

Agenda Item	8.
Report No	PEO 29/17

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: People Committee

Date: 19 October 2017

Report Title: Statutory Consultation – Establishment of a new primary school for Ness Castle/Ness-side

Report By: Director of Care and Learning

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' agreement to conduct a statutory consultation proposing the establishment of a new primary school in Inverness to serve the Ness Castle housing development. The proposal will also require a change to the catchment area of Holm Primary School.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are asked to agree to proceed to statutory consultation on the proposal set out in **Appendix 1**, to establish a new primary school to serve the Ness Castle housing development, with a consequential amendment to the catchment area of Holm Primary School.

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

The proposal is to establish a new primary school to serve the Ness Castle and Ness-Side housing developments

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS STATEMENT

THIS IS A PROPOSAL PAPER PREPARED IN TERMS OF THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY'S AGREED PROCEDURE TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010

The Highland Council is proposing, subject to the outcome of the statutory consultation process:

- To establish a new primary school in Inverness to serve the Ness Castle and Ness-side housing developments.
- To amend the delineated area (catchment area) of the current Holm Primary School, in order to create the catchment area for the new school.

In this paper, the new school will be referred to by the provisional name of "Ness Castle Primary School". In the event that the new school is approved, the final name of the school will be subject to detailed consultation with stakeholders.

Three options are under consideration to create the delineated area of Ness Castle Primary School:

- Under **Option A**, the boundary of the delineated area for Ness Castle Primary will begin on the River Ness at a point just below Whin Island, from there running east to the B862. It then runs in a south westerly direction along the B862 to where it meets the Inverness Distributor Road, after which the boundary extends east along that road to the point where it meets the Lochardil PS catchment. The areas of the present Holm PS catchment that are south and west of this line will become the new school's catchment area;
- Under **Option B**, the boundary of the delineated area for Ness Castle Primary will begin on the River Ness at a point just below Whin Island, from there running east to the B862. It then runs in a south westerly direction along the B862 to where it meets the Holm Burn, after which the boundary extends south and east along the burn to where it meets the Lochardil PS catchment. The areas of the present Holm PS catchment that are south and west of this line will become the new school's catchment area;
- **Option C**, under which the delineated area for Ness Castle Primary will be that part of the current Holm Primary catchment that lies south of the current Holm Burn, and south of a line that would leave part of the proposed Ness-side housing development within the Holm Primary catchment.

Maps of the options for the new Ness Castle Primary and revised Holm Primary catchments are at **Appendices A, B and C**. This paper invites views on the identified options.

The paper also discusses a potential variation to Option A, which includes Essich Gardens, (currently part of the Lochardil PS catchment), in the new Ness Castle Primary. A map of this variation can found at **Appendix A(i)**.

SUMMARY OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Proposal Paper Published

The proposal paper will be available for inspection, free of charge, at:

- Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness IV3 5NX
- Holm Primary School, Stratherrick Road, Inverness IV2 4YL
- Lochardil Primary School, Lochardil Road, Inverness IV2 4LB
- Inverness Library, Farraline Park, IV1 1NH

and published on the Highland Council website:

www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

Copies of this Proposal Paper are also available on request from:

Brian Porter
Head of Resources, Care and Learning Service
Highland Council HQ
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness
IV3 5NX
E-mail: carelearningadmin@highland.gov.uk

To request this information in an alternative format, e.g. large print, Braille, audio formats, or suitable language, please contact The Business Support Team (South and HQ) Highland Council HQ, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX. Email: carelearningadmin@highland.gov.uk

Formal notice of the Proposal and relevant information will be given and be made available, free of charge, to the consultees listed as follows:

- (i) Parents of pupils attending Holm Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (ii) Parents of pupils attending Lochardil Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (iii) Parents of pupils attending Aldourie Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (iv) The Parent Councils of the above schools.
- (v) Members of Parliament and Members of the Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;
- (vi) Staff of Holm Primary School; Lochardil Primary School; and Aldourie Primary School
- (vi) Trade union representatives;
- (vii) Lochardil and Drummond Community Council;

- (viii) Dores and Essich Community Council
- (ix) Education Scotland;
- (x) Highland Youth Convener.

