



EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

AUGUST 2015

PROPOSAL DOCUMENT

**REVIEW OF WESTHILL NETWORK PRIMARY SCHOOL
ZONES**

Proposal for the redistribution of primary school catchment areas in the Westhill network

SUMMARY PROPOSAL

It is proposed that:

The existing primary school catchment areas within the Westhill network be amended with effect from August 2016;

New pupils joining schools within the Westhill Network should be educated at their newly zoned school with effect from August 2016;

Existing primary pupils within the Westhill Network should remain at their current primary school for the duration of their primary education and siblings of existing primary pupils in the Westhill network could also attend the currently zoned primary school so that families are not split between different primary schools.

This document has been issued by Aberdeenshire Council in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

The schools affected by this proposal are:

Crombie School
Elrick School
Skene School
Westhill Primary School

DISTRIBUTION

A copy of this document is available on the Aberdeenshire Council web-site: www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/education/EducationConsultations.asp or by e-mailing rezoning@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

This document will be provided to:

- Parent Council(s) of the schools listed above
- Parents of the pupils at the schools listed above
- Pupils at the schools listed above
- Parents of pre-school age children living within the Westhill Network
- Staff at the schools listed above
- Trade union representatives of the above staff
- Westhill and Elrick Community Council
- Echt and Skene Community Council
- Fintray and Kinellar Community Council
- Relevant users of Westhill Network primary schools
- Education Scotland

A copy of this document is also available from:

- Council HQ, Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen, AB16 5GB
- Westhill Library
- The schools affected by the proposal
- Westhill Academy
- Gordon House, Blackhall Road, Inverurie

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Aberdeenshire Council strives to allocate its resources in a way that ensures the quality of all of its services. It attaches particular importance to providing the best possible educational experience for all of the pupils in its schools.
- 1.2 The Council's aims for Education and Children's Services are:
 - the building of capacity
 - the realisation of potential
 - the achievement of excellence
- 1.3 In order to fulfil the above vision it is necessary to adapt to changing circumstances. It is essential that the Council regularly reviews the pattern of educational provision across all establishments, with a particular focus on school rolls, accommodation and quality of education.
- 1.4 This proposal document is focussed upon the Westhill network of primary schools. Located within the Garioch area of Aberdeenshire the Westhill network comprises of 4 primary schools and 1 secondary school. Four of these schools are classed as Not Rural and one (Skene School) is defined as Accessible Rural by the Scottish Government.
- 1.5 This proposal does not impact upon secondary provision at Westhill Academy.

2. Reason for Proposal

- 2.1 For a number of years concern has been building that the capacities of some schools within the Westhill network would be exceeded due to the expansion of the town. One school has also experienced falling pupil numbers which has led to an imbalance across the network.
- 2.2 Development to the west of Westhill will continue to put pressure upon school rolls for the coming years. Currently within the network there are sufficient pupil places across all schools for the next few years, as houses in the new developments are sold and families move into them.
- 2.3 Whilst there is currently capacity across the whole network, it is no longer in the right place. The purpose of the rezoning exercise is to change the catchment areas of the four primary schools in the network so that current and future pupils can be educated in suitable school buildings with sufficient space.
- 2.4 The vast majority of recent and planned housing in Westhill is in the Skene school catchment area. However Skene School is a small rural school with a core capacity of 71 pupils and a working capacity of 96 pupils due to a temporary classroom on site. This housing was originally expected to put the roll at Skene School up to around 230 pupils by 2020 or sooner. However families buying the new houses have on the whole put in placing requests for Crombie and Elrick Schools as they are nearer and within the main Westhill settlement.

- 2.5 Due to rising rolls at Elrick School a one year cap was introduced for the 2014/15 session to manage capacity at the school. This restricted the number of out of zone requests to the school, and allowed the roll to stabilise following a large number of primary admissions from families moving into new build housing.
- 2.6 In August 2014, the Education, Learning and Leisure Committee agreed that the school zones in Westhill should be reviewed.
- 2.7 In May 2015 following a parental survey and discussions with head teachers, a series of informal engagement sessions were held to give parents and any other interested stakeholders the opportunity to see some draft suggestions for primary school zone changes in Westhill.
- 2.8 These meetings proved very useful and a number of suggestions were made over the course of the sessions which have been incorporated into the proposals in this document. They also resulted in some earlier suggestions being discounted as they proved unpopular.
- 2.9 Further changes had to be made to some of the draft options as they did not fully address the capacity issues that would be caused by the continued development to the west of the town.
- 2.10 The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 requires that when a change is to be made to a school boundary or catchment area then a formal consultation must be undertaken with all relevant stakeholders.

