



West Lothian  
Council

**EDUCATION EXECUTIVE**

**NON-DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS CATCHMENT AREAS, BRUCEFIELD – OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION**

**REPORT BY HEAD OF SERVICE, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To inform the Education Executive of the outcome of the public consultation on a proposal to re-align the existing school catchment boundaries.

**B. RECOMMENDATION**

That the Education Executive:

1. Consider the issues raised through the consultation and the responses provided.
2. Determines a view on the implementation of the proposal.

**C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

<b>I Council Values</b>	Focusing on our customers' needs Being honest, open and accountable Providing equality of opportunities Developing employees Making best use of our resources Working in partnership
<b>II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b>	Education (Scotland) Act 1980 and related regulations. The Standards in Schools (Scotland) Act 2000, the School Education (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2002 and School (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. It is also necessary to consider school provision and catchment area arrangements in the context of West Lothian Council planning policies contained within: West Lothian Local Plan and Edinburgh and the Lothians Structure Plan 2015
<b>III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>	The proposal will have no effect on the scheme of delegation.
<b>IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators</b>	It is anticipated that the proposal will have little effect on performance and performance indicators.

<b>V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement</b>	The proposal supports delivery of Outcomes 2, 4, 5 & 10 in the Single Outcome Agreement 2011-2012 and relates to the Economic and the Health and Wellbeing themes.
<b>VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b>	Proposals that involve additional capital and revenue expenditure must be considered in the context of very constrained resources and would require to be managed within the Councils' current, and planned, capital and revenue resources. It is essential to make best use of available school capacity. Revenue costs, associated with adjustments to school transport, would need to be accommodated in future.
<b>VII Consideration at PDSP</b>	N/A
<b>VIII Other consultations</b>	The consultation methodology applied to the catchment review was approved by the West Lothian Council Education Executive, 11 September 2007. Local ward members were briefed on the proposed options for consultation and were invited to comment through the consultation process.

## **D TERMS OF REPORT**

### **1. Background**

West Lothian Education Executive agreed on 4 October 2011 to commence statutory consultation on a proposal to re-align the existing school catchment boundaries that cut through the housing development site at Brucefield.

The school catchments in this area were last reviewed in September 1998 in connection with West Calder High School.

Since that date, the West Lothian Local Plan identified housing development sites, including the Brucefield site, within the Livingston and Almond Valley Core Development Area. The scale of these developments means there is a need to review the current catchment arrangements to make most effective use of existing and future capacity of the schools.

The Brucefield housing development site is crossed by non-denominational catchment boundaries for both primary and secondary education. The schools with catchment areas that include parts of the Brucefield site are:

- Bellsquarry Primary School
- Parkhead Primary
- The James Young High
- West Calder High School

## 2. Consultation arrangements

The formal consultation ran from 10 November 2011 to 22 December 2011, a period of 42 days including 30 school days. A copy of the Consultation Paper is at <http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/education/schoolrelateditems/>. The Paper was made available in schools, nurseries and libraries and on-line. All interested parties were invited to submit their comments in writing, by email or by on-line survey. Details of the consultees and consultation arrangements are given at **Appendix 1**.

A public meeting was held at West Calder High School to explain the report and answer questions.

A “Frequently Asked Questions” page on the Council website was regularly updated to provide further information to parents and members of the public involved in the consultation. The website was also used to give access to tables, maps etc following issues raised at the public meetings.

Following the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, this report has been published at least 3 weeks before consideration by the Council. Copies of this report can be viewed in the schools affected by the proposal and in local public libraries and nurseries. It is also available on-line at: <http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/education/schoolrelateditems/>.

### 2.1 The proposal

It was proposed that non-denominational catchment boundaries are re-aligned with the west edge of the site so that it lies entirely in the catchment areas of Bellsquarry Primary School and The James Young High School.

The proposal was fully detailed in the consultation paper.

### 2.2 Stakeholder Consultations

#### 2.2.1 School Parent Councils, parents/carers and other interested parties.

Letters were sent to the Parent Councils and parents/carers of the schools and nurseries involved in the consultation process inviting response to the proposal by letter, email or on-line survey. A summary of the on-line responses is at **Appendix 2 (a)**. A summary of the emails and letters, with Council officer responses, is at **Appendix 2(b)**.

#### 2.2.2 Primary school pupils and staff

Council Officers met with P4-P7 pupils at the primary schools. The pupils completed response pro-formas. The key issues and results were then identified by the school. The primary teachers gave presentations to the P1 to P3 pupils and collated responses. A summary of the responses is at **Appendix 2(c)**.

The Head Teachers briefed the staff. The staff were invited, by e-mail, to respond by online survey.

### 2.2.3 Secondary school students and staff.

Council officers gave presentations to student representatives at West Calder High School and The James Young High School. The student representatives then gave the presentation to the other students and invited them to respond by online survey. A summary of the responses is at **Appendix 2(d)**.

The Head Teachers briefed the staff. The staff responded by online survey and a summary of their responses are at **Appendix 2(e)**.

### 2.2.4 Public meetings

A public meeting was held during the consultation process. A detailed record of this meeting is at **Appendix 3**.

### 2.2.5 Education Scotland

Education Scotland (Inspectorate of Schools) has a statutory requirement to review all relevant consultation documentation and to visit the affected primary and secondary schools for discussion with relevant consultees. Education Scotland is also required to prepare a statement on the education aspects of the proposal for Council response. This is at **Appendix 4**.

## 2.3 Full content of submissions to the consultation

The full content of all the submissions are available for viewing by application to Sharon McCawley, Forward Planning Officer, Education Services, West Lothian Civic Centre, Howden South Road, Livingston EH54 6FF, or by email to [schoolconsultation@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:schoolconsultation@westlothian.gov.uk).

## 3 Key issues raised in the consultation

The key issues raised during the consultation process were:

- Capacity at Bellsquarry Primary School
- Distance and safe walking route
- Capacity at Parkhead Primary School
- West Calder High School facilities.

These issues are expanded below. The Council response to these issues and others are detailed in sections 3.1 to 3.6 below.

### 3.0.1 Bellsquarry Primary School

Many parents commented that Bellsquarry Primary School had limited facilities and questioned whether the school could support the additional number of children coming from the new Brucefield site. A range of online comments suggested that the proposal to move the catchment into Bellsquarry “made sense”, given the falling roll, and would improve extra curricular activities.

### 3.0.2 Distance and safe walking route

It was felt by some parents that the proposed safe walking route to Bellsquarry Primary School was not appropriate for young children to walk to school. It was accepted that the walking route was shorter in comparison to that of Parkhead Primary School with some suggesting that the underpass was not safe for children to walk along.

### 3.0.3 Parkhead Primary School

Respondents suggested another other option to re-draw the boundary line to include Parkhead Primary School in the new catchment area. Many suggesting that due to the falling roll at Parkhead Primary School the school could accommodate the new children coming forward from the Brucefield site.

### 3.0.4 West Calder High School

Comments were made by parents regarding the upgrading of West Calder High School in the hope that an increase in the roll from the new development would provide an opportunity for the school to benefit from refurbishment. Several comments were made regarding the short distance from the new site to that of West Calder High School and the possibility of an increase in placing requests due to this short distance.