Advertisement in Local Media

A notice announcing the public meeting will be placed in the local press and on the Highland Council's Facebook page.

Consultation Period

The consultation for this Proposal will begin on Monday 23 October 2017 and will end on Friday 1 December 2017. This period allows for the statutory minimum of six weeks, including at least thirty school days.

Public Meeting

A public meeting will be held, the details of which are set out below:

7.00pm on Wednesday 8 November at Holm Primary School.

Anyone wishing to attend the public meeting is invited to do so. The meeting will be convened by the Council, will be chaired by a senior elected councillor, and will be addressed by officers of the Care and Learning Service.

The meeting will be an opportunity for the public to hear more about the proposal; to ask questions about the proposal; and to have the views of all stakeholders recorded so that they can be taken into account. A note will be taken of questions asked and views expressed. This note will be published on the Council website. The meeting will also be recorded.

The note will be forwarded to Education Scotland, along with other submissions and comments received by the Council during the consultation process.

Meetings with Pupils and Staff

School staff will arrange to discuss the proposal with pupils (who are considered to be of a suitable age and maturity) in the affected schools. A record of questions, responses and views will be taken and this will be published in the Consultation Report.

Responses to the Proposals

Interested parties are invited to respond to the Proposals by making written or electronic submissions on the Proposals to:

Brian Porter
Head of Resources, Care and Learning Service
Highland Council HQ
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness
IV3 5NX
E-mail: carelearningadmin@highland.gov.uk

Or via an online form, a link to which can be found on

www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

When responding, you are invited to state your relationship with the school – for example, “pupil”, “parent”, “carer”, “relative”, “former pupil”, “teacher in school”, “member of the community” etc. However it is not compulsory to do so.

Those sending in a response, whether by letter or electronically, should know that their response will be open to public scrutiny and may have to be supplied to anyone making a reasonable request to see it. If they do not wish their response to be made publicly available, they should clearly write on the document: “I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to Councillors and Council Officers of Highland Council”. Otherwise, it will be assumed that the person making the response agrees to it being made publicly available. All written responses must be received by the last day of the consultation period, Friday 1 December 2017 at 5.00pm.

Involvement of Education Scotland

When the Proposal Document is published, a copy will also be sent to Education Scotland by the Council. Education Scotland will also be sent, by 8 January 2018, a copy of any relevant written representations that are received by the Council from any person during the consultation period. Education Scotland will also receive the summary note of the public meeting that will be held and so far as is practicable a copy of any other relevant documentation. Education Scotland will then prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal not later than 26 January 2018. In preparing their report, Education Scotland may visit the affected schools and make such enquiries of people there as they consider appropriate.

Further Consultation

Highland Council will review the proposal having regard to the Education Scotland Report, written representations that it has received, and oral representations made at the public meeting. It will then prepare a Consultation Report. This Report will be published in electronic and printed formats and will be sent to anyone who submitted a written representation during consultation. It will be available on the Council website as well as at the affected school and local library, free of charge. The Report will include a summary of the written and oral representations made during consultation and a copy of the Education Scotland Report, together with the Council’s considered response to the issues raised. The Report will include details of details of any alleged inaccuracies and/or omissions and how these have been handled. The Consultation Report will be published at least 3 weeks prior to being submitted to the People Committee, who will make a recommendation to the full Highland Council.

In publishing the report the Council will invite any person or party to make further representations to the Committee prior to its meeting. A notice to this effect will also be published on the Highland Council website.

Timescale Following Consultation

At the present time the Council intends to publish its Report in April 2018, prior to submission to the People Committee on 30 May 2018. However, this timescale may

change depending on the nature of issues raised during consultation, and the need to give full consideration to those issues. In the latter event, the Report may not be submitted until a later Committee meeting.