3. Details of the Proposal

- 3.1 The council proposes that the existing primary school catchment areas within the Westhill network should be amended with effect from August 2016; and that from this date all new pupils attending primary schools within the Westhill network should attend their newly zoned school. The council also proposes that all existing primary pupils should continue their education at their current school. If the proposals are implemented any siblings of current pupils would be able to join their brother/sister(s) at the same school.
- 3.2 It is important that these proposals do not have a negative impact upon any children currently attending schools within the Westhill network and that they have continuity in their education. There are no plans to move existing pupils to a different school if these proposals are adopted. They would only come into effect either for new children moving into the area, or for the new cohort of P1 pupils in August 2016.
- 3.3 Currently the school nurseries in Westhill (and across Aberdeenshire) do not have catchment areas and this is unlikely to change for the foreseeable future.
- 3.4 Officers have identified a preferred option based upon what they think would work best given the number of current pupils, children under 5 in Westhill and expected house building rates. There are also a number of other potential changes that could either be included or removed from this

preferred option. These changes include some additional streets in catchment areas as suggested at the informal meetings, or tidy up boundary lines to follow main roads. They are not crucial in making sure that there is sufficient space in all four schools.

- 3.5 This proposal document contains a number of maps and there is a map showing the preferred change for each of the primary schools in the network. There is also an additional map with numbered sections for the other changes that can be included or removed. The council wants to know which of these changes would be preferred for that school.
- 3.6 Printed copies of the maps will be on display in each of the schools affected by the consultation and available on request at Gordon House in Inverurie. Pdf copies of the maps will be available on the Aberdeenshire Council website:
<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/education/EducationConsultations.asp>
- 3.7 Pupils living out with 2 miles of their zoned primary school would have an entitlement to free school transport. Due to the urban nature of the Westhill network, there are relatively few pupils currently transported to school compared to other networks in Aberdeenshire. Currently 43 pupils are transported to school.
- 3.8 The changes that are being made to the boundary lines are largely within the town of Westhill itself, and so rural families currently entitled to transport would continue to have that entitlement.

Options

Option 1

Keep the current zoning arrangements for the Westhill network with no changes made to catchment areas. (The Status Quo). (Map 1 below)

Option 2 – Changes to all school catchment areas

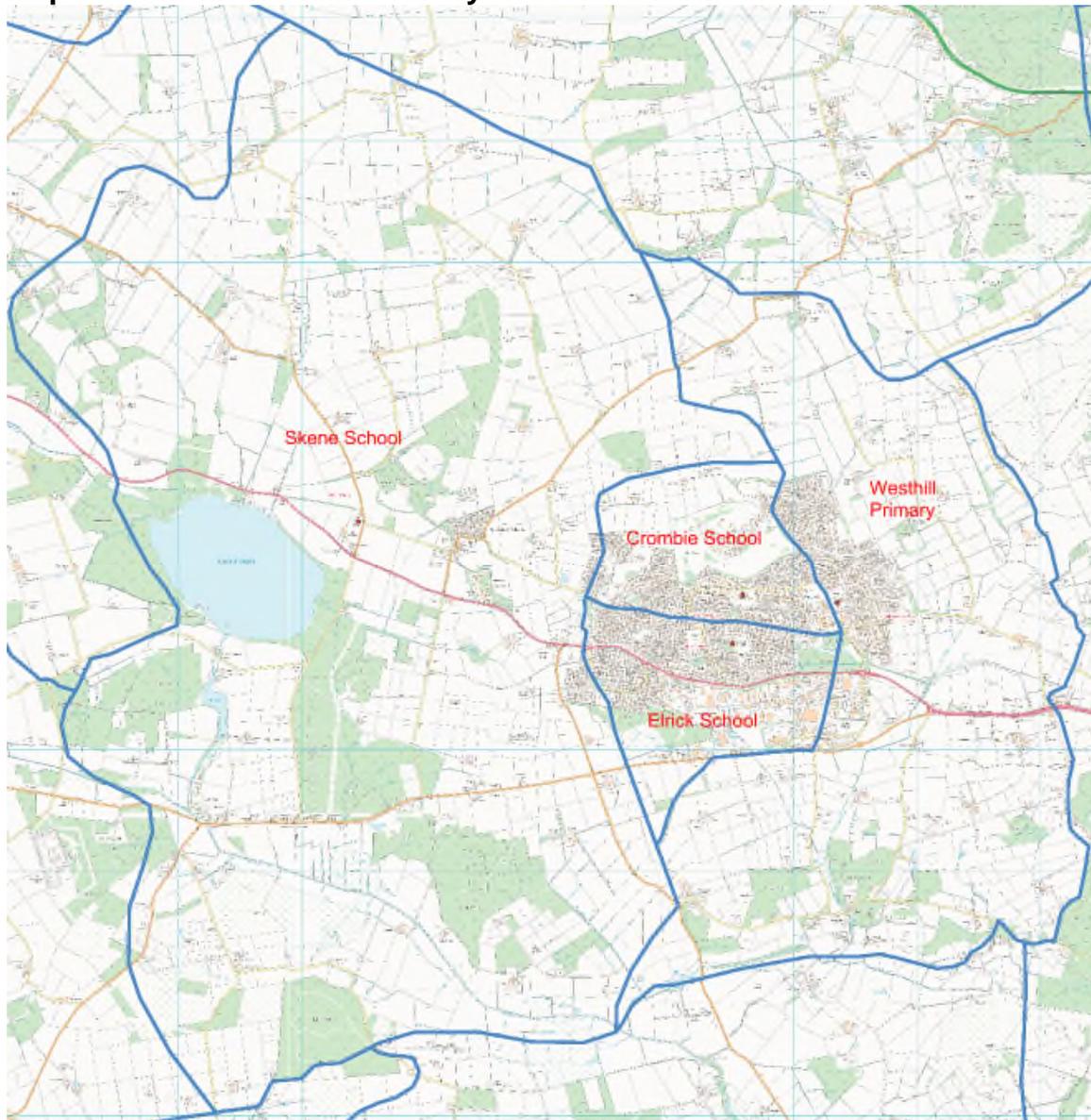
The maps for option 2 show officers' preferred option for changes to all four primary schools in Westhill. This is the identified solution that best addresses the issues of capacity within the four schools. Some of the changes tidy up the rural boundaries of the schools, making them follow roads or postcode boundaries. There is a map for each school with the proposed new zone. (Maps 2-5). There is also an overview map of the preferred option (Map 6)