## 3.1 Parent Councils, parents/carers and other stakeholders

It should be noted that although some 3,040 letters were sent, inviting parents/carers to respond to the consultation paper, 6 responses were received. Half of the submissions received were from parents of children currently attending Bellsquarry Primary School.

There were 15 responses from parents/carers by online survey. The biggest percentage of responses were from parents/carers with pre-school children (50%), from Bellsquarry Primary School (35.7%), from West Calder High School parents/carers (14%) and Parkhead Primary School (7.1%).

Some (64%) of the respondents were against with 36% supporting the proposal. A summary of the online responses is at **Appendix 2(a)**.

The Key issues are detailed below with officer responses in *italics*.

### 3.1.1 Bellsquarry Primary School

Several parents commented on the possible implications on Bellsquarry Primary School should the Brucefield site come forward with a consequent increase to the pupil roll. Suggesting that Bellsquarry had limited resources and the additional children coming from the new site would put a strain on both staff and building.

*Bellsquarry Primary School is currently operating close to capacity. However from 2012 onwards it is forecast that pupil numbers are likely to drop. This is due to fewer children living within the catchment area. New development would sustain the school roll and would bring benefits to curricular provision. Staff and resources are already related to school rolls and if the school roll was to increase staffing and resources would show an appropriate increase also. West Lothian Council have conducted a feasibility study on increasing the capacity at Bellsquarry Primary school if required.*

### 3.1.2 West Calder High School

The main points raised from parent/carers regarding West Calder High School was the need to improve school facilities especially PE provision. They hoped to gain extra pupils from the Brucefield and other sites in the catchment area of West Calder High School, leading to investment in the school infrastructure.

West Calder High School Parent Council disagreed with the re-alignment of the catchment area and proposed that it is re-drawn to include Parkhead Primary and West Calder High School.

*The accommodation at West Calder High School is considered appropriate for the schools maximum capacity of 1,100 pupils. It is important to note that additional facilities at a school results in increased capacity. Increased capacity at West Calder High School may be prejudicial to the provision of a new non-denominational secondary school at East Calder. However, consideration could be given to assessing the suitability of the schools current hall, dining and PE facilities.*

*It should be noted that a placing request may be made from those parents living in the Brucefield development to West Calder High School*

### 3.1.3 Parkhead Primary School – Polbeth Community

The main issues raised by Polbeth Community Council were that Parkhead Primary School could accommodate the estimated number of pupils coming from the Brucefield site. Issues concerning the safe walking route from the site to Bellsquarry were raised in comparison to the safe walking route they suggest to Parkhead Primary School. Polbeth Community Council commented on the Polbeth community as being thriving and that it would adapt well to new housing sites within their area.

*There is insufficient capacity at Parkhead Primary School to support all current allocated housing sites within the current catchment area. The Brucefield housing site is a 1.35 mile walk to Parkhead Primary School in comparison to the 0.55 mile walk from the site to Bellsquarry Primary.*

*West Lothian Council accept that Polbeth is a thriving community and note that other future residential developments in that area are also likely to come forward within the next few years giving scope for improvements at Parkhead Primary School. There is a current planning application for 200 houses in Mossend and West Lothian Council have granted planning permission for a proposed extension to Parkhead Primary School.*

### 3.1.4 Safe walking route

There was concern surrounding the safe walking route from the new site to Bellsquarry Primary School and suggestions that the underpass along this route was not appropriate for young school children to walk alone. It was suggested that if the catchment was altered to include that of Parkhead Primary School there would be no safety issues as children would be bussed to and from school instead of walking along a busy main road to reach their primary school.

*West Lothian Council consider the proposed route as a safe walking route, this route is currently used by pupils and adheres to the three main criteria associated with a safe walking route, it is well lit, of adequate width and is of an all weather surface. West Lothian Council has a policy to encourage walking to school. The revenue costs of bussing children to Parkhead Primary School is costly and not sustainable when there is alternative arrangements that would not require any transport.*

### **3.2 Primary Pupils**

Responses were received from both primary schools. Each P4-P7 primary pupil completed a questionnaire to identify “good points”, “worries” and “other comments”. Teachers collected similar information from the P1-P3 classes. For each school, the pupils, with staff support, summarised the information from the questionnaires to find the key issues. The summary of the schools’ responses is at **Appendix 2(c)** with the main issues grouped by theme on the third page. Council officers noted the interest and level of understanding shown by the pupils during the consultation.

The key issues raised by the pupils are summarised below, in order of frequency, with responses and are in *italics*.

#### **3.2.1 More Friends**

The proposed changes to the catchment area would bring extra children into the school.

*In most consultations with primary school children, it is apparent that making new relationships is important for them. The proposal and the increase in capacities of the schools would support this.*

#### **3.2.2 School is not big enough/ not enough resources.**

Most of the comments for this theme came from Bellsquarry Primary School.

*The falling school roll at Bellsquarry Primary School may give sufficient space for children from the Brucefield site. However it is accepted that an extension may be required if the roll does not drop as expected. This would be built into the planning conditions and S75 Planning Agreement associated with the Brucefield development.*

#### **3.2.4 Space**

Having less space to work and play.

*Some children identified that having more children at their school would mean that there would be less space for them to work and play. Other children commented on having more space due to the likelihood of refurbishment to their school due to the catchment review taking place. Staff and resources are already related to school rolls and if schools roll were to increase, staff and resources would show an appropriate increase also.*

#### **3.2.5 Siblings/Families**

Some comments were made that siblings may not go to the same school.

*The councils established transition arrangements give younger siblings the same status as catchment area children if the elder sibling is at school when the younger enrolls. This is to keep children of the same family at the same school.*

### 3.3 Secondary Students

Presentations were given by council officers to the student representatives at the two secondary schools involved in the consultation – The James Young High School and West Calder High School. Student representatives spoke to their peers at assemblies and other meetings. All secondary pupils were invited by email to respond by an online survey.

The two schools have a combined roll of about some 2093 students.

From The James Young High School 423 responded by paper survey, 61% were in support with 39% against the catchment review. Four students from The James Young High School responded using the online survey.

From West Calder High School, 7 students responded to the online questionnaire.

The main issues raised are detailed below with officer responses in *italics*;

#### 3.3.1 Distance

The James Young High School pupils highlighted that an advantage of the catchment review was that primary aged children would walk less, a much shorter distance to primary school. A further point was also made about secondary children having to walk considerably further to The James Young High School.

*It is accepted that the distance for secondary pupils to walk is further to The James Young High School in comparison to West Calder High School. However, a priority consideration is the minimisation of home to school walking distances for primary school children. In any case, parents would be able to make a placing request for West Calder High School.*

#### 3.3.2 West Calder High School

One comment from the online survey discussed not agreeing with the catchment review as there may be a possibility that West Calder High School will eventually get less pupils and may eventually close down.

*West Lothian Council would like to clarify that West Calder High School will not be closing down, the roll is likely to increase when the other housing developments within the area come forward. It should be noted that the proposed development at Mossend is currently in the process of obtaining planning permission.*

#### 3.3.4 Bellsquarry Primary School

One comment suggested the number of pupils at Bellsquarry Primary School will increase dramatically and that there may not be enough teaching staff to educate the children.