Any proposal approved at People Committee would require to be confirmed by a subsequent meeting of the full Highland Council.

If approved, the Proposal will then move to the implementation phase. A Stakeholder Group will be established to act as a formal forum for the dissemination of information relating to this development, and to ensure that there is an effective two way flow of information between the Group and the Council, Project Team and Contractor (once appointed). The Group will also have the opportunity to comment and provide feedback on the Council's proposals in relation to the new school. It is anticipated that the requirements of design, planning permission and build will require a further 30-36 months after the conclusion of the statutory consultation process.

Note on Corrections

If any inaccuracy or omission is discovered in this Proposal paper, either by the Council or any other person, the Council will determine if relevant information has been omitted or, if the paper contains an inaccuracy. The Council will then take appropriate action, which may include the issue of a correction or the reissuing of the Proposal or the revision of the timescale for the consultation period, if appropriate. In that event, relevant consultees and HMI will be advised.

Legislative Background

- 1.1 The proposal is advanced within the context of all applicable legislation. Amongst other duties, education authorities are required to secure adequate and efficient provision of school education (S.1 of the Education Act 1980); and to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of school education in schools that are managed by them (S.3 of The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000). As with all Council duties, the Council also has a duty to make arrangements to secure best value, and in securing best value the Council is required to maintain an appropriate balance between, inter alia, the quality of its performance of its functions and the cost to the authority of that performance (Local Government in Scotland Act 2002, section 1). Each of the above, and all other legislative requirements, have been taken into account in the preparation of this Report.
- 1.2 A statutory consultation on this proposal is required under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 on the following grounds:
 - i. Proposal to establish a new school;
 - ii. Proposal to alter the catchment area of a school or schools.

Reason for the Proposal

- 2.1 This proposal is being advanced because on current projections the pupil numbers at Holm Primary School will exceed the school's capacity within the foreseeable future. The capacity issue arises from the construction of a new housing development at Ness Castle and proposed developments at

Ness Castle. A map showing the proposed site of the new school, can be found at **Appendix D**.

- 2.2 The consultation process, together with the planning process, and the design and construction of the new school, is likely to take at least 3 years. Additional modular accommodation will be installed as required at Holm Primary in the intervening period. This accommodation will be an interim measure and will not offer a long term solution to the capacity issues that will arise at Holm Primary.

Current Details – Holm Primary School

- 3.1 Holm Primary School is a non-denominational school serving a residential area of Inverness. The school opened in 1974 and was extended in 1979. There are four main buildings:

The Administration Block, which contains the office accommodation; staffroom, hall, dining area and kitchen;

Teaching Block A, where the P.1 and P.2 stage classrooms are situated;
Teaching Block B, where P.2/3, P.3, P.4, and P.4/5 stage classrooms are situated

Teaching Block C, where P.5, P.6, P.6/7, and P.7 are situated.

In addition, a new Nursery building was opened in 2012.

Each of the Teaching Blocks has a central "open area" adjacent to classrooms. The "open areas" are provided as classroom extensions. Each Teaching Block has its own toilet facilities.

- 3.2 The school has outside playing and recreational areas. The grass area provides space for sports and the tarmac quadrangle in the centre of the school grounds can be used for playground games and other activities. There is a basketball court at the edge of the playing field and an Adventure Trail. There are other grassy areas, which have picnic benches for the children, a 'bottle' greenhouse, an outdoor classroom and our school garden which is looked after by our pupils.
- 3.3 The school has both car parking and drop-off facilities for visitors and parents of nursery children.
- 3.4 At the time of writing, the P1-7 roll for the 2017-18 session is 281 pupils. Without taking account of a new Ness Castle Primary, current roll projections for future years are as follows, taking account of the estimated impact of the new housing developments at Ness Castle and Ness Side:

2020-21	- 383
2021-22	- 416
2022-23	- 437
2023-24	- 469
2024-25	- 504
2025-26	- 539
2026-27	- 567
2027-28	- 602