Option 3 – Make some changes but not all of them to the catchment areas

Option 3 contains six suggested changes that can be adopted if there is support for them or left as the original lines if that is preferred by the community. These are discussed in detail beneath the map with the reasons behind them (Map 7)

Option 1 – Make no changes

Map 1 – Current Westhill Primary Network Catchment Areas



Option 2 – Changes to all school catchment areas

Map 2 – Preferred option for Crombie School



Summary of changes – inclusion of majority of completed Broadshade housing and northern part of development under construction. Removal of Westhill Heights area and streets directly north and south of Westhill Academy.

Map 3 – Preferred Option for Elrick School



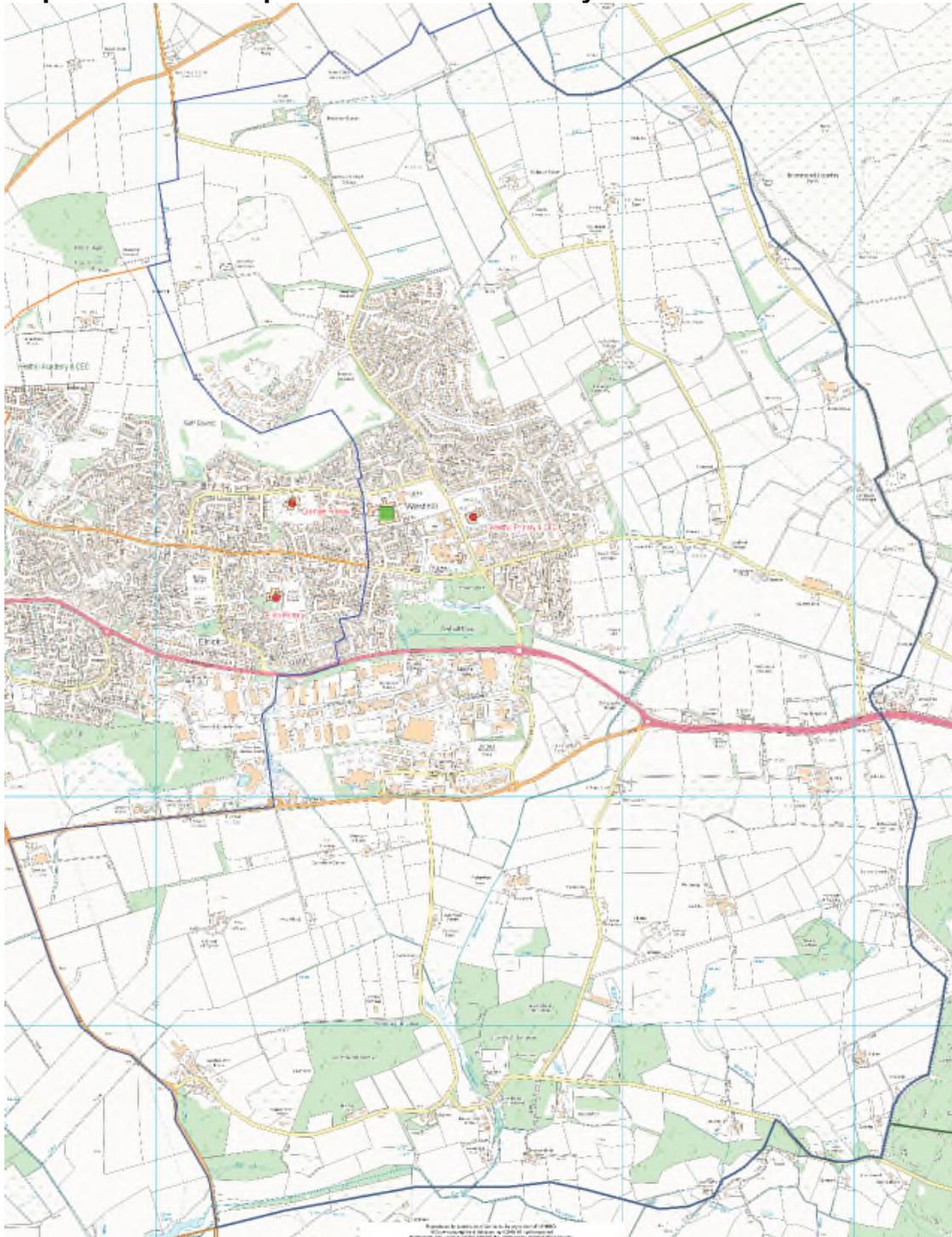
Summary of changes – inclusion of Burnland housing and removal of properties south of Westhill Academy between Old Skene Road and Straik Road

