



Education & Children's Services
Improving life chances for all



Education and Children's Services

Statutory Consultation on a Proposal to Close Milton of Balgonie Primary School and to rezone the catchment areas of the Coaltown of Balgonie, Pitteuchar East and Thornton Primary Schools

Public Meetings

Coaltown of Balgonie PS – Monday 5 February from 6-7 pm

Thornton PS – Monday 12 February from 6-7 pm

Village Hall, Milton of Balgonie – Wednesday 21 February from 6-7 pm

Pitteuchar East PS – Wednesday 28 February from 6-7 pm

Shelagh McLean

Head of Education & Children's Services



Agenda

Background, rationale and implications in respect of the proposal to close Milton of Balgonie Primary School (PS) and to rezone the catchment areas of Coaltown of Balgonie, Pitteuchar East and Thornton Primary School

Consultation Process and Timeline

Questions



Context

- Statutory duty to ensure adequate and efficient provision of education and a statutory duty of 'Best Value in Public Services'
- Improving the learning environment is one of the key priorities for the Education & Children's Services Directorate and the status of Milton of Balgonie Primary School creates challenges for officers, as the building has not been operational for 4 academic sessions.
- Our ambition is to manage schools that are fit for purpose, with suitable and efficient learning environments for children, young people and other learners now and in the future.



Guiding Principles

In October 2012, and August 2018, the former Executive Committee and Education & Children's Services Committee agreed Guiding Principles in relation to the school estate:

- Every school should be rated as “A” or “B” for both condition and suitability, to include a number of accessible schools in each geographical area,
- Schools should have an occupancy rate greater than 60% of capacity and should have a minimum of 3 classes, where possible,
- A strategy for a sustainable school estate should support the progressive reduction in the overall carbon footprint for the Council.



The Proposal

- Close Milton of Balgonie PS from Monday 19 August 2024
- Rezone the catchment area of Coaltown of Balgonie PS to incorporate all the current catchment area of Milton of Balgonie PS, from Monday 19 August 2024
- Seek alternative uses for the Milton of Balgonie PS site, with the presumption that these will be within the control of the Education Service to ensure that should the number of primary aged pupils in this area increase to a level that may require provision of an additional primary school in future, that it may be done so at the least cost to the Council
- Rezone the catchment areas of Coaltown of Balgonie, Pitteuchar East and Thornton Primary Schools, to realign these primary school catchments from Monday 19 August 2024
- If the proposal is approved in full, there will be no impact on pupils currently enrolled in Coaltown of Balgonie, Pitteuchar East or Thornton Primary Schools including those enrolled to begin Primary One in August 2024.
- Existing pupils will not require to change schools unless parents/carers want them to.
- The catchment changes will apply to enrolments (including placing requests) made from Monday 19 August 2024.



Rural School Requirements within the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

As Milton of Balgonie is a rural school, when formulating this proposal, the Council was required to:

- (i) identify and explain the reasons for formulating the proposal,
- (ii) describe what steps (if any) it took to address those reasons before formulating the proposal or if it took no such steps, explain why it did not do so, and
- (iii) consider whether there are any reasonable alternatives to the proposal as a response to those reasons.

As Milton of Balgonie PS is a rural school, in the proposal the Council must also have special regard to:

- (i) the likely effect on the local community in consequence of the proposal (if implemented) and,
- (ii) the likely effect caused by any different travelling arrangements that may be required in consequence of the proposal.



Reasons for Formulating the Proposal

- Milton of Balgonie PS is a rural school with a capacity for 75 pupils
- During session 2018/2019, the school operated with a single teacher
- For session 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 there were no pupils enrolled for Milton of Balgonie PS – school roll was 0
- School has been mothballed formally since 26 January 2021 and not in operation for 2 years prior to this “mothballing” decision.
- Small site of 63 units with Milton of Balgonie PS catchment area, is not expected to increase the roll to more than one class, therefore, school unlikely to ever have a sustainable school roll
- Updated birth information has shown that births in the catchment area have not significantly increased in the last 4 years – remain <5
- As part of the review of the mothballing decision, all 4 primary schools catchment areas that are located near the A92, and the impact of the housing bisecting across these catchment areas, has been considered



Steps taken to address those reasons before formulating the proposal

- When the school roll fell to zero in 2019, and the school was no longer operational, the authority monitored relevant factors including the number of primary age children, the number of births and housebuilding in the catchment area to establish whether the position might change.
- When the school roll remained zero in 2021, as an alternative to proceeding with a closure proposal at that stage, the authority mothballed the school to allow a further opportunity to monitor these factors.
- The mothballing of the school was reviewed later in 2021 and again in 2022 and 2023. The authority reviewed the relevant factors on each of these occasions. In 2021 and 2022 the ultimate decision of the authority was to continue to mothball the school.
- The outcome of the 2023 review led to this proposal.