2028-29 - 637
2029-30 - 672
2030-31 - 700

- 3.5 The school had a permanent planning capacity of 244 at the start of the current school session, with a roll of 281. A modular two classroom unit has since been installed at the school to provide additional accommodation to address this immediate pressure but further temporary units will be required in the coming years as the roll continues to grow.
- 3.6 The size of the school roll at Holm Primary has led to the school already being capped to prevent enrolments as a result of placing requests.
- 3.7 The Highland Council assesses all of its schools for Suitability and Condition, in line with the Scottish Government's School Estate Management guidelines. School buildings are assessed on a scale with the ratings "A" (good) "B" (satisfactory), "C" (poor) and "D" (bad). Holm Primary School is currently rated as "B" for educational suitability and "B" for building condition.
- 3.8 The most recent HMIe report was published in May 2015. A copy is at **Appendix E**.
- 3.9 The year group numbers for the 2017-18 session are as follows:
- P1 – 34
P2 – 37
P3 – 45
P4 – 38
P5 – 47
P6 – 34
P7 – 46

Proposed New School

- 4.1 The new school would be of modern design, environmentally efficient, and allowing pupils the opportunity to enjoy a comfortable, naturally lit and well ventilated environment designed to meet the needs of modern learners and teachers; meeting the requirements for "A" assessments for both Suitability and Condition; and influenced by good practice elsewhere.
- 4.2 The projected roll of the new school varies according to which catchment area option is chosen, but is estimated as follows:

OPTION A (Appendix A)

2020-21 - 265
2021-22 - 303
2022-23 - 321
2023-24 - 357
2024-25 - 392
2025-26 - 427
2026-27 - 455

2027-28	- 490
2028-29	- 525
2029-30	- 560
2030-31	- 588

Option Ai would result in a marginal upward variation to the figures in Option A

OPTION B (Appendix B)

2020-21	- 239
2021-22	- 282
2022-23	- 304
2023-24	- 343
2024-25	- 378
2025-26	- 413
2026-27	- 441
2027-28	- 476
2028-29	- 511
2029-30	- 546
2030-31	- 574

OPTION C (Appendix C)

2020-21	- 95
2021-22	- 115
2022-23	- 142
2023-24	- 168
2024-25	- 189
2025-26	- 217
2026-27	- 245
2027-28	- 266
2028-29	- 294
2029-30	- 322
2030-31	- 343

- 4.3 Pre-school accommodation would be provided, and the pre-school accommodation would be suitable for use by breakfast clubs and after-school clubs, should any be created. Flexibility will be built in to take account of the increased entitlement to free provision required by 2020.
- 4.4 It would be important to include a degree of flexibility and adaptability within the design in order to provide options to alter spaces in the future in response to the changing needs of the school. This approach would optimise the use of available space.
- 4.5 The needs of every child would be placed at the centre of developing the design in recognition of the transitions from pre-school to primary and ultimately to secondary education. The design would be planned to enable the flexibility required to meet the evolving needs of the school curriculum and other developments, including:
 - The Pre School educational area having sufficient space to accommodate a variety of activities to support early years learning, together with close internal

links with the infant department in order to encourage regular collaborative learning through active play and to enhance the transition between pre-school and Primary 1.

- Learning and teaching spaces for primary age pupils which have access to internal shared activity areas and external teaching spaces which provide flexibility and opportunities to maximise the use of space inside and outside the building.
 - HT office, reception/admin office, staff room, and meeting room/staff base.
 - Kitchen with dining area.
 - Games hall with changing facilities (potentially accessible to community outwith school hours).
 - Grass playing field, and Multi-use Games Area.
 - A variety of other spaces to support activities within the school, including general purpose space and spaces specifically designed for pupils with Additional Support Needs.
 - Design which will maximise the use of natural daylight and natural ventilation, together with heating, ventilation and electrical systems which provide modern requirements in an energy efficient and sustainable manner.
 - The landscaping around the school will be designed in conjunction with the school users to ensure that there is an interesting “play and learning” environment.
 - Safe access to the school with the appropriate arrangements for those arriving/departing on foot, by bicycle, by bus or by car.
- 4.6. The above overview provides an outline of the design opportunities that exist taking into account recent experience with similar primary school projects elsewhere within Highland. These opportunities will be developed in conjunction with the school communities to ensure that the new school design takes account of the aspirations of future users of the facility.
- 4.7 The Scottish Government’s Climate Change Policy specifies that new buildings should be nearly zero in terms of carbon emissions. The Council’s expectation is that the new school would have a Carbon Dioxide equivalent impact of about 15 tonnes per year at most.