Map 4 – Preferred Option for Skene School



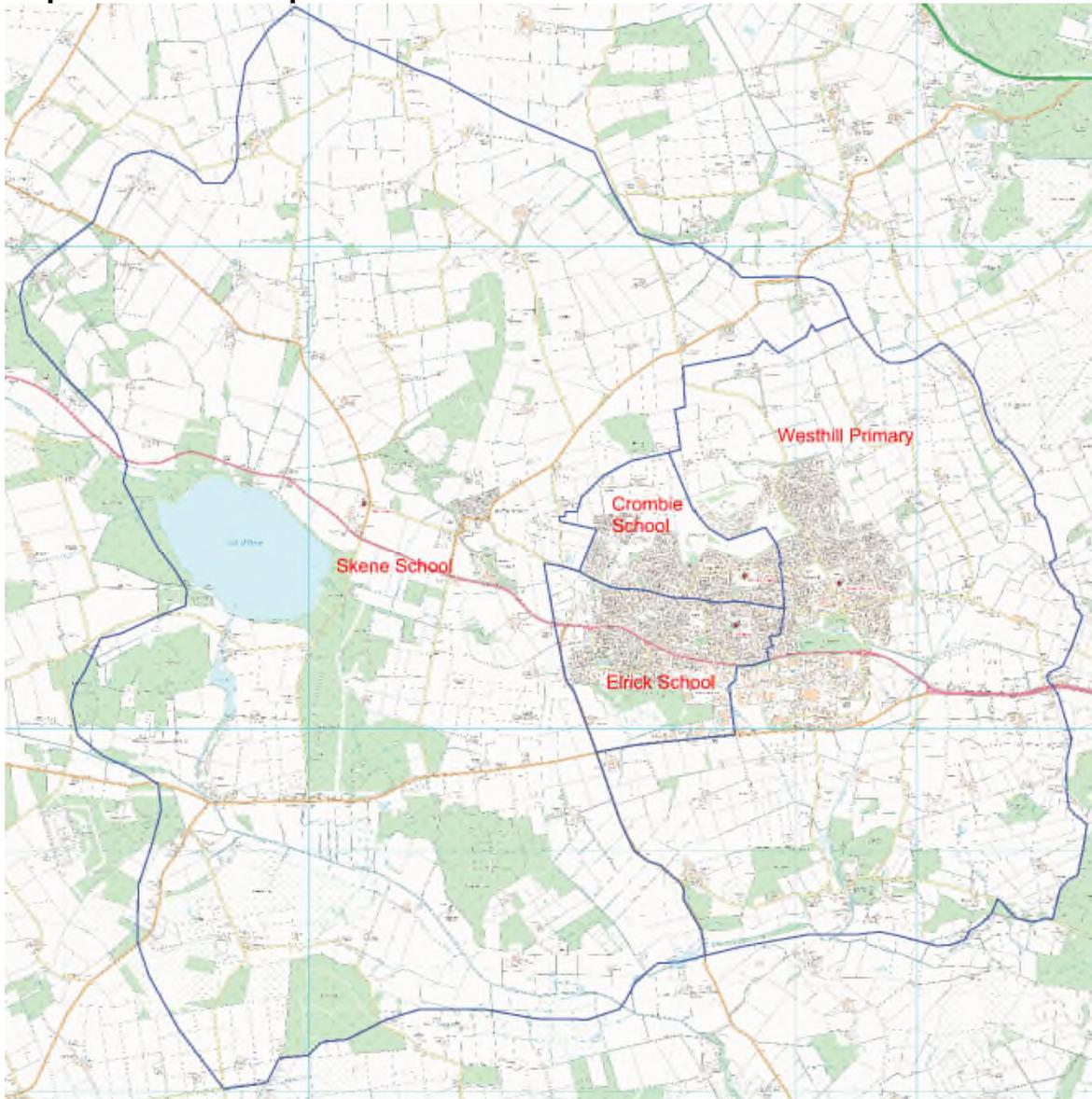
Summary of main changes – removal of Burnland housing, most of Broadshade housing, but keeping the southern part of the Broadshade development still under construction.