Any reasonable alternatives to the proposal

1. Continued mothballing of Milton of Balgonie Primary School

- Mothballing is an alternative to closure for local authorities and is only appropriate for a temporary period, and unlikely that it should exceed 3 years
- Council agreed to the mothballing of the school on 26 January 2021
- Not in the best interests of the Council to maintain and retain an empty building, undertake repairs and sustain maintenance



Any reasonable alternatives to the proposal (2)

2. Milton of Balgonie Primary School to reopen

- not in the best interests of pupils and wider community as projected pupil roll, based on birth rates and known pupils in the catchment area, falls short of one of the guiding principles
- Pupil trends showed significant placing requests from catchment children to attend other schools
- If all catchment children attended, the educational experience would be different to other schools with a higher occupancy and larger peer group
- Catchment pupils attending Coaltown of Balgonie PS are benefitting from being part of a larger school. Catchment pupils attending other primary schools may not wish to enrol in Milton of Balgonie Primary School
- There would be only one pupil at stages P1, P4, P5 and P6
- Minimum staffing costs of £105,000 and school would require some level of refurbishment and resources – total budget requirement in the region of £175,000



Any reasonable alternatives to the proposal (3)

3. Consideration of the rezoning of the nearest primary schools' catchment areas to Coaltown of Balgonie or Balcurvie Primary Schools

(a) Coaltown of Balgonie Primary School

- increasing the Milton of Balgonie PS catchment area would result in 2 small schools operating with fewer than 3 classes (Coaltown of Balgonie and Milton of Balgonie)
- rezoning part of current catchment area to Milton of Balgonie PS would affect the school's long term sustainability
- rezoning part of Coaltown of Balgonie PS would increase transport expenditure and pupils could be travelling past their existing school to attend Milton of Balgonie PS, reducing the opportunity to build independence for those pupils who currently walk to school, as they would be transported
- being part of a larger school will enable both the existing pupils in both Milton of Balgonie and Coaltown of Balgonie to continue to benefit from an enhanced range of curricular experiences
- decreasing the number of pupils within Coaltown of Balgonie will, over both schools, increase the number of pupils in a broader range of school years e.g. P1-P4 instead of P1/2



Any reasonable alternatives to the proposal (4)

(b) Balcurvie Primary School

- Balcurvie PS is part of a different secondary school cluster
- There are no pedestrian footpaths available on the A911 to enable pupils to walk from Windygates to Milton of Balgonie
- This would increase transport expenditure and pupils could be travelling past their existing school to attend Milton of Balgonie PS
- For a number of pupils in Balcurvie PS catchment, this option would take away the opportunity to build independence for those children who currently walk to school



Special Regard to the likely effect on the local community

- school community already part of a larger, sustainable school community
- Milton of Balgonie community made no use of the school building for community activities and the village hall is in the heart of the village, 250m away from school building
- no impact on holding community events in the village
- Council believes that the sustainability of the Milton of Balgonie village community will not be affected as pupils will attend a school fewer than 2 miles from their existing school



Special Regard to the likely effect caused by any different travelling arrangements

- pupils living in the Milton of Balgonie PS catchment area who are attending Coaltown of Balgonie PS are receiving free transport
- journey time is less than 10 minutes by car or taxi
- small environmental impact of busing all of the Milton of Balgonie pupils who may have previously walked
- unlikely to be any environmental impact arising from the arrangements staff make to get to school



Catchment Rezoning

As part of the review, the Education Service considered the existing catchment areas of Coaltown of Balgonie, Pitteuchar East and Thornton Primary Schools at the time of formulating the proposal

These catchment areas were drawn before the A92 regional road was in place:

Coaltown of Balgonie Primary School

- Catchment area boundary overlaps the A92, with Lochtyview estate to the left of the A92
- Access to Lochtyview is via B9130 (Blackwood Road)
- Natural boundary for the catchment would be the A92
- The rezoning of Lochtyview will support any decision related to the potential removal of the Milton of Balgonie Primary School catchment area



Catchment Rezoning (2)

Pitteuchar East Primary School

- Westwood Park housing – currently under construction, accessed from Foxton Drive
- Site extends to north of Lochtyview housing estate, north of Blackwood Road (B9130)
- Natural boundary would be north of Blackwood Road (B9130)
- All 420 units being rezoned will help sustain the school roll at Pitteuchar East PS.

Thornton Primary School

- Although this catchment area runs under the A92, the access to and from the only current residential properties east of the A92 is along Station Road, which is a dead end (access to golf club only). Therefore, being part of the Thornton catchment remains appropriate.
- Lochtyview estate is on the west side of the A92 and closer to the village of Thornton than Coaltown of Balgonie PS (375 metres to Thornton, 1370 metres to Coaltown of Balgonie) - proposal seeks to address this