Educational Benefits

- 5.1 Highland Council is of the view that the school environment should be of a quality that sustains and improves education provision, pupil performance and outcomes for the young people of Highland.
- 5.2 With the above aim in mind, Highland Council has adopted the above indicators in reviewing its school estate:

1. Pupils should be educated in facilities which are rated at least category B for each of Condition and Suitability.
2. Pupils should be members of an age-appropriate peer group.
3. Pupils should have the opportunity to engage in the widest possible range of activities beyond the core curriculum, including music, sports, drama and art.
4. Pupils with Additional Support Needs should be educated in the most appropriate local setting.
5. Pupils should not ordinarily be required to travel for longer than 30 minutes from the nearest classified road pick-up point to school (primary) although it is recognised that this may not always be possible in a rural Council area such as Highland.
6. School facilities should be of a size appropriate to the delineated area that they serve, paying due regard to demographic trends.
7. School delineated areas should reflect geography, travel routes and population distribution.
8. Safe school transport should be provided and safe traffic management in and around school sites should be implemented.
9. Teachers should be members of a professional learning community comprising at least 3 members located in the same facility.
10. The implications of school location to local communities should be considered.
11. Schools, wherever possible, should be located where there is a recognised village or other built up community.

5.3 The projected rolls at paragraph 3.4 indicate that the new school is required in order to address point 6 of the Highland Council criteria *“School facilities should be of a size appropriate to the delineated area that they serve, paying due regard to demographic trends.”* The Ness Castle/Ness-Side housing developments mean that in future Holm Primary will no longer meet this criterion. There is a need for a new school to balance the number of children in the area with the facilities that are available.

5.4 Should the new school be constructed, the revised projected rolls for Holm Primary would be as follows. Again, the projections vary according to which catchment option is chosen:

Option A (Appendix A)

2020-21	- 118
2021-22	- 113
2022-23	- 116
2023-24	- 112
2024-25	- 112
2025-26	- 112
2026-27	- 112
2027-28	- 112
2028-29	- 112
2029-30	- 112
2030-31	- 112

OPTION B (Appendix B)

2020-21	- 144
2021-22	- 134
2022-23	- 133
2023-24	- 126
2024-25	- 126
2025-26	- 126
2026-27	- 126
2027-28	- 126
2028-29	- 126
2029-30	- 126
2030-31	- 126

Option C (Appendix C)

2020-21	- 290
2021-22	- 297
2022-23	- 300
2023-24	- 308
2024-25	- 315
2025-26	- 322
2026-27	- 329
2027-28	- 336
2028-29	- 343
2029-30	- 350
2030-31	- 357

- 5.5 The roll projections provide an overwhelming case for the construction of a new school. It is clear that without a new school in the area, Holm Primary, and probably other local schools, would be faced with an unmanageable level of overcrowding. Indeed, under Option C above, capacity issues could still arise at Holm Primary, even after the building of the new school. The delineation of the catchment will therefore be a significant factor in deciding on the size of the new school.
- 5.6 It is of course impossible to predict future school rolls with complete accuracy. Much will depend on the pace of housebuilding in the area. The projections shown are also partly based on the past pattern of local placing requests, but this pattern could itself be changed by the construction of the new schools. The Council is also looking at new school capacity for the Slackbuie area, which might further affect the above projections.
- 5.7 By alleviating future capacity pressures expected to arise at Holm Primary, the proposal would improve the learning environment for the pupils of both Holm Primary and Ness Castle Primary.
- 5.8 In summary, the new school offers the possibility of educational benefit arising through averting future overcrowding at Holm Primary.