*West Lothian Council ensures that when the school roll increases at any school the number of teachers supplied will increase appropriately.*

### 3.4 School staff responses

Emails were sent to the school staff at the 4 schools involved, inviting them to respond by online survey, letter or email. Staff were briefed by the Head Teachers. Some 19 staff responded. The largest number from West Calder High School, 11 staff, followed by The James Young High School, 4 staff, Parkhead Primary School, 3 staff and Bellsquarry Primary School 1 member of staff.

Some 10 members of staff, (56%) supported the proposal with 8 staff members 44% against it. A summary of the online survey is at **Appendix 2(e)**. The comments have been grouped by themes and put in order of frequency on the last page of the appendix. No letters or emails were received from staff. The main key issues raised by the staff are summarised below, in order of frequency, and are in *italics*.

#### 3.4.1 Distance.

These comments were divided, some agreeing that the proposal is correct in that the safety of the primary school children comes first in that they can walk to Bellsquarry Primary School and others holding an opposing view.

*It is accepted by West Lothian Council that secondary children would have to walk further than they would if they attended West Calder High School. However the proposal was suggested in the best interests of the younger children and given that the safe walking route is currently used by secondary children. Parents could also make a placing request for West Calder High School.*

#### 3.4.2 Parkhead Primary School.

One staff member commented that Parkhead PS would not be in a position to accommodate an increase of school pupils. Another comment suggests that the boundary line should be moved to the East to include Parkhead PS and questioned the councils long term plans for the catchment areas within this part of West Lothian.

*There is insufficient capacity at Parkhead Primary School to support all current allocated housing sites within the school catchment area. Parkhead Primary School is associated with West Calder High School and Bellsquarry Primary School with The James Young High School. Moving the Brucefield site into Parkhead Primary School catchment area would mean that the primary school would exceed capacity and a further catchment review would be necessary.*

#### 3.4.3 Bellsquarry Primary School

One comment regarding Bellsquarry suggested that the school would welcome the additional numbers of expected children however there was a fear that the school would lose the charm of having always been a small school.

*The development housing would sustain the school roll at Bellsquarry Primary School and would bring benefits to curricular delivery and options for class organisation.*

*Bellsquarry Primary School has been operating at or above capacity in recent years. However the catchment population is expected to decline significantly in the immediate future.*

### 3.5 Public meetings

A public meeting was held at West Calder High School and a record of this meeting is at **Appendix 3**.

Approximately 12 individuals attended the meeting. Almost all the key issues at the meetings were also raised by the online survey, email or letter. Three additional issues, not covered elsewhere in the report, were raised and are summarised below (3.51- 3.53) with officer responses.

#### 3.5.1 Further consultation

One comment was made at the meeting asking the question whether it is likely that another consultation will be required due to the recession.

*The council is uncertain of the level of demand for new housing over the next few years. However West Lothian has attractions for both developers and house buyers. Armadale and Bathgate are still growing in terms of housing developments. In those respects, West Lothian does not follow the national trend for housing development. It may be the case that another catchment review may be required in 3-5 years for any new schools at Calderwood or Gavieside.*

#### 3.5.2 Request that Brucefield site goes to West Calder High School

A request was made for the Brucefield site to go to West Calder High School, similar to the situation at Kirknewton with the primary school's relationship with Balerno High School.

*Kirknewton Primary School is associated with Balerno High School and not West Calder High School. Parents can however make placing requests to West Calder High School should they wish their child to attend that school.*

#### 3.5.3 Brucefield site

Several questions were asked relating to the Brucefield site, what the impact would be if the development did not go ahead as planned? What are the timescales for the potential Brucefield development? And will the site consist solely of private housing?

*West Lothian Council may be deemed as not delivering a sufficient housing land supply. This would bring significant risks to the authority and open the council to ad hoc planning appeals and pressure from the government to ensure a suitable housing land supply.*

*The developers are keen to bring the site forward as quickly as possible given that they already own the site and the houses could be delivered with minimum financial risk.*

*All the housing on the Brucefield site is primarily private but will include affordable housing in accordance with council policy.*

## 5 Report from Education Scotland

Inspectors from Education Scotland were fully involved in the consultation process as set out in the Education (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. The inspectors focus on the educational aspects of a proposal. They assessed all the submissions or summaries of submissions and met with selected stakeholders. A draft report was checked for accuracy by council officers. The report from Education Scotland is at **Appendix 4**.

The inspectors noted that members of the parent council at Bellsquarry Primary School fully support the proposed boundary change and see the proposal as positive for the long term future of the school. Pupil council members saw benefits from the possible increase in roll, including the opportunities for new friends. There were concerns about the need to have bigger classrooms, having limited space and disruption from building works.

The acting Head Teacher believes the proposal would provide parents with more choice.

Almost all pupils attending Bellsquarry Primary School currently transfer to The James Young High School at the end of P7 and have around 50 pupils on the roll through placing request. The Head Teacher supports the proposal and the staff, parents and young people expressed no concern about the proposal

The Head Teacher at Parkhead Primary School also supported the proposal, although having concerns about additional traffic, including buses, should children from the Brucefield area be zoned to Parkhead Primary School. The pupil council were consulted and saw a benefit in the proposal for the children moving into the housing development. Their concerns about children from the development attending Parkhead Primary School included the lack of physical space in the building and increasing numbers of buses arriving at the school.

The Head Teacher and senior management team at West Calder High school would prefer a longer term strategic review of catchment boundaries. Members of the Parent Council strongly disagree with the proposal to re-align the catchment boundaries favouring a boundary re-alignment that would include the entire Brucefield development within their schools catchment area.

Parent and senior staff expressed concern over the adequacy of existing physical education and dining facilities. They believe that the improvement of these would benefit both the school and the local community. The James Young staff felt that implementation of the proposal could lead to an increase in placing requests to West Calder High School and have an adverse impact on the effectiveness of transition arrangements for young people moving from primary to secondary school. Young people were widely consulted on the proposal and saw the benefits of the shorter walking distance to primary school.

The inspectors identified the key issues for the parents/carers and wider community. The issues are below with responses from the council.

5.1 The following were identified as issues:

- The council needs to satisfy parents that the proposed route to school is a safe route for primary age children.
- The council need to consider the impact the proposal will have on primary to secondary transition arrangements.

The officer responses to issues are at 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 below:

#### 5.1.1 Safe walking route to school

*It should be noted that current footpath routes are considered by West Lothian Council as safe as they adhere to the council's 3 point criteria - adequate width, all weather surface and well lit.*

*The path and underpass is presently used by pupils from Bellsquarry Primary School and West Calder High School. The Council supports strategies for children walking to school, some schools use "walking buses" for this purpose and this could be an appropriate strategy to support affected families if the school consultation proposal is accepted and would also limit car use.*

#### 5.1.2 Transitional arrangements

*West Lothian primary schools work hard in ensuring that a smooth transition is made from primary to secondary schools and that the children are informed and supported throughout the process, ensuring that each pupil is familiar with their secondary school by the time they arrive in S1.*

*It is accepted that West Calder High School is located closer to the Brucefield site and that placing requests may occur due to this.*

#### 5.2.1 Education aspects of the proposal for children from affected areas.

##### Brucefield Development

The proposal identifies a number of educational benefits for children and families living in the Brucefield area who would have the opportunity to send their children to the same non-denominational primary school.

Children would benefit from being able to walk the short distance to Bellsquarry Primary School which would mitigate the decline in school roll at Bellsquarry Primary School. This would avoid unnecessary school roll pressures at Parkhead Primary School.