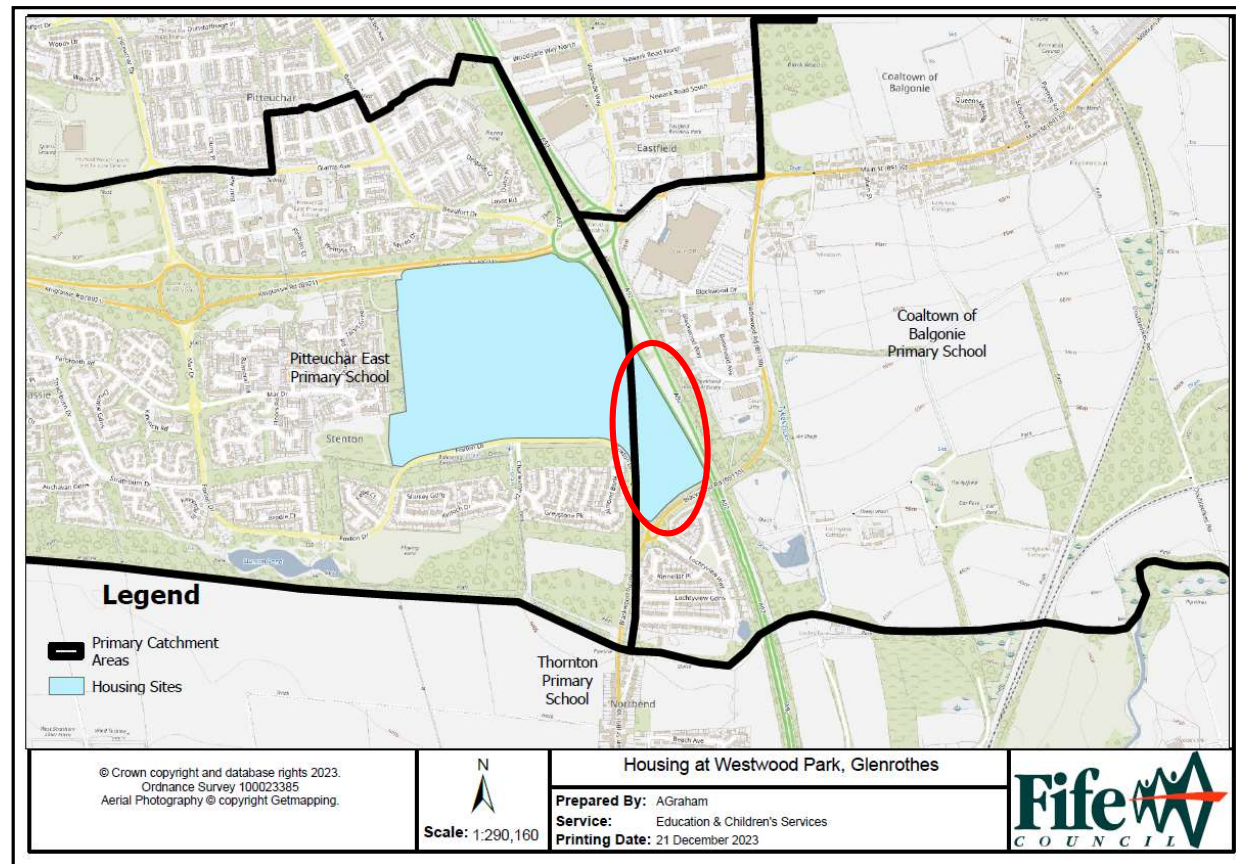


Catchment Rezoning (3)

Westwood Park Development Site – 420 units

Majority of the new houses are in Pitteuchar East PS catchment area

Rezoning from Coaltown of Balgonie PS to Pitteuchar East PS will ensure all pupils from the same community are zoned to the same catchment area





Catchment Rezoning (4)

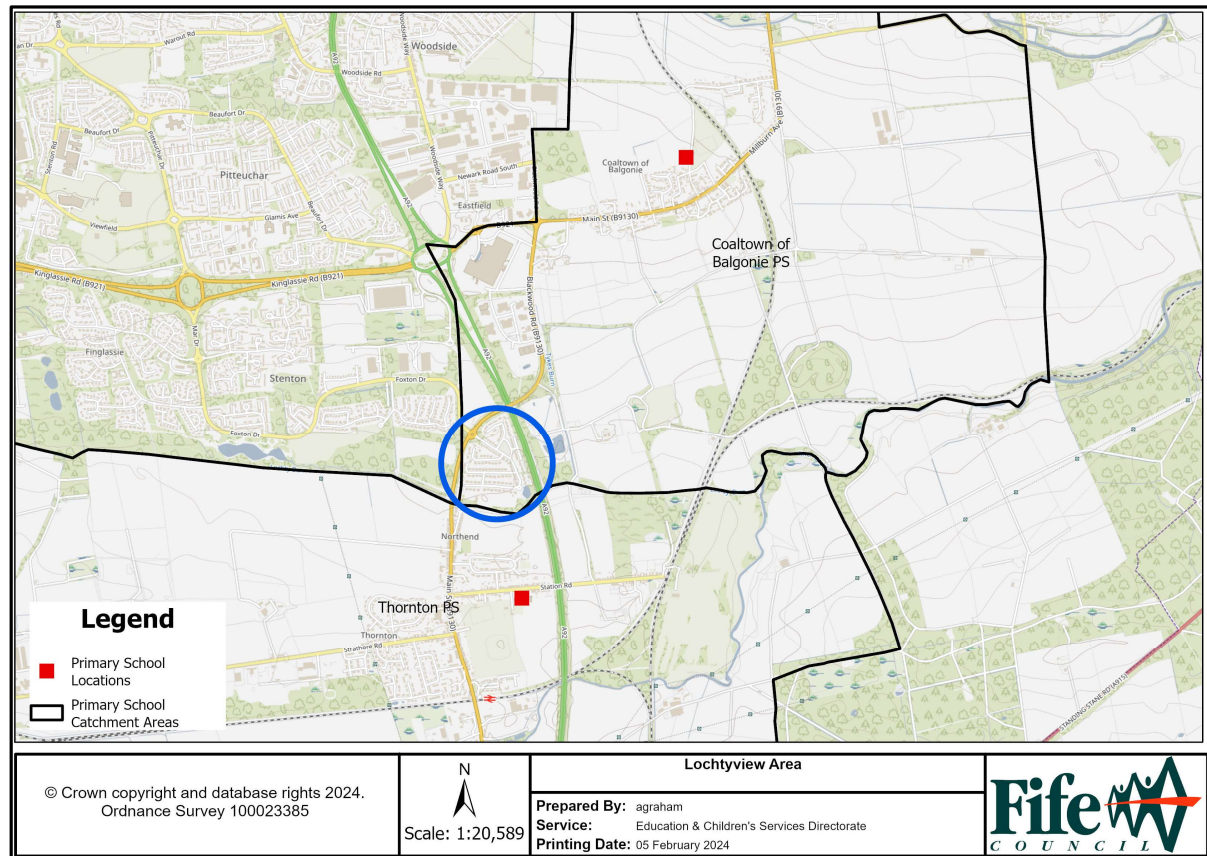
Lochtyview Development -This housing site is now complete.

Housing sits on the edge of Thornton PS catchment area.