Map 5 – Preferred Option for Westhill Primary School



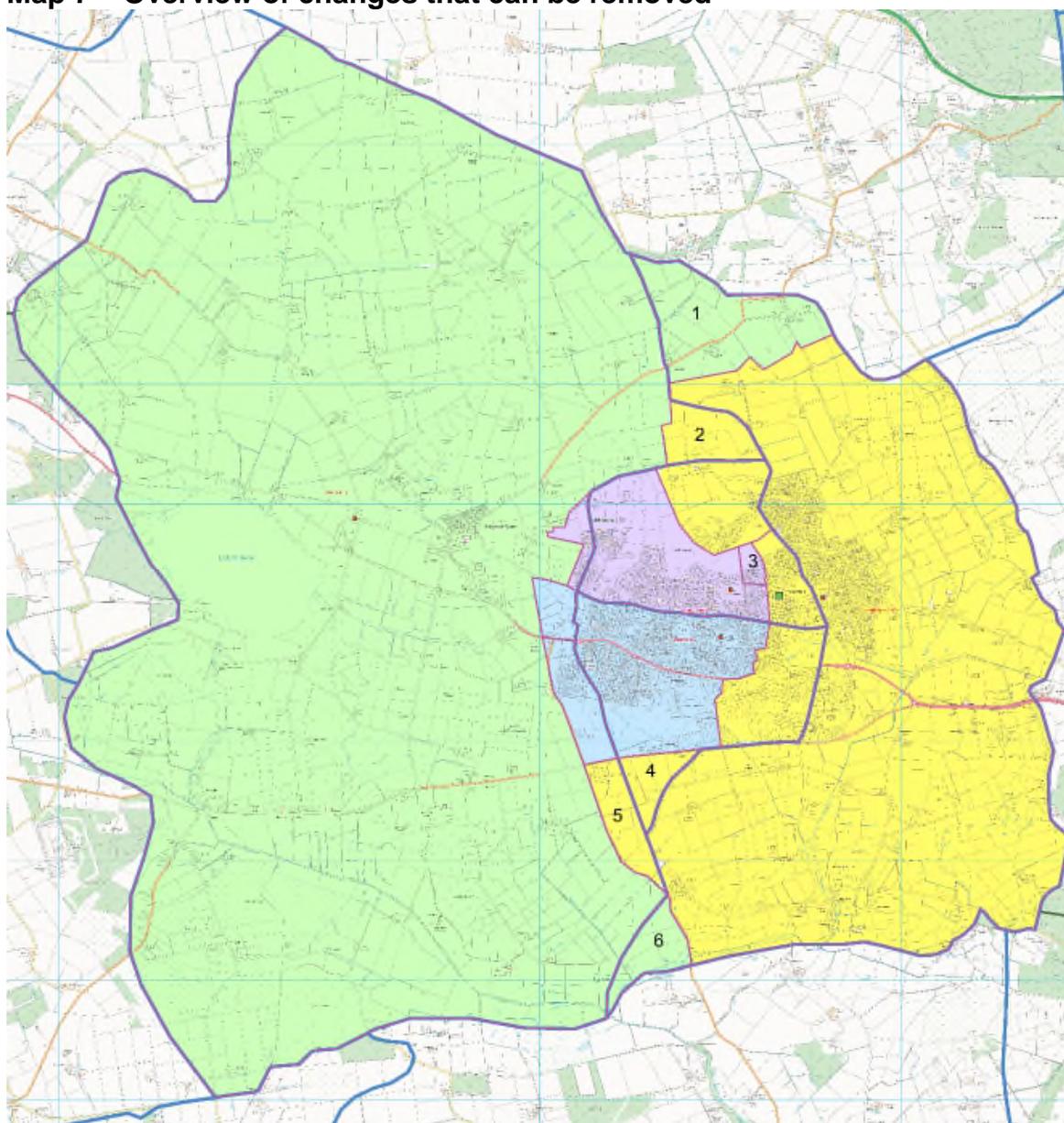
Summary of main changes – Inclusion of all streets west of Westhill Drive both north and south of Westhill Academy. Inclusion of Westhill Heights and surrounding streets.