Key strengths were identified by Education Scotland:

West Lothian Council conducted an extensive consultation process enabling young children, young people, parents, staff and other stakeholders to express and have their views considered. The proposal:

- takes good account of the pressure on school capacities,
- identifies a number of educational benefits for families and children, and,
- would ensure the long term viability of Bellsquarry Primary School and the ability to provide children with high quality learning experiences.

## E. CONCLUSION

The consultation on the proposal has been undertaken in line with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010 and has attracted a good level of response in relation to the number of families who would be directly affected by the proposal.

After taking account of the representations made, it can be considered that the case for making the proposed catchment changes could be supported for the following reasons:

- Support for effective school community links,
- Long term placement certainty for families,
- Support for a community identity for new householders, and,
- A short walk to primary school by a safe route encouraging walking to school.

## F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

13 January 2009	Council Executive report: <i>West Lothian Local Plan</i> .
20 January 2009	Education Policy Development Scrutiny Panel report: <i>School Catchment Area Management</i> .
5 January 2010	Education Executive report: <i>Enhanced consultation Arrangements for Formal School Consultation Processes</i> .
23 November 2010	Education Executive report: <i>2010 Base School Forecasts</i> .
21 June 2010	Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel report: <i>Catchment Review Strategy</i> .
22 March 2011	Council Executive report: <i>Funding for Key Infrastructure Projects</i> .
13 September 2011	Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel report: <i>Development Plan Update</i> .
4 October 2011	Education Executive report: Non-denominational school catchment area – Brucefield Housing Development.

Edinburgh and the Lothians Structure Plan 2015

West Lothian Local Plan 2009

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, Scottish Government 2010

Appendices/Attachments:

Appendix 1	Details of the consultees and consultation arrangements
Appendix 2 (a)	Summary of parent/general public online survey responses
Appendix 2(b)	Summary of written and e-mail responses

Appendix 2(c)	Summary of primary pupil responses
Appendix 2(d)	Summary of secondary pupil responses
Appendix 2(e)	Summary of online staff responses
Appendix 3	Record of public meeting
Appendix 4	Report from Education Scotland

Contact Person: Sharon McCawley Forward Planning Officer, Education Services, Civic Centre, Howden South Road, Livingston EH54 6FF. Tel: 01506 281859  
[sharon.mccawley@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:sharon.mccawley@westlothian.gov.uk)

Steve Field, Head of Service, Planning and Economic Development      February 2012

## Details of consultees and consultation arrangements Appendix 1

The School (consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 specifies relevant consultees for a formal consultation on a proposal to adjust catchment area and transition arrangements. The following were consulted:

Pupils, Parent Councils, parent/carers, staff and trade unions of the primary and secondary schools affected by the proposed catchment changes;  
Parent/carers of children at local nurseries;  
Community Councils within the catchment areas of the schools;  
West Lothian Council elected members;  
West Lothian Education Executive members;  
MPs – M Connarty  
MSPs – G Brown, F Hyslop, A Constance, M MacDonald, D McLetchie, A Johnstone, Sarah Boyack.  
Archdiocese of St Andrew's and Edinburgh;  
Education Scotland (Inspectorate of School)  
NHS Lothian; and  
Affected West Lothian Heads of Service

All of the above were invited to respond to the consultation proposal by pro-forma, letter, e-mail or on-line survey. There was one point of contact for all questions and comments.

The schools involved in the consultation were:

- Bellsquarry Primary School
- Parkhead Primary School
- The James Young High School
- West Calder High School

Copies of the consultation paper were made available in all affected schools and in selected libraries and local nurseries. The paper was also available on-line using the link <http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/education/schoolrelateditems/> This link also allowed public access to catchment area maps, "frequently asked questions" and other useful documentation.

The consultation started on 10 November 2011 and finished on 22 December 2011.

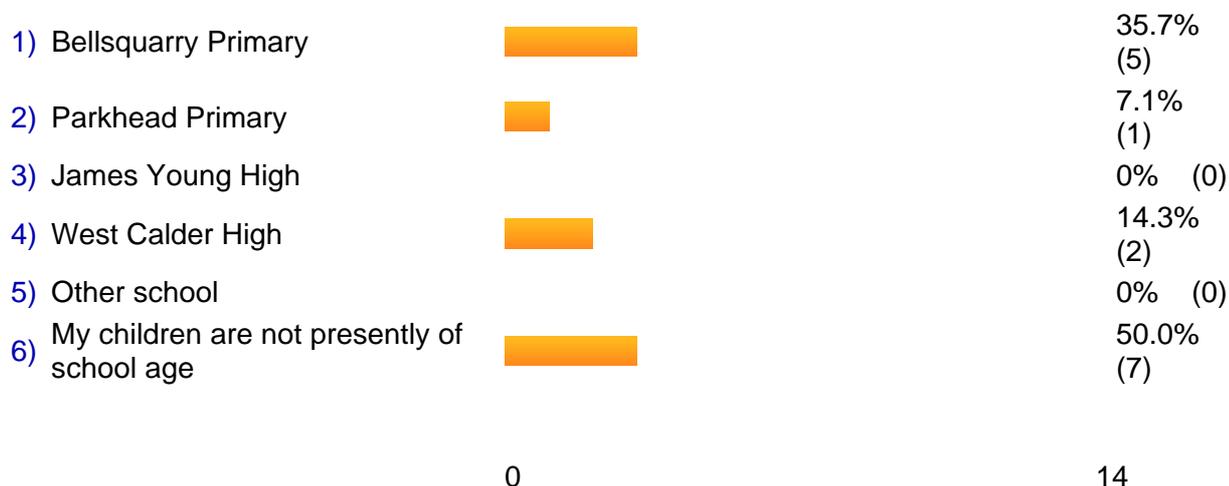
Public meeting held on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011 at 7pm

Inspectors from Education Scotland, as part of the consultation process at the schools involved in the consultation (listed above) as well as local nurseries and libraries and online at <http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/education/schoolrelateditems/>

## Summary of parents/general public online survey responses Appendix 2(a)

Total Respondents: 15

1. Which schools do your children attend?



14 people answered this question (93.3%)

2. Do you support the proposed catchment changes?



14 people answered this question (93.3%)

3. What are your views on the proposed changes?

- I'm so glad I found my solution online.
- The impact of the extension work on Bellsquarry Primary would be significant and I'm concerned about the disruption this work would have on the pupils. In addition, the school is already very crowded with issues around composite classes to accommodate the large numbers of children already in the area. The school is excellent at present and I see these changes as only having a detrimental effect.
- I think they will be good for Bellsquarry PS to boost the falling numbers. I also agree that it's better for children to be at a closer primary school.
- Given that the Parkhead Primary role is nearly 50 below capacity it seems that the best use of resources would be to send the Children from the new development there. In these times of austerity this would be the best use of council funds/taxpayers money. As a parent with 1 child in Bellsquarry Primary and another due to start in 1.5 years would I be given written assurances that my 2nd child would be assured a place at Bellsquarry? (We are with in current catchment area)

- I feel that increasing the school roll by such a large amount would change Bellsquarry to the detriment
- It makes sense for the primary children to be within walking distance of their school and for the families to be part of the nearest community.
- I think it is not acceptable to give so little notice to parents.
- I understand the need for change, but why couldn't parents and children have been given more advanced warning than this about these proposed drastic changes concerning their education?
- Why is it that Livingston has to increase, why not West Calder. It is all to do with 'backhanders' to politics the simple solution is to keep as is and expand Parkhead keep it within the community
- Larger school could give Bellsquarry Primary more opportunity to provide a larger range of services such as extra-curricular activities.