For a number of years some pupils from the Lochtyview area have chosen to attend Pitteuchar East or Thornton Primary Schools

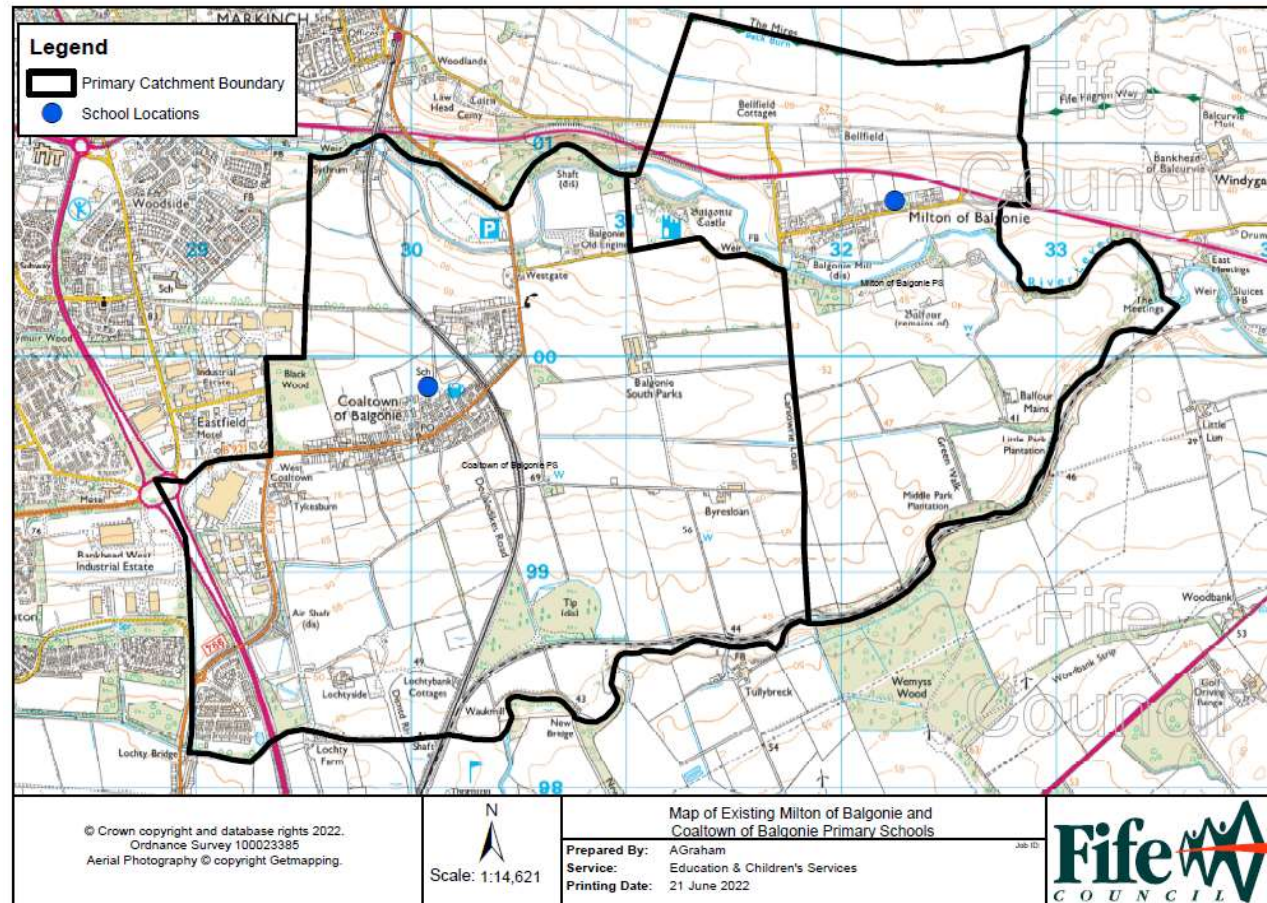
The map shows that Lochtyview is also on the left side of the A92

This development site is located more than 0.85 mile from the main Coaltown of Balgonie village and 0.22 mile from end of Thornton village.