Map 6 – Preferred Option Overview



Option 3 – Make some changes but not all of them

Map 7 – Overview of changes that can be removed



In this map there are 6 changes that can be included or removed from the preferred options shown in Option 2. The preferred option for each school has been shaded and the thick blue line is the current catchment area for each school. The six areas numbered on the map are those that can be removed from the preferred options if they are not felt to have any benefit by the community.

Area 1 – In the preferred option, the Skene boundary line is extended north east along the B979 to Auchincloch and Craigmar to the edge of the network boundary. The reason for this was an assumption that properties along the road have a direct route to Skene School that would be easier to travel than to reach Westhill Primary School.

Area 2 – In the preferred option, the Westhill Primary boundary line is extended to the west to include the area east of Hill of Keir. There are currently no

properties in this area but assumption is that if properties were built, that it would be easier to travel to Westhill Primary School than Skene School.

Area 3 – At the informal meetings some people suggested that Morven Crescent and Morven Drive should also be moved to Westhill Primary School from Crombie to keep these streets and those around Fare Park Drive together. Officers did not include these streets in the preferred option as it was felt that these properties are closer to Crombie than Westhill Primary School and parents may not support the change. However if families would welcome this change it can be included.

Area 4 – The preferred option for Elrick School removes the rural area to the south of the B9119 and realigns it with Westhill Primary School. The basis for this was to keep the Elrick zone largely urban so that future school transport would continue to go to Westhill Primary and Skene Primary.

Area 5 – The preferred option for Westhill Primary School extends the boundary to the B979. This is to simplify the catchment areas using the main road as a clear boundary line.

Area 6 – In a similar change to Area 5, the boundary line here extends the Skene catchment area to the B979. Again this is to simplify the catchment areas using the main road as a clear boundary line.

4. Educational Benefit Statement

- 4.1 Some of the schools within the network are operating close to or above maximum capacity. This results in less space being available for pupils, and imposes restrictions in delivering the curriculum.
- 4.2 Conversely some of the schools in the network are operating well below capacity, whilst pupils have ample space for learning, this does not afford all pupils in the network the same opportunities and access to resources.
- 4.3 The proposed changes address the capacity issues to a large extent and over time will provide the additional learning space for pupils in schools that are currently full.
- 4.4 Aberdeenshire Council is committed to delivering entitlements to learners in the 21st century according to a Curriculum for Excellence.
- 4.5 A number of the zoning options will consolidate what is happening in practice at a number of schools through out of zone placing requests. Currently a large number of families are submitting placing requests to Elrick School from the Burnland area rather than attending Skene School. Many families in the Broadshade development are submitting placing requests to Crombie School rather than Skene School. There are also families to the east of the Crombie and Elrick catchment areas that are submitting placing requests to Westhill Primary School.
- 4.6 Much of the feedback received from the informal sessions, head teacher meetings and the parental survey have confirmed that parents at Skene School want the school to keep its rural qualities and stay at a similar size as at present.

- 4.7 The options identified above would impact upon the school rolls of all four schools in the Westhill Network. The following tables detail the current roll and capacity of these schools over the next 5 years as per the Council's School Roll Forecast. The full forecast document can be found on the Aberdeenshire website at http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/parents/carers/information/school_roll.asp
The rolls highlighted in red are already or are projected to exceed maximum capacity.

Table 1 is taken from the published School Roll Forecast based upon the census taken in September 2013. Table 2 is taken from a working forecast that is used to monitor variations in the published forecast, but has not been approved.

Table 1 – Published School Roll Forecast

Westhill Network	Capacity range		Forecast for current session	Projected Rolls			
			2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020
Crombie	307	333	332	346	349	348	345
Elrick	416	442	423	407	386	372	345
Skene	48	71	111	136	162	188	218
Westhill Primary	307	333	239	221	217	218	213

Table 2 – Working Forecast

Westhill Network	Capacity range		Current Roll		Projected Rolls			
			May 2015	August 2015 (expected)	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020
Crombie	307	333	290	314	314	317	321	322
Elrick	416	442	421	425	402	381	369	340
Skene	48	71	56	65	141	161	184	198
Westhill Primary	307	333	254	274	251	242	240	232

The preferred option would be expected to deliver the changes to the school roll forecast as shown in table 3 below.