10 people answered this question (80.0%)

## Summary of written and e-mail responses Appendix 2 (b)

### Parent Council, Head Teachers, Councillors, MSP's, MP's

Date & Method	Contact	Comment summary	Response 15/11/11
E-mail 22/11/11	<b>West Calder High School Parent Council</b>	Disagree with the proposed boundary change. Wish boundary to be drawn so that catchment is associated with Parkhead Primary and West Calder High School.	Response 8/12/11
		West Calder High School lags behind other schools in West Lothian in relation to investment in its facilities. Plans to upgrade school facilities have been made clear but will not be made without the requirement to increase capacity.	Comment noted
		See opportunity to gain additional high school pupils from this development as a positive step towards justification of additional investment in the school.	Comment noted

Geographical proximity of West Calder High School to the proposed development is a significant reason for high school pupils to attend to WCHS. To propose otherwise is impractical for secondary pupils.

Comment noted

Parents are likely to submit a placement request to WCHS. If this does happen WCHS could increase its population significantly via a back door rather than formal catchment areas.

Comment noted

See this proposal putting pressure on resources.

Comment noted

By not having the additional pupils from this development will significantly disadvantage WCHS by further delaying investment in its facilities. Resulting in a less attractive school.

Comment noted

Likely to lead to further decline in the school facilities.

Comment noted

Comment noted

Constructing a shared community/school sports facility in the south of the Brucefield development would enhance the attraction of the site to prospective home owners building strong links between this community, their catchment secondary, West Calder High School and the local communities.

**E-mail  
20/12/11**

**Polbeth  
Community  
Council**

**Response  
22/12/11**

Question was asked why Polbeth Community Council was not made aware of the consultation document. Reponse was the documents were sent to chairperson rather than secretary. Details were given to secretary for forwarding information.

Comment noted

It was stated at meeting the catchment change is the only option to enable planning on the Brucefield site. Disappointing to see the WLC focus on land sale before community spirit and needs.

Comment noted

Since the public meeting WLC have submitted a planning application for an extension to the building at Parkhead Primary. This extension can easily accommodate the estimated numbers from the Brucefield development.

Comment noted

The safe route from the development to Bellsquarry is not safe. After the underpass the area is totally out of view from all sides where children can be abducted.

Comment noted

The easy vehicular exit routes from the industrial estate also make the route unsafe for children walking past the site.

Comment noted

The route provides safety issues for High School children having to walk similar routes with similar issues and additional problems during the 1.7 miles walk.

Comment noted

Primary children would have no safety issues if at Parkhead Primary, with all being transported on a bus from a dedicated bus stop that would be relatively close to the development. Again yards walk for high school children is more sensible and safe.

Comment noted

Person who provided the report do not know area very well. Polbeth is a thriving community which easily adapts to new developments and is continually providing ideas on how to incorporate the whole community into worthy development matters. Brucefield site sits easier with Polbeth and the Limefield development as a village area, rather than have a community split in two by a large industrial estate.

Comment noted

A wider consultation to incorporate detail on all future developments was asked for as it was suggested that closer scrutiny of all planned CDA's would allow long term planning for areas rather than the suggestion that this consultation is to secure the future of Bellsquarry Primary School.

Polbeth Community Council wish to have the local councillors advised on the full plan and that any decision making is placed on hold until local councillors can meet with all relevant stakeholders.

Comment noted

E-mail 14/11/11	Parent 1, Bellsquarry	Son attends Bellsquarry Nursery. Want to know what provision has been made of the schooling of additional children.	Response  Envisaged that any pupils from new housing would require additional capacity. A feasibility study has been looked at to extend the school. Any extensions would be funded by the developers.
		Bellsquarry is an old school with limited infrastructure. Additional children would put strain on both the building and staff.	Latest projections show a falling roll at this school and works to increase the capacity may not be required.
E-mail 16/11/11	Parent 2, Bellsquarry	Do you have a breakdown of the split of social/private housing numbers proposed for the site? Do you have an approximate number of extra pupils it might be expected the site will produce?	Response 17/11/11  The masterplan indicates 58 detached, 106 semi detached, 36 flats and 4 townhouses. We would expect that 0.289 towards ND Primary. 0.179 towards ND Secondary. 0.095 towards RC Primary and 0.055 towards RC Secondary.

Do you have any information on what measures are in place or indeed funding to allow a small school such as Bellsquarry to cater for such increased numbers?

West Lothian Council will monitor the situation at the school and make appropriate arrangements should the school come under pressure with regard to its school roll.

E-mail  
22/11/11

Parent 3,  
Bellsquarry

Current catchment arrangements are not affected by the proposed changes for the same reasons as you are proposing to change the catchment.

Response  
23/11/11

Current catchment arrangements are not directly affected. The new housing development would no longer be split catchment and would fully be in the catchment of Bellsquarry and James Young High School. The benefits stated in consultation paper are aimed at those residents entering into the new housing site.

Concern regarding the increase of 50 pupils to a small school and the implications this will have on the current position.

Bellsquarry PS is currently sitting close to capacity. From 2012 onwards its forecast pupil numbers will drop. New development would sustain the school roll at Bellsquarry PS and bring benefits to curricular.

E-mail & Letter 20/12/11	Parent 4, Bellsquarry	Response 23/12/11
	<p>Live in Adambrae and heard that numbers were dropping at Bellsquarry Primary, was hoping to get my 3 year old twins into Bellsquarry in 2013.</p>	<p>Comment noted</p>
	<p>One of reasons moved into Adambrae was that Bellsquarry was such a good school. We presumed that this was our catchment school, however to find out that we were on the wrong side of the A71. Now forced to use a car everyday to take my children to school.</p>	<p>Comment noted</p>
	<p>If the numbers at Bellsquarry are decreasing. Only fair that Adambrae residents should get first chance of applications to Bellsquarry for the above reasons that they are far closer than the new development.</p>	<p>Comment noted</p>

(Combined P1-P3 & P4-P7 responses)

### **Parkhead Primary**

#### Good Points

- Children would be closer to West Calder High School
- If new children came to the school it would mean more friends
- Children would be closer to West Calder High School.

#### Bad Points

- Would need even more buses to bring the new children to out school if they came to Parkhead Primary.
- Don't have a lot of space for more children, classes are already full.
- If a family moved to West Calder the children may not get a space.
- Worried that some families may be in different schools.

### **Bellsquarry Primary**

#### Good Points

- More space in school.
- New things in school.
- More teachers with lots of different skills.
- More children therefore more friends.
- Pupils will be able to come to school more safely as it will be closer.
- Need to build a school extension.
- Pupils roll will increase.
- Increase the popularity for Bellsquarry and The James Young High School.

#### Bad Points

- May be too many children.
- More traffic.
- Loss of outdoor space.
- Size of classrooms.
- Less PE time.
- More houses will impact on the environment.
- Less playground space.