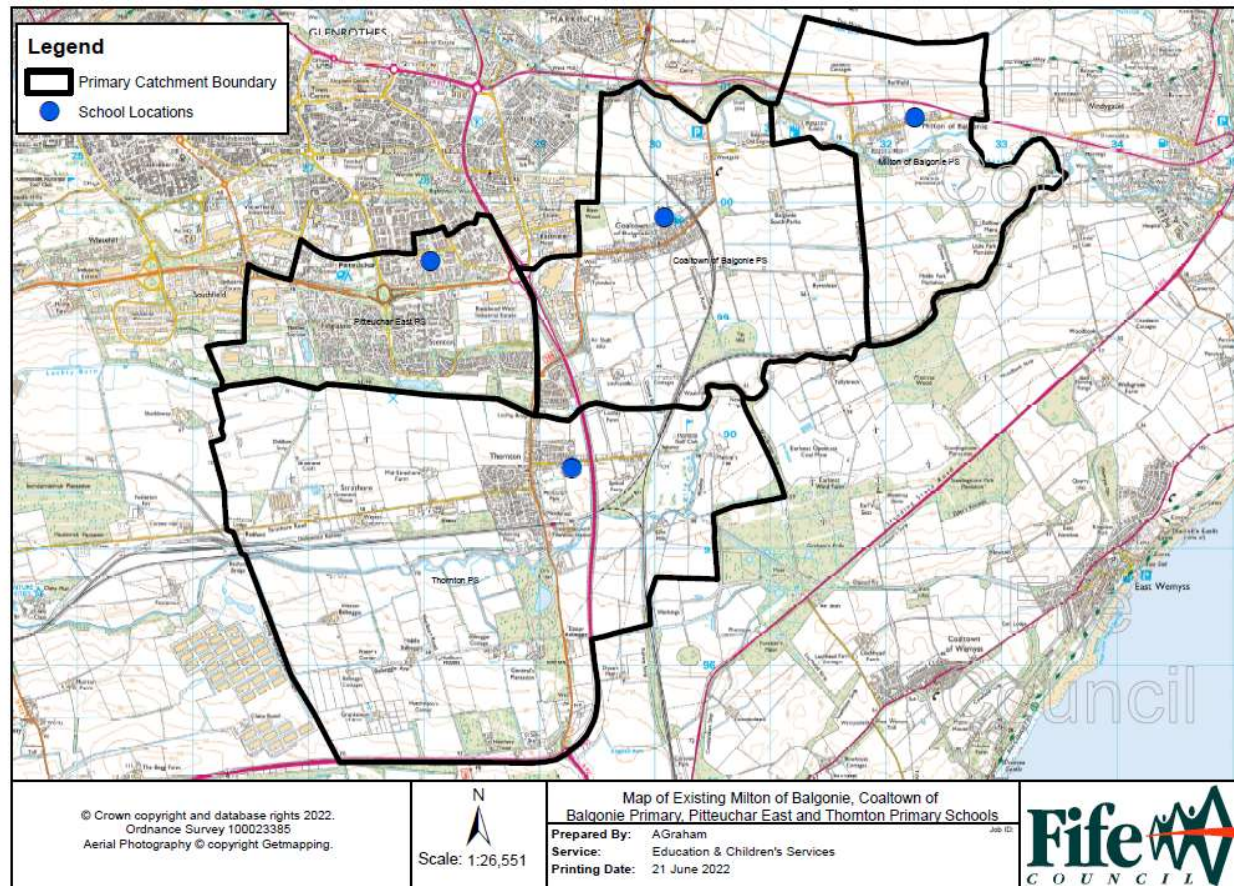


Existing Catchment Areas of Milton of Balgonie and Coaltown of Balgonie Primary Schools



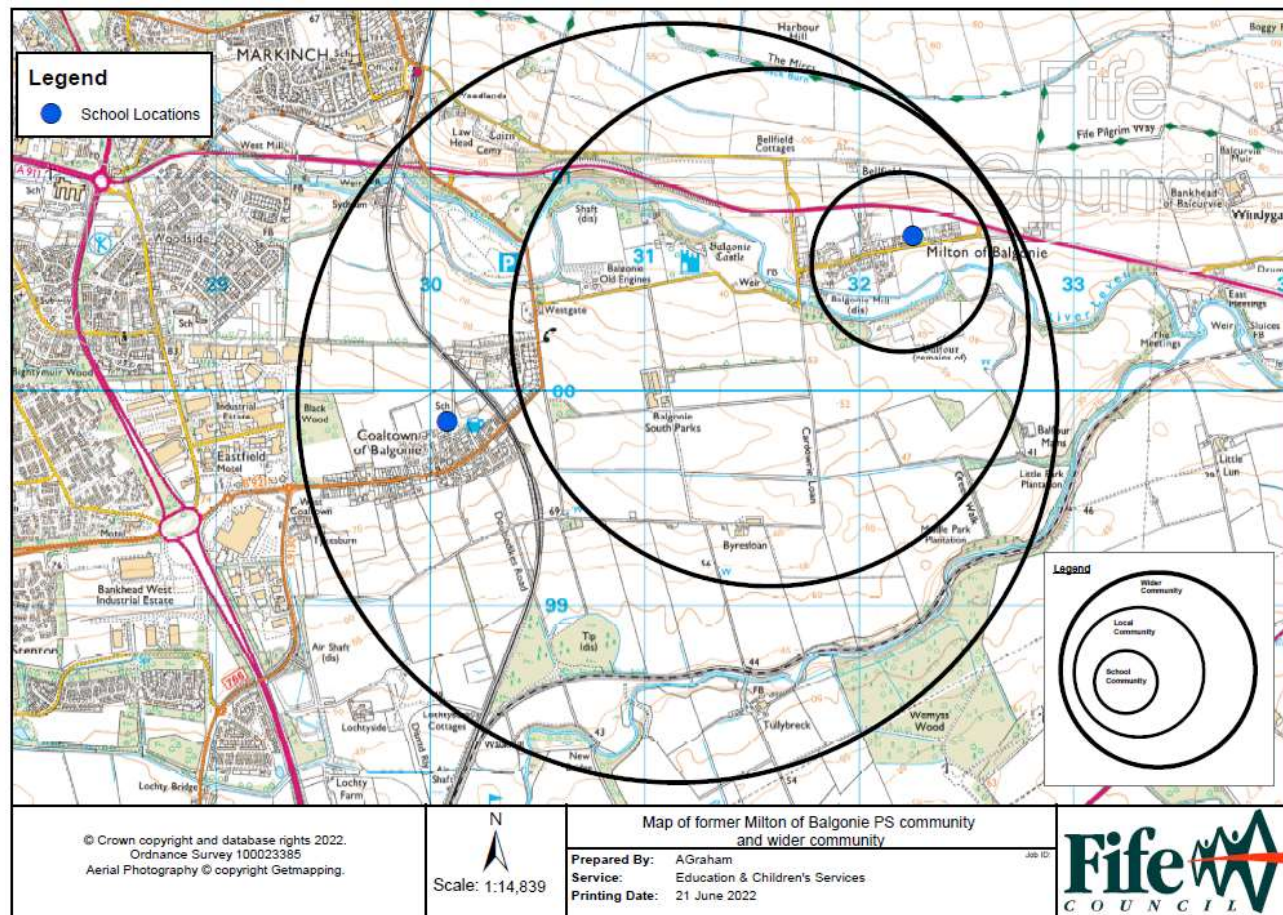


Existing Catchment Areas of Milton of Balgonie, Coaltown of Balgonie, Pitteuchar East and Thornton Primary Schools