Table 3 – Predicted Forecast after Rezoning

Westhill Network	Capacity range		Current Roll	Projected Rolls after Rezoning			
			August 2015 (expected)	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020
Crombie	307	333	314	323	324	327	327
Elrick	416	442	425	435	434	435	419
Skene	48	71	65	112	113	120	116
Westhill Primary	307	333	274	256	258	251	238

*Skene has a working capacity of 96 due to the temporary accommodation on site.

There are also a number of housing sites allocated in the local development plan over the next few years. These are detailed in table 4 below.

Table 4 – Housing Forecast

Location	Total Units	Units not yet built	Status	Zoned School	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Milton of Garlogie	7	7	Full Planning Permission	Skene	0	5	2	0	0
Burnland, Adj Broadstraik Farm	266	38	Full Planning Permission	Skene	0	0	0	0	0
Strawberry Field Road, Elrick	10	10	Allocated	Skene	0	10	0	0	0
West of Broadshade	190	159	Under Construction	Skene	157	2	0	0	0

5. Alternatives to the proposal

5.1 A range of alternative possibilities have been considered as noted below.

- Continuing the status quo – this does not address the concerns regarding the capacity of some schools as new housing developments are built. This is however being consulted on as Option 1 to make no changes.
- The following zoning options have been discounted by Aberdeenshire Council Officers. (List any options that we are no longer considering)
 - An option to zone Broadstraik from Elrick School to Crombie School has been discounted. This option proved unpopular during the informal sessions and so will not be taken forward. The number of future pupils that this would remove from Elrick to create additional capacity was minimal.
 - A larger catchment area for Westhill Primary was considered, however due to the network of well-lit footpaths surrounding Elrick and Crombie Schools it was felt to be inappropriate to move the boundary line too close to these schools. It would not be desirable for pupils to have their gardens backing onto the school grounds but be zoned to a different school further away.
 - A number of options were considered for the boundary line between Crombie School and Skene School around the Broadshade development. Most of these have been discounted as the expected number of pupils from the houses being built would adversely affect the capacity of one or both schools significantly.

6. Effect on the local community

- 6.1 There are significant developments planned, and underway across the Westhill network. These will generate new communities and extend existing ones. These proposals will help ensure that adequate educational facilities are available to the communities as the developments progress.
- 6.2 The proposals for the town based schools within the network will hopefully strengthen the community links around the schools.
- 6.3 Work is also underway independently of this process to assess the level and location of pre-school provision and out of school provision that is required in the Westhill network.

7. School Transport

- 7.1 As the change in school zones would only apply to new children entering education in the Westhill network, there will not be any change to transport provision for current pupils.
- 7.2 There are currently 43 primary pupils within the Westhill network that are transported to school by Aberdeenshire Council.
- 7.3 There could be a change in school transport provision for some families with children starting school in the more rural parts of the Westhill network along the Skene and Westhill Primary School boundary, although this would be that their children would simply be transported to a different school, rather than a change to entitlement.
- 7.4 There should be no change to the overall transport requirements as the vast majority of changes are made to the urban parts of catchment areas where there is no current transport entitlement.

8 Financial Implications

- 8.1 Some of the zoning options could result in a need for additional teaching staff at the receiving schools. Any changes would be gradual and would be managed through existing HR recruitment policies.
- 8.2 The proposed changes for Skene and Crombie Schools do not fully mitigate the impact of the Broadshade housing development, and the current predicted speed of building completions advised by the developer. Options are currently being considered regarding potential small-scale extensions to both schools using Developer Contributions.

9 Sustainability

- 9.1 The proposed changes should ensure that all pupils attending Crombie and Elrick Schools, and the majority of pupils attending Westhill Primary School should be able to walk or cycle to school safely, and there would be no requirement for school transport. The majority of households in rural areas would have had an entitlement to school transport for future pupils, so the difference would be in which school they would be taken to. In most cases the difference in distance to the newly zoned school would be less than a mile and for a very small number of pupils.