Alternative Solutions

- 6.1 In arriving at the proposal set out within this report, the Council has considered alternative solutions. However, none of the neighbouring schools have the capacity to accommodate the number of additional pupils that will arise from the new housing. It has been recognised from the outset that the housing development at Ness Castle would require the construction of the new school.

Options for New Catchment

- 7.1 Under Option A and its variant, Ai, the area of existing housing known as “Holm Dell” would transfer to the Ness Castle catchment, and Option Ai would also affect the Lochardil catchment, in that the small area of housing at Essich Gardens would transfer to Ness Castle.
- 7.2 A separate review is underway regarding education provision in the Slackbuie area of Inverness, the outcome of which could have implications for the Lochardil PS catchment. Full consideration of the best future catchment area for Lochardil PS will be included within any forthcoming proposal arising from that review, and Highland Council does not recommend altering the Lochardil catchment as a consequence of the current proposal for Ness Castle Primary.
- 7.3 Under Option B, “Holm Dell” would remain within the Holm Primary catchment, and the Ness Castle catchment would encompass all of the Ness Castle and Ness-side developments.
- 7.4 Option C would offer Ness Castle Primary a smaller catchment than the other options and would leave a significant amount of new housebuilding within the Holm Primary catchment. It would therefore lead to a larger roll at Holm Primary than would any other catchment option, and would potentially still result in some capacity issues at Holm Primary in the future, which would need to be addressed.
- 7.5 As mentioned above, the delineation of the catchment area will have a significant effect on the required size of the new school.
- 7.6 Highland Council would welcome the views of local people on which of the catchment options would be the most appropriate.

Effects on School Transport

- 8.1 Pupils attending Holm Primary are not entitled to school transport as the home to school distances are within walking distance. Appropriate arrangements would be made for any transport required for pupils due to Additional Support Needs.
- 8.2 The construction of the new school will not therefore have any significant impact on school transport.

Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements

- 9.1 An appropriate management structure will be put in place at the new school, reflecting the size of the school and consistent with such arrangements

elsewhere in Highland. Consideration will be given to the need for transitional arrangements, to fully establish Ness Castle Primary.

- 9.2 The staffing arrangements for Ness Castle Primary will also be consistent with the staffing of other schools in Highland. Staffing levels will be arranged in accordance with local and national agreements, and relevant legislation.
- 9.3 The projected roll at Holm Primary would fall under catchment options A and B above, which would mean less staff being required at the school. This would however be within the context of an overall rise in roll within the Inverness area, and consequently there would be numerous redeployment opportunities for staff, not least at Ness Castle PS itself.
- 9.4 At the present time the new school is too far off to be able to look at the effect on individual staff. The Council will at all times follow its redeployment policy, should there be a need to assign any staff to a new school.

Effect on the Local Community

- 10.1 The establishment of the new school provides the opportunity to improve and expand access to community facilities, within the new school, and through the continuation of the existing Holm Primary school. The scope of, and access to, community facilities would be considered through the briefing and design stage following conclusion of the Statutory Consultation.

Financial Consequences

- 11.1 The capital and revenue implications of constructing the new school will be taken account of within the Council's capital programme and revenue budget planning.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 12.1 The proposal has been assessed as having no impact on the following Equality areas:

- Gender
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy or Maternity
- Marriage/Civil Partnership
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sexual Orientation
- Looked After Children
- Young Carers
- Children and Young People Living in Deprivation

- 12.2 In respect of age equality, the proposal relates to 2 primary schools and as such primarily affects children in the 3-12 age group, and their parents. The proposal is advanced on the basis of educational benefit to the children in the area concerned. No negative age related effects arise. Age is not a protected characteristic for the purposes of schools provision.