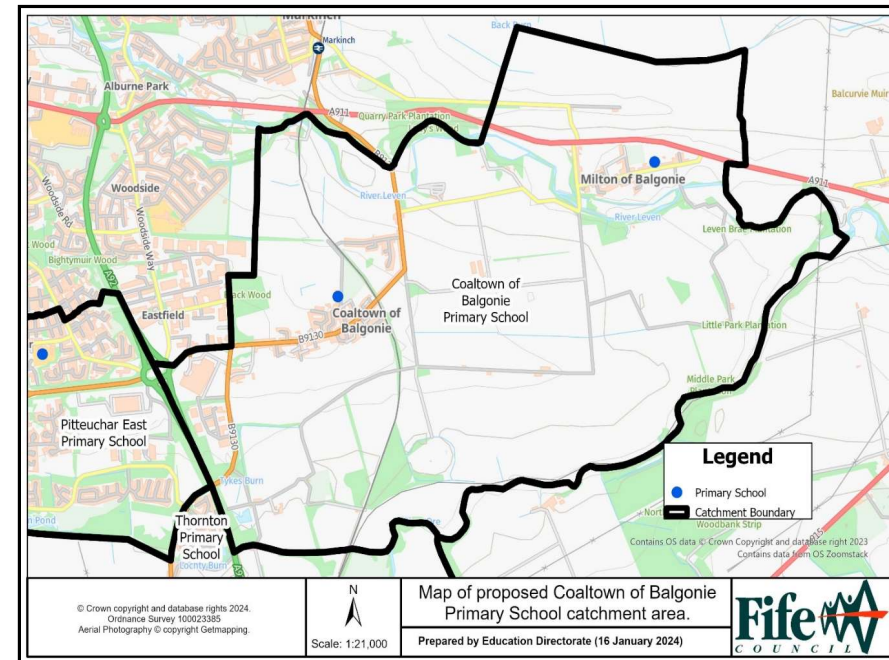
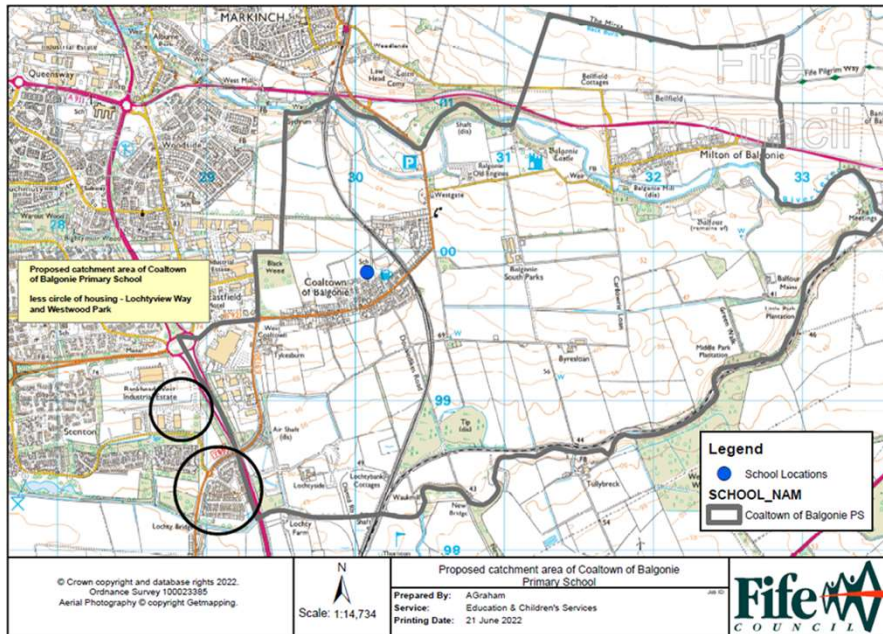


