting would start as families moved into the phased housing developments and the hosting arrangement can only last a period of up to 36 months.

He asked if that was a maximum figure.

Fiona replied that it tends to be up to 36 months to allow a viable school roll. The housing development phasing is such that the school would be ready for the children over that period of time.

Parent of child at King's Meadow asked who would be the Head Teacher of the new school and when would they come into post.

Fiona Robertson explained that the Head Teacher post would be shared by King's Meadow during the transition period but the Transition Leadership Team would be in place the January before the move was to take place and this would be based on the number of children from the new development. The Head Teacher and staff would be in post prior to the opening of the new school.

Chris Webb drew the meeting to a close and reiterated the purpose of the consultation is for consultees to suggest alternatives or amendments, once these have been suggested the Council is duty bound in its final report to explain why it is not a reasonable or viable alternative for the Council to adopt. This will allow the councillors to see that alternatives or amendments have been put forward. He informed the attendees that they should not just rely on the meeting to make their points, and that they could put their points in writing to the Council to allow them to be given due consideration, councillors can ask officers for information on any alternate proposals and why these were not included in the original proposal.

He informed the meeting that Phil Denning was in attendance as an observer who will be responsible for providing the report on the consultation process and the recommendations; this will then be in the public domain for three weeks to allow for a fair, open and transparent process. This report will be published along with the Council's final consultation report. It is then the Elected Members who will make a decision. He thanked the members of the public for coming along and also commented that the number of officers present from the Council showed the commitment to the process.