10 Equal Opportunities

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a statutory requirement on the Council to assess the policies and practices necessary to meet the requirements of anti-discrimination and equalities legislation. It also affords an opportunity for the Council to consider the impact on the education service. In addition an EIA can provide more information to develop and deliver services that meet the needs, in this case, of children and parents.
- 10.2 The aim of an EIA is to examine policies and practice in a structured way to make sure that adverse effects on groups with protected characteristics are avoided. It is also a tool to enable the Council to assess what positive steps it can take to promote equality of opportunity and measure the results of the actions that have been taken.
- 10.3 With regards to the rezoning of the Westhill network, it is not believed that this will have a negative impact on any of the groups with protected characteristics.
- 10.4 As part of the consultation process the Council will consult with a wide range of stakeholders, including staff, parents/carers and young people, and will address comments about equality during this consultation.
- 10.5 Under The Equality Act 2010 education providers must not treat disabled pupils less favourably and should take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage. Existing arrangements in place for pupils within the Westhill network with additional support needs will continue.

11 Implications for staff

- 11.1 Initially there should be minimal implications for staff. As the overall roll of the Westhill network continues to rise there will be a requirement for additional teaching staff.

12 Consultation Arrangements

- 12.1 At its meeting on 27 May 2015, Aberdeenshire Council's Education, Learning and Leisure Committee agreed that a proposal document should be issued as a basis for consultation. No decision will be taken by the Council on the proposal contained in the paper until after the end of the consultation period. The Council will then receive a report on the consultation and will reach a view on the proposal.
- 12.2 A copy of this document will be issued free of charge to all of the consultees listed on the first page of this document and it will also be published on the Council's website:
www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/education/EducationConsultations.asp
- 12.3 The period for consultation will extend from 14 August 2015 until 9 October 2015 which covers a minimum period of 30 school days.
- 12.4 A public meeting will be held on Thursday 10 September 2015 at Crombie School at 7pm. Anyone wishing to attend the meeting is free to do so. The meeting will be convened by the Council and the Council will present the

reasons for bringing forward the proposal. There will be an opportunity for questions and comment. A note will be taken so that comments can later be summarised and considered.

- 12.5 Meetings will be organised for the staff working in each Westhill primary school during September to discuss the proposals, and a number of opportunities will be arranged for all primary pupils within the Westhill network to engage in the consultation during the first eight weeks of the new session.
- 12.6 An online survey will be available as part of the consultation. This can be completed at the following address:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WesthillRezoning>
- 12.7 The Council will also take into account written comments which should be sent to Mrs Maxine Booth, Quality Improvement Manager, to be received no later than 5pm on Friday 9th October 2015. They should be posted to Aberdeenshire Council, Education & Children's Services, Gordon House, Blackhall Road, Inverurie, AB51 3WA or emailed to rezoning@aberdeenshire.gov.uk
- 12.8 A copy of this document will also be sent to Education Scotland (ES). ES will also receive a copy of any relevant written representations that are received by the Council during the consultation period or, if ES agree, a summary of them. ES will further receive a copy of any oral representations made at the public meeting and a copy of any other relevant documentation. ES will then prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal. In preparing their report, ES may visit the school and make such reasonable enquiries as they consider appropriate.

Consideration of Consultation Responses

- 12.9 The Council will review the proposals having regard to the ES Report, survey results, written representations that it has received and oral representations made to it by any person at the public meeting. It will then prepare a report on the consultation. This report will be published in electronic and printed formats. It will be available on the Council web-site and from Council Headquarters, as well as at the schools, libraries and offices listed on pages 2 and 3 of this document, free of charge. Anyone who has made written representations during the consultation period will also be informed about the report.
- 12.10 The report will include a record of the total number of written representations made during the consultation period, a summary of the written representations and a summary of the oral representations made at the public meeting. The report will also include the Authority's response to the ES Report, a response to issues raised through any written or oral representations it has received, together with a copy of the ES Report and any other relevant information, including details of any alleged inaccuracies and how these have been handled. The report will also contain a statement explaining how the Council has complied with the requirement to review the proposal in light of the ES Report and representations (both written and oral) that it received.

- 12.11 The last section of the report will include an officer recommendation as to whether the proposals should be adopted and implemented. The Consultation Report will be published at least 3 weeks prior to the Council making a decision.
- 12.12 As the proposal is to implement the changes from August 2016, a copy of the Consultation Report will be in the public domain from January 2016 to support parents making Primary 1 applications for their children at that time. A final decision is likely to be made by the council on the proposed changes in February 2016.

Decision Making

- 12.13 The consultation report will be considered firstly by the Garioch Area Committee who will be asked to make a recommendation as to whether the proposed changes are implemented. This is expected to be in January 2016.
- 12.14 Following discussion and recommendation at the Garioch Area Committee, the Education, Learning and Leisure Committee will consider the report and be asked to approve the officer recommendation in the report. This is expected to be in February 2016.

12 Conclusion

- 12.1 There are strong educational and financial arguments in favour of this proposal.
- 12.2 The Council believes that the measures proposed in this document will enhance the provision of primary education in this area.