School Community and Wider Community



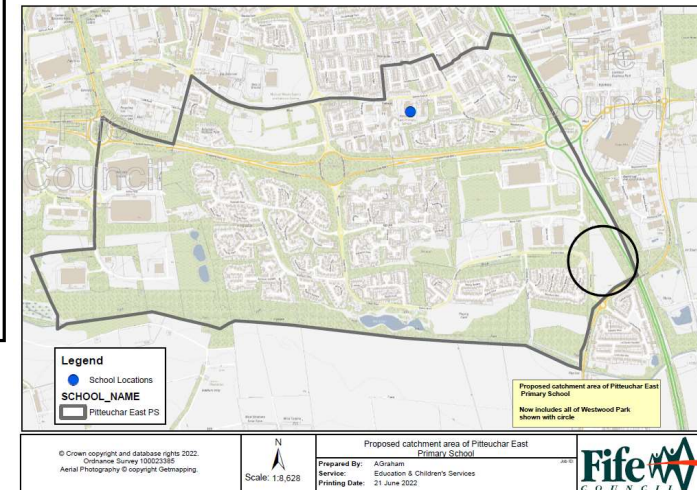
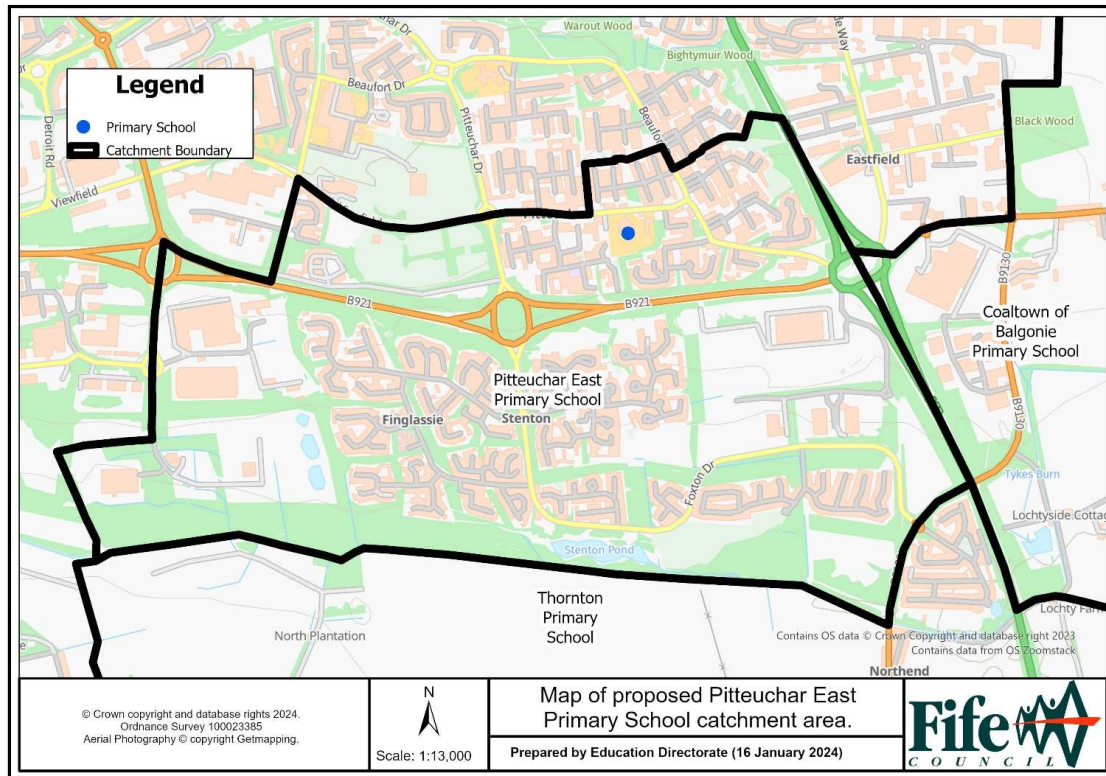


Proposed catchment area of Coaltown of Balgonie Primary School



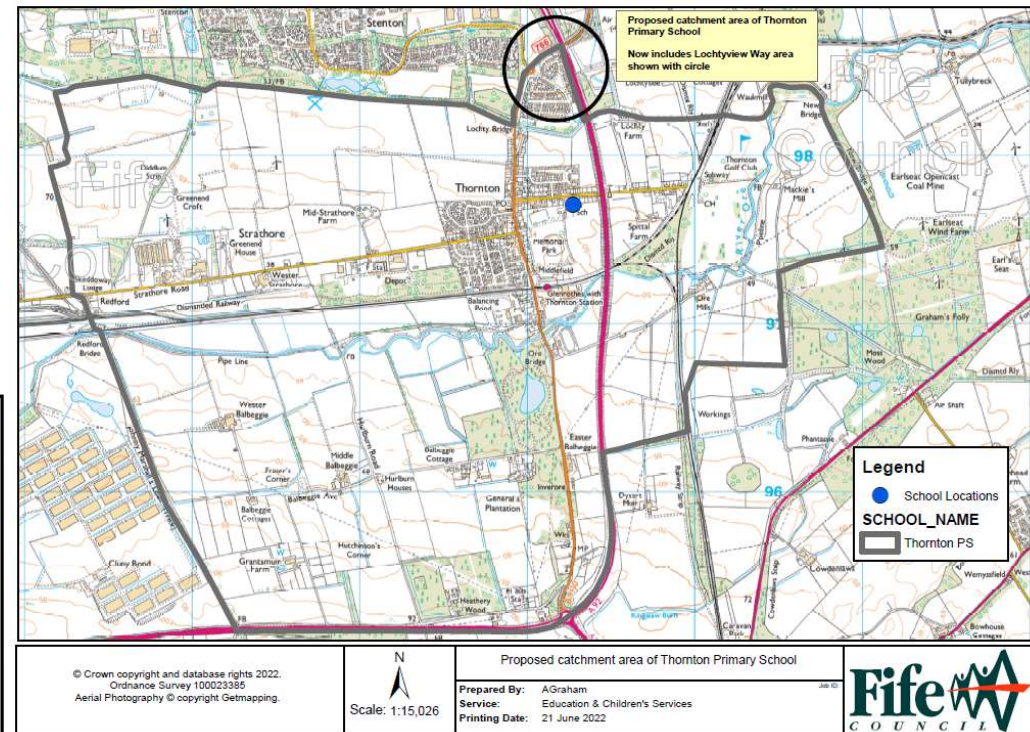
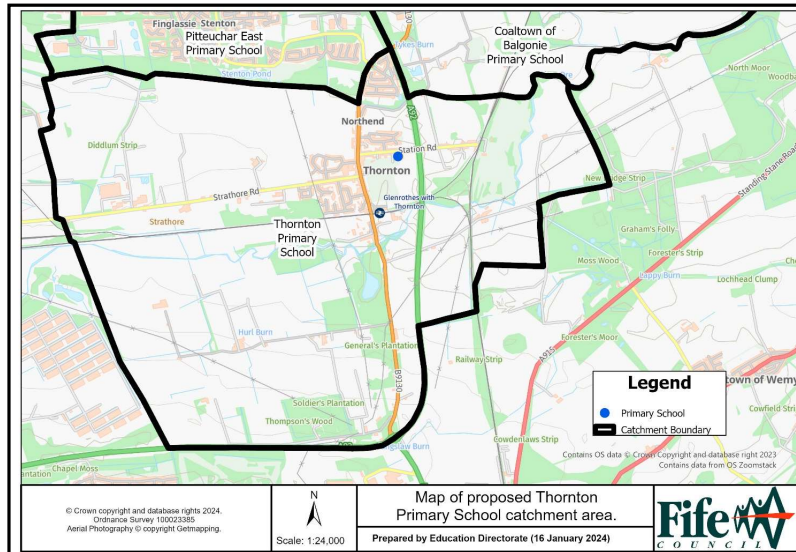


