

School Estate Review



March 2016

Frequently asked questions

Why are we reviewing the school estate?

At the Council's Education Executive in 2015, it was agreed that a long term approach to the development and design of the school estate was required to ensure that Scottish Borders Council (SBC) fulfils its statutory duties to secure for our area adequate and efficient provision of school education. It was also recognised that SBC needed to assess within the context of Curriculum for Excellence whether our school estate buildings and locations can deliver maximum educational benefits for our children and young people.

What happens in a review of the school estate?

The Council has to follow the guidance as set out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 which establishes a rigorous, open and transparent system for consulting on changes to the school estate. The Act advises authorities to engage with school communities to gather and share information before they consider formulating formal statutory consultation proposals.

Why is this called a pre-consultation?

The legislation advises that 'pre-consultation' can play an important part in information gathering and sharing in advance of a statutory consultation. It will enable SBC to consult the community on a wider range of possible options for the school estate, engaging communities constructively in advance of statutory consultation, so that statutory consultation is not a surprise to the community and addresses the issues that concern them.

Will you be building new schools?

We would like to continue to build new schools. However, funding for new schools in the last five years has required partnership resource from the Scottish Government. An expected outcome of this review would be to enable us to prioritise where new builds would be situated, should we have funding available.

What factors would be taken into account in prioritising new builds?

Our first step is to listen to our stakeholders to hear their views on their priorities and consider this alongside the information SBC holds on building capacity/roll pressures, condition, suitability and access of current school builds.

Will you be changing catchments?

We need to consider whether existing catchment areas are fit for purpose and that we have enough provision to fulfil our duties to provide education now and into the future, taking into account possible new housing developments as well as population changes and the impact of parental choice.

What could happen to schools?

A range of options could be considered: status quo, new school builds, school mergers, school closures, school redesign, stages change (3-18 years rather than 3-12 years and 12-18 years) and any alternative proposals presented by stakeholders during consultation.

Which schools could be affected?

This is unknown at the pre-consultation stage. It is our intention to gather the views of children, young people, parents/carers and community members regarding education provision in their locality and for SBC to share the information we have about our school estate and the quality of our education provision. There are no pre-determined formal proposals at this stage.

Who will have an opportunity to contribute to the pre-consultation?

A series of pre-consultation events will be held at local high schools during March. All parent/carers and members of the local community are invited to attend and participate. There will also be a questionnaire available online seeking views and asking for information, which will be available throughout the pre-consultation period.

How will my child get to have a say?

Existing school pupil groups will be asked to respond to a questionnaire. They will also have the opportunity to complete a questionnaire online.

Who else can contribute?

The pre-consultation events will be open to community members and families living in the community or families connected with the school. The wider community will also have an opportunity to complete questionnaires.

What will the pre-consultation event look like?

There will be an open event in each secondary school in the month of March. At the event there will be a presentation of information from the Council, an opportunity to hear from local schools about education provision and an opportunity to meet with officers from the Council to ask questions about the estate and contribute views.

What will happen to the information gathered from the engagement events and the on-line questionnaire?

The information will be gathered, analysed and shared at a full Council meeting on 19 May 2016. Following this meeting, the officers of the Council will pull together a set of formal proposals which will be subject to statutory consultation as set out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. These proposals will be subject to consultation during school session 2016/2017.

Who will make the final decisions?

SBC full Council can make decisions about catchment changes. Decisions regarding changes to the status of existing school provision are subject to call-in by the Scottish Government who have the power to call in an authority's decision, but only in relation to school closure decisions and only where it appears to Ministers that the authority may have failed in a significant regard to comply with the Act's requirements imposed on it by (or under) the 2010 Act so far as they are relevant to the closure proposal, or, to take proper account of a material consideration relevant to its decision to implement the proposal.

More information

The online questionnaire and supporting information will be available on the Council website from 1 March – 1 April: www.scotborders.gov.uk/schoolestate