**Summary of secondary student online responses    Appendix 2 (D)**

Total Respondents: 11

1. Which school are you attending?



11 people answered this question (100.0%)

2. Do you support the proposed catchment changes?



11 people answered this question (100.0%)

3. What are your views on the proposed changes?

- They should go to the closer primary school and the further away high school because they can walk further when their older
- the housing is fine
- I don't like this change about the Brucefield catchment area. I'm afraid that if this happens west Calder high school will have less pupils and in a result might shut down. But as a plus the school will/might get a bigger allowance of money which means more pupils and students will be better educated and have a more secure and nicer environment at school. But this is my opinion and I have said this, a couple of weeks back to the pupil council at west Calder as we were discussing this problem.
- well I thought we could get a cleaner bus also better bins and most people just don't care about the stuff their throwing away like our school our janitor said he is so sick from the amount of rubbish he picks up and the playground why should u be picking up the rubbish that they have threw away worse place is Polbeth.
- I do not know because I have just been set up with a new password that works as my old one did not work! :)
- Don't mind
- It doesn't affect me.
- If I was the high school student in the new houses I would not want to travel the distance required to get to James Young when I had a high school on my door step. Therefore I think you will have a lot of students wanting to be relocated. Why is St.Marys primary not being taken into consideration for the primary school pupils. You are more worried about the primary pupils over the high school students however is it not safer in the bad weather for them to get a bus to Parkheard rather than walk in the snow/ice etc to Bellsquarry and let the high school students go to a closer school

so they don't have as far to walk either.

- Numbers at Bellsquarry Primary School will increase dramatically therefore; there may be fire hazards and not enough teaching staff to educate children. However, extensions could be made to the which would make it a safer place for more children
- Two of my main views are that catholic schools e.g. St Ninians Primary School should be allowed to come to our school as our school is alot more closer to our school than St Margerets but although that is a catholic school pupils should still be allowed to have the decision with the heads of the primary and high schools about where they would like to go for secondary schools like West Calder, James Young or St Margerets. Also schools that are not in James Youngs primary school catchment area should be allowed to bring other pupils from further away schools like Letham Primary school.
- Worry for late nights and far walking for young people attending high school living in the extended catchment.

11 people answered this question (100.0%)

### **Summary of Secondary Students (Pro-forma)**

The James Young High School

**For** the proposal – 258 (61%)

**Against** the proposal – 165 (39%)

For – Senior pupils recognised that high school pupils have a greater responsibility for their own safety and can look out for themselves more.

Against – The dinning hall and corridors would not be sufficient to allow more pupils. Many pupils see that it is unreasonable to request to ask someone to walk a distance to go to something that you have on your doorstep.

Total Respondents: 19

1. Where do you work?

1) Bellsquarry Primary		5.3% (1)
2) Parkhead Primary		15.8% (3)
3) James Young High		21.1% (4)
4) West Calder High		57.9% (11)
5) Other school		0% (0)
	0	19

19 people answered this question (100.0%)

2. Do you support the proposed catchment changes?

1) Yes		55.6% (10)
2) No		44.4% (8)
	0	18

18 people answered this question (94.7%)

3. What are your views on the proposed changes?

- The planning of this development does seem propose challenges to West Lothian Council when it comes to catchment areas. Closer to Bellsquarry but further away from JYHS but much closer to West Calder High. No easy answer but the distance/safety of primary school pupils being nearer to Bellsquarry was my deciding factor.
- I personally believe that Parkhead Primary school would not be in a position to accommodate an increase of school pupils. Reasons: 1. The road into the school is always congested with traffic. It is worse when there are events on at the local bowling club with parked cars. 2. Parking within the school car park is totally inadequate at present for parked cars. 3. The main A71 is at gridlock when the school comes out at 3.20
- As long as there is re-development within the school to house the extra children and the correct resource for the school.
- I understand the primary school argument, but the secondary school argument makes absolutely no sense whatever. Why make pupils walk (and they won't) to a school so far away when they live next door to a different one which is within walking distance. The use of James Young as school for this group will involve increased traffic in the

area, and around James Young High School. When councils and people should be trying to reduce the number of car journeys, why make it difficult for them to do so?

- I disagree with them. The majority of the site currently lies within the Parkhead / West Calder catchment area and believe, therefore, that the boundary should be drawn to the east of the development, not the west. Bellsquarry PS used to be part of West Calder's cluster of associated primaries, and should be again. I would like to know the long-term plans for all catchment areas that will be affected by an eventual new secondary school in East Calder, which may be influencing the strategy behind this current proposal.
- In my opinion the catchment area for the Brucefield site should Bellsquarry PS and West Calder HS. Insisting the pupils travel to James Young seems short sighted and potentially dangerous due to the distance and lack of transport.
- Houses right next door to WCHS. Easier for kids to go there.
- I cannot see that parents will be happy about children walking 1.7 miles when they could walk 0.3 - from a purely common-sense point of view, this proposal looks wrong.
- Most of the housing site comes within the West Calder/Parkhead Ps boundary area. Both school rolls have decreased recently so capacity exists at Parkhead PS. If not, why no exploratory examination of Parkhead PS for extension work? Not mentioned in consultation document. Good for West Calder cluster to have wider mix of types of housing communities in catchment area.
- I have no strong feeling one way or the other. It would, however, seem sensible to make the changes proposed.
- I feel that secondary children should go to West Calder High School because stop rivalry between schools.
- It makes sense to keep the housing development in the one catchment area
- Children can walk to their local school as opposed to having to take a bus (less traumatic for younger children and reduces impact on the environment). Children also get to attend school with all their neighbouring friends as opposed to potentially having children from one side of the street going to one school and one to another. The only downside is the fact that Bellsquarry is a feeder school for JYHS, and that school albeit less than 2 miles away is fairly difficult to get to on foot from Brucefield. Although there is nothing to stop parents putting a request that their child attends West Calder HS which is considerably closer.
- If the proposal is correct that school role is to fall then of course we will welcome the numbers. My fears would be that if the school got substantially bigger lose charm of always having been smaller school
- The proposed changes are reasonable as you can hardly expect children who are next door neighbours to attend different schools.
- I would like the pupils to attend Bellsquarry

16 people answered this question (84.2%)

Brucefield Catchment Review 2011

**Minutes of Meeting held on the evening of Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011 at West Calder High School 7pm**

Council Officers present:

David McKinney – Planning & Information Manager (DM)  
 Alan Russell – CDA Education Officer (AR)  
 Sharon McCawley – Forward Planning Officer (SM)  
 Fiona Rowland – West Calder High School HT (FR)  
 Shameen Ali – Bellsquarry Primary HT (SA)

Carol McKenzie (HMIE Representative)

Approximately 12 parents and members of the public attended meeting

**Part 1 – Presentation of the Consultation Paper – titled “Non-denominational school catchment areas – Brucefield housing development.**

DM made introductions before giving a description of the present catchment area arrangements.

DM presented Section 3, “The need for change”.

DM explained the Proposal in the consultation paper.

AR presented facts about the Transitional Arrangements and the Educational Benefit Statement.

SM closed the presentation by outlining the consultation procedures and inviting comments on or before 22 December 2011.

Part 2 – Questions, comments and answer session. Responses and answers from council officers in italics.

Comment 1: Restrictive outdoor space at Bellsquarry at present, if building was extended how much grounds would this take up?

*There has been some feasibility work to minimise the footprint, it is likely to be 231sqm or bit larger. Would involve play park and school hall extending but not classrooms.*

Comment 2: Potential purchase land at Calder Road?