Proposed catchment area of Pitteuchar East Primary School





Proposed catchment area of Thornton Primary School





Educational Benefits

As part of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, the local authority must prepare an educational benefits statement which includes the likely effects of a relevant proposal. The educational benefits of this proposal include:

Benefit for the pupils of Milton of Balgonie PS catchment area

1. pupils from Milton of Balgonie catchment area attending Coaltown of Balgonie PS will continue to benefit from an improved range of curricular experiences, providing more opportunities to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens
2. learners will have more opportunities to learn from their peers and more opportunity to develop wider relationships and friendships
3. pupils will be educated in classes organised in narrower range of school years e.g. P1/2 instead of P1-P7
4. greater number of staff at Coaltown of PS and opportunities for greater collaborative working
5. pupils will have access to any lunchtime and after school clubs that are run by school staff
6. opportunity for parents to become involved in a larger parent community
7. better facilities within the Coaltown of Balgonie PS accommodation.



Educational Benefits

Benefit for the pupils of Coaltown of Balgonie PS catchment area

1. Pupils from Coaltown of Balgonie PS will have increased opportunities to develop relationships and friendships from a wider geographical area
2. Increased school roll supports the sustainability and viability of the school
3. Narrower range of pupils in each composite class
4. Enhanced number of pupils to take part in any lunchtime or after school activity

Benefit for the pupils of Pitteuchar East PS catchment area

1. Pupils from Westwood Park will not be split across 2 primary school catchment areas
2. All of the 420 units will sustain the roll at Pitteuchar East PS and ensure school stays above 60% occupancy
3. Pupils attending Pitteuchar East PS have access to an after-school club in the afternoons
4. Pupils from Westwood Park will have increased opportunities to develop relationships and friendships from a wider geographical area



Educational Benefits

Benefit for the pupils of Thornton PS catchment area

1. Pupils within Lochtyview will benefit from being able to walk to school with peers living in the local community to develop their independence
2. Pupils from Lochtyview would more than likely be part of a single class based on higher numbers of pupils at the same age
3. As the nursery is on site, parents/carers will have an opportunity to walk both nursery and primary aged children to school



Consultation Process

Statutory consultation in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Council required to consult for a minimum of 30 school days

Statutory consultation period – Wednesday 24 January 2024 to Tuesday 12 March 2024

Pupil consultation with a range of pupils from P4-P7 in the 3 schools

Education Scotland involvement

Consultation Report

Decision by Cabinet Committee around June 2024



Timeline

Thursday 11 January	Consultation proposal considered by Fife Council 's Cabinet Committee
Tuesday 23 January	Parents and other statutory consultees to receive letters informing them of the dates for the statutory consultation.
Wednesday 24 January - Tuesday 12 March	Consultation live
	Public meetings held on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Coaltown of Balgonie Primary School on Monday 5 February 2024 from 6-7 pm•Thornton Primary School on Monday 12 February 2024 from 6-7 pm•Village Hall, Dickson Lane, Milton of Balgonie on Wednesday 21 February 2024 from 6-7 pm•Pitteuchar East Primary School on Wednesday 28 February 2024 from 6-7 pm Drop-in sessions at: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Pitteuchar East Primary School on Tuesday 30 January 2024 from 8.45-9.30 am•Coaltown of Balgonie Primary School on Monday 5 February 2024 from 5-6 pm•Thornton Primary School on Monday 12 February 2024 from 8.45-9.30 am•Thornton Primary School on Monday 12 February 2024 from 5-6 pm•Village Hall, Dickson Lane, Milton of Balgonie on Wednesday 21 February 2024 from 5-6pm•Pitteuchar East Primary School on Wednesday 28 February 2024 from 5-6 pm
Tuesday 12 March	Consultation closes
Friday 15 March	Report on consultation process is submitted to Education Scotland
Tuesday 23 April	Education Service receive report from Education Scotland
Tuesday 14 May	Consultation Report published 3 weeks before the Cabinet Committee
Thursday 6 June	Report submitted to the Cabinet Committee
Thursday 13 June	Estimated end of Fife Council's internal Call-In Period
Friday 16 August	Estimated end of Scottish Government Call-In Period
Monday 19 August	Proposed date of implementation



Discussion

Have your say at

<http://www.fife.gov.uk/miltonofbalgonieprimary>

or

send comments to:

Sustainableschoolestate.enquiries@fife.gov.uk

Managing Our School Estate

Latest news

Principles of managing the Estate

Curriculum for Excellence

Legislative documents

Consultation and feedback

Dunfermline Learning Campus

Lochgelly South PS

Relocation of Inverkeithing High School Consultation

Milton of Balgonie Primary School consultation

Click on
tile on
website