*There are possibilities with that piece of land, should this land be used this will be paid for by developers not WLC.*

Comment 3: There is a mistake with forecast roll for Bellsquarry Primary School, it should be 198 not 189. Also figures for West Calder High School are incorrect.

The mistakes on the consultation paper will be rectified online as well as a separate appendix sheet being issued to all consultees.

Comment 4: What are the projected rolls for Bellsquarry Primary School?

*The school roll for Bellsquarry PS drops substantially after 2012. WLC officers will publish latest 2010 school base forecast figures on the WLC website. The 2011 forecast won't be published until February/March 2012.*

Comment 5: Concerned that Bellsquarry roll is declining, which will result in composite classes. Have concerns over composite classes especially from P4 onwards.

*If there are less than 150 pupils there will need to be a class organisation of 6.*

Comment 6: What restrictions would there be if those children from the new development were in the catchment for Parkhead Primary School?

*Catchment children would end up being refused if this was proposed for the catchment review.*

Comment 7: Parkhead Primary is not yet at capacity, when is this likely to happen?

*There are other housing applications which once are approved are likely to increase the capacity at Parkhead Primary School. Had recent conference with housing developers in the hope to stimulate housing development in West Lothian. With the hope that growth in housing will increase in the near future.*

Comment 8: This proposal is complex, West Calder High School want to consider the bigger picture. Can't understand the planning of catchment areas.

*WLC try to plan ahead for catchment reviews, we base this on a variety of different things.*

Comment 9: Seen individual plans for the Brucefield development, need to have all the information before Polbeth Community Council comment on this catchment review.

*Comment noted.*

Comment 10: Concerns over the safe walking route to The James Young High School.

*WLC specifies that the route in question is a safe walking route to school and is currently used by Pupil's at present.*

Comment 11: If buying a house in this area I would prefer to send my child to The James Young High School rather than West Calder High School. There is a need to fight for better provision for WCHS . Desperately need new games/dining hall.

*DM, I have been involved in all the extensions to WCHS. Once Calderwood developments and other sites in this area start coming forward then improvements to WCHS will be looked at.*

Comment 12: What catchment area would the Calderwood development be under?

*First there would need to be a new 2 stream primary school to cope with those new 2000 Houses. West Calder High School would be the secondary catchment school. There is also need for new secondary school which would be situated at Calderwood , which would cost in the region of £27million to deliver. A further extension to West Calder High School would be required at that point.*

Comment 13: Do you think it's likely that we will be back here in a few years to discuss another consultation due to another recession?

*We are uncertain as to what demand for housing will be in a few years. West Lothian has attraction, both Armadale and Bathgate are growing in terms of development but West Lothian doesn't sit in the national trend. However it may be the case that another catchment review may be required in 3-5 years.*

Comment 14: There are no further developments in The James Young High School area.

*The school roll will drop for The JYHS more than it will for WCHS. There is a need to consider secondary rolls. P1 rolls are generally rising which pushes up the secondary rolls in 4 years time.*

Comment 15: The Brucefield development is closer to WCHS, can people make placing requests to come to WCHS?

*The Brucefield site is closer to WCHS and non catchments can apply.*

Comment 16: Request that the Brucefield site go to West Calder High School, similar to that of Balerno. Would you consider this request?

*As discussed parent can make a placing request to West Calder High School.*

Comment 17: How do the developers feel about the development being next door to WCHS, are they aware that this won't be one of their catchment schools?

*The developers are aware as the scale of developer contributions is lower. They are pleased with the position and are aware that parents can make placing requests should they wish to do so.*

Comment 18: Developers only care about minimising contributions and making money.

*Comment noted.*

Comment 19: Parent council are concerned for WCHS lacking in investment and facilities and want to bring forward improvements. The extension to Parkhead is planned although the capacity isn't sufficient?

*Parkhead can be extended to a two stream school but not beyond that. If this Consultation fails this may result in refusing those developments in the Calder, WLC do not wish to be in that position.*

Comment 20: What will the impact be if development at Brucefield doesn't go ahead as planned?

*WLC may be classed as not delivering as a council and government may step in, which has significant risks to an authority.*

Comment 21: Will Gavieside development require a primary school, where would this be located?

*A primary school would be required and this would be located in Gavieside, around the farmhouse area.*

Comment 22: Why can't the Gavieside development be included in the Bellsquarry catchment area rather than a new primary school being built?

*Gavieside development would have around 2000 houses and would more than fill a two stream primary school.*

Comment 23: Due to the falling rolls at Bellsquarry PS, would there be potential for non catchment children to fill up places or will a cap be placed on the school?

*Applications from non catchment would be accepted at this stage.*

Comment 24: Adambrae developer informed buyers of the wrong catchment schools.

*Developers know which catchment their development is in and often do this. WLC can use planning conditions to ensure that the developers inform buyers of the correct catchment.*

Comment 25: What about nursery provision? Sometimes it's not always possible to get into the school of your choice?

*Nurseries do not have catchment areas, this does happen when nurseries are associated with a certain school and there is a risk that a place may not be available.*

Comment 26: What are timescales for the potential Brucefield development, has this been sold yet?

*The site has been bought by the developer therefore the site may happen quickly. Developers are very keen to bring the site forward as quickly as possible.*

Comment 27: Will the site consist of all private housing?

Yes.

Comment 28: There is great pressure to kick start the economy; will WLC relax developer contributions in order to achieve this?

*WLC cannot afford to relax these contributions.*

Comment 29: Going to speak to local councillors regarding how quickly this development is going through without notifying community council representatives.

*Comment noted*

## Consultation proposal by West Lothian Council

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal to re-align the existing school catchment boundaries that currently run through the proposed housing development site at Brucefield to associate the area with Bellsquarry Primary School and The James Young High School. Part of this area is currently associated with Parkhead Primary School and West Calder High School.**

### 1. Introduction

1.1 West Lothian Council proposes to re-align the existing catchment boundaries that currently run through the designated but, as yet undeveloped, housing site at Brucefield. The proposed re-alignment would place the full site entirely within the catchment areas of Bellsquarry Primary School and The James Young High School. Part of this area is currently associated with Parkhead Primary School and West Calder High School.

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 29 November 2011 in connection with the council's proposals;
- 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 sites of The James Young High School, West Calder High School, Bellsquarry Primary School and Parkhead Primary School including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.4 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the schools; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people in the council area;
- 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 West Lothian Council undertook the initial consultation on its proposals with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*.

2.2 The council's figures indicate that the capacity of Bellsquarry Primary School is 189 with a current roll of 185. The school currently has no composite classes and P1 is capped at 25. The council projects that the roll will decline to 148 by 2015. Members of the Parent Council at the school fully support the proposed boundary change. They see the proposal as positive for the long-term future of the school. The pupil council had been consulted and children in the school have had the opportunity to give their views. Pupil council members saw benefits from the possible increase in roll, including the opportunities for new friends. Their concerns included bigger classes, limited space in the school, particularly for physical education, and possible disruption from building works to extend the school. The acting headteacher believes the proposal would provide parents with more choice. Staff at the school were concerned about the impact on accommodation of a rising school roll. They also expressed some concern about the impact on arrangements for transition from primary to secondary if some children from the Brucefield development should choose to transfer to the nearer West Calder High School rather than the more distant The James Young High School. Staff also expressed some concern about the walking route from Brucefield and thought that parents might transport their children by car, increasing traffic volume in the vicinity of the school.

2.3 The council's figures indicate that the capacity of The James Young High School is 1210 with a current roll of 1109. The school has four associated primary schools, including Bellsquarry Primary School. Almost all pupils attending Bellsquarry Primary School currently transfer to The James Young High School at the end of P7. The James Young High School has around 50 pupils on the roll through placing requests. The headteacher supports the proposal. The pupil council had been consulted. Staff, parents and young people expressed no concerns about the proposal.

2.4 The council's figures indicate that the current capacity of Parkhead Primary School is 415. The council projects that the roll will rise to over 500 by 2018. The headteacher supported the proposal. She had concerns about additional traffic, including buses, should children from the Brucefield area be zoned to Parkhead Primary School. The pupil council had been consulted and in turn had consulted pupils during a school assembly. They saw a benefit in the proposal for the children moving into the housing development. Their concerns about children from the development attending Parkhead Primary School included the lack of physical space in the building and increasing numbers of buses arriving at the school.

2.5 The council's figures indicate that the capacity of West Calder High School is 1100. The headteacher and senior management team at West Calder High School would prefer a longer term strategic review of catchment boundaries. Members of the Parent Council strongly disagree with the proposal to re-align the catchment boundaries. They favour a boundary re-alignment that would include the entire Brucefield development within the catchment areas for West Calder High School and Parkhead Primary School. The Parent Council believes that the case for improving facilities at West Calder High School would be

strengthened through the inclusion of the Brucefield development within their school's catchment area. Parents and senior staff expressed concern about the adequacy of existing physical education and dining facilities. They believe that improved physical education facilities would benefit both the school and the local community, of which the Brucefield development would be part. West Calder High School is closer to the Brucefield area than The James Young High School and staff felt that implementation of the proposal could lead to an increase in placing requests to West Calder High School and have an adverse impact on the effectiveness of transition arrangements for young people moving from primary to secondary school. Young people at the school were widely consulted on the proposal. They saw the benefits of the shorter walking distance to primary school. Although the route is shorter, they also shared the same concerns as the Parent Council about the safety of the walking route from the housing development to Bellsquarry Primary School. Parents and children feel that West Calder High School is in need of upgrading and an increase in roll from the Brucefield development could provide an opportunity for the school to benefit from refurbishment.

2.6 There were 15 online responses from parents to the consultation, seven of whom had children not presently of school age. Nine of the respondents did not support the proposed catchment changes.

### **3. Educational aspects of the proposal**

3.1 The council's proposal principally seeks to strategically manage school capacity issues arising from current and future housing developments in the areas served by the four schools. However, the proposal also identifies a number of educational benefits for children and families. All families living in the Brucefield area would have the opportunity to send their children to the same non-denominational primary school, fostering a greater sense of community and strengthening links between the school and the wider community. Curriculum planning would be assisted through long-term certainty about the school to be attended by children living in the area. Children would benefit from being able to walk the relatively short distance to Bellsquarry Primary School. The proposal would also address potential educational issues that could arise should the roll at Parkhead Primary School continue to increase.

3.2 The proposed housing development at Brucefield is one of several possible housing developments that lie within the catchment areas of the schools concerned. The Brucefield development is for a projected 170 houses. Figures provided by the council forecast an additional 50 primary aged pupils and 30 secondary aged pupils living within the development. Projections for Bellsquarry Primary School indicate a falling roll. There will be sufficient capacity for all the children moving into the proposed Brucefield development. The council has conducted a feasibility study on increasing the capacity at Bellsquarry Primary School to accommodate any increase in roll arising from its proposal. Proposed improvements would include better facilities for physical education and dining.

3.3 The current catchment boundaries run through the site of the proposed housing development at Brucefield. Re-aligning the boundaries would give all families in the proposed development the opportunity to have their children attend the same non-denominational school.

3.4 Most of the Brucefield site currently lies within the existing catchment area of Parkhead Primary School which is approximately 1.7 miles from the centre of the development. Transport would be required to take the children from Brucefield to this

school. Currently two minibuses and two buses transport children to and from Parkhead Primary School. The turning space for buses is limited. Projected rolls for Parkhead Primary School suggest that there would be insufficient capacity to accommodate all children moving into potential future housing developments, including the Brucefield development. West Lothian Council has recently submitted a planning application for an extension to the building.

3.5 The re-alignment of the catchment boundaries would place the entire Brucefield housing development within the catchment area for Bellsquarry Primary School. This school is approximately 0.6 miles from the centre of the proposed housing development and is therefore closer than Parkhead Primary School. Children would benefit from being able to walk or cycle to school. There is an existing footpath from Brucefield to Bellsquarry Primary School. The path runs alongside the main road, through a short underpass and through a woodland area. The council needs to satisfy parents that this is a safe route to school for primary age children.

3.6 The proposal to re-align the catchment boundaries would place the Brucefield development entirely within the catchment area for The James Young High School which is the associated secondary for Bellsquarry Primary School. This secondary school lies 1.7 miles from the centre of the Brucefield development and has sufficient capacity for the projected increase in roll. The facilities in the school have been refurbished and are of a very good standard. There is a possible walking route to The James Young High School from the Brucefield site. There is a well-established transition programme for children moving from P7 in Bellsquarry Primary School to The James Young High School. Around 50 pupils currently attend The James Young High School through placing requests. Incorporating the Brucefield housing development in the catchment area for The James Young High School could restrict the number of places available for future placing requests.

3.7 The Brucefield site lies adjacent to the grounds of West Calder High School. The centre of the proposed development is 0.2 miles from the school. The school has sufficient capacity to cope with any increase in roll arising from the Brucefield development. The close proximity of the proposed housing development to West Calder High School may lead to placing requests from families living nearby. This could add to existing pressure on limited facilities at the school particularly for physical education and dining.

#### **4. Summary**

4.1 West Lothian Council has conducted an extensive consultation process enabling children, young people, parents, staff and other stakeholders to express and have their views considered.

4.2 Overall, the proposal takes good account of the pressure on school capacities at the primary stages arising from potential housing development. The proposal also identifies a number of educational benefits for families and children who may, in future, live in the Brucefield area. Children would benefit educationally and socially from attending the same non-denominational school. All would be able to walk or cycle to school, promoting both health and the council's policy of encouraging walking to school. However, the council needs to ensure that the walking route is suitable and safe for primary age children. The school and children would benefit from clear and strong community links. The proposal would help ensure the long-term viability of Bellsquarry Primary School and its ability to continue to provide children with high quality learning experiences and opportunities to achieve. The proposal also addresses possible capacity and consequent educational issues at Parkhead Primary school should its roll continue to increase. The council's

proposal recognises that although the Brucefield area is adjacent to Bellsquarry Primary School it is more distant from The James Young High School which would become the zoned secondary school for the area. It needs to consider the impact of its proposal on primary to secondary transition arrangements

4.3 The proposal would ensure that the council is in a position to meet its legislative responsibilities by providing adequate and sufficient school places whilst securing best value in the efficient and effective use of resources. The scale of proposed housing developments in the council area is likely to require ongoing review of its school catchment areas along with consideration of the needs of the local communities.

**HM Inspectors  
Education Scotland  
January 2012**