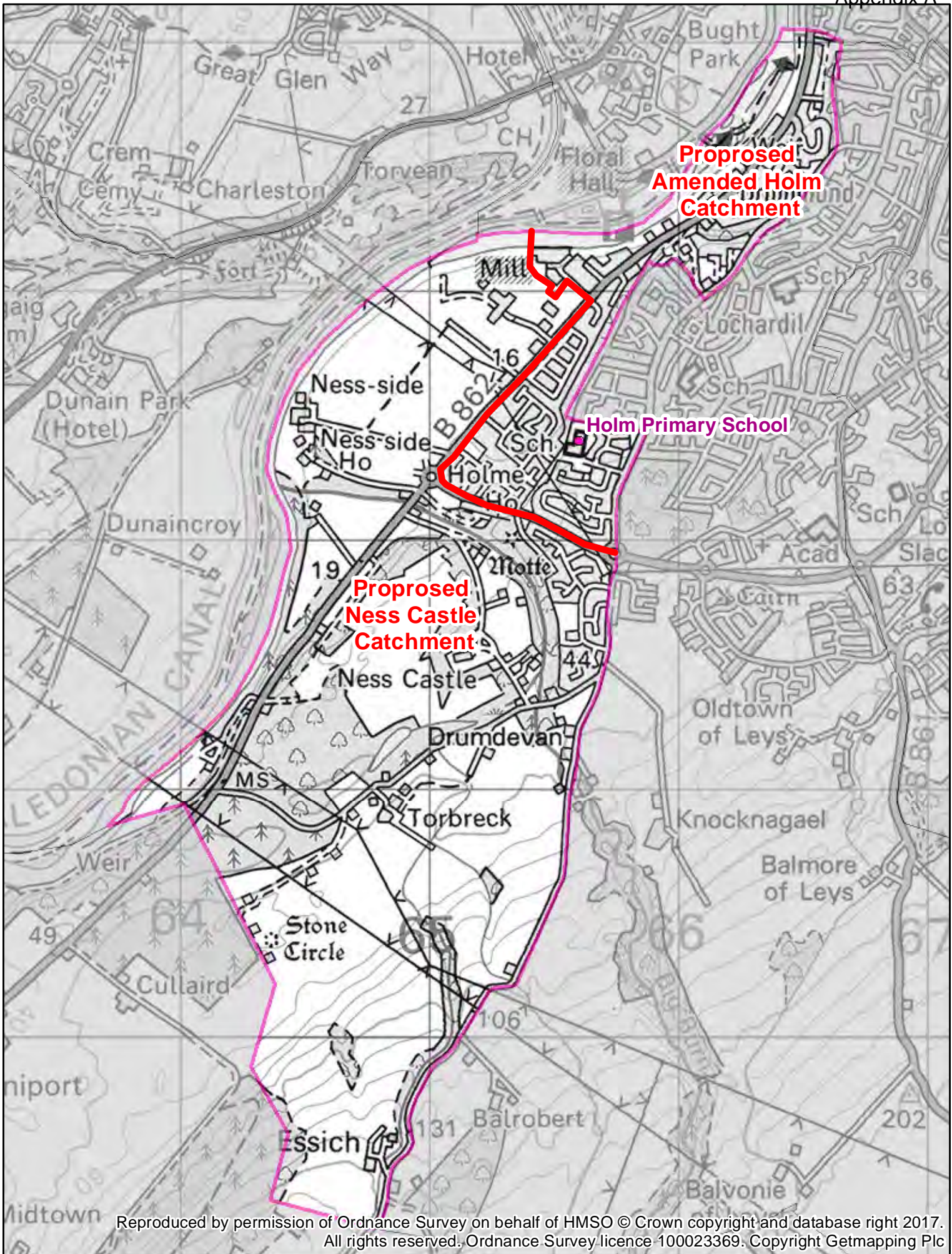
- 12.3 The proposed new school would be built to modern standards, offering disabled access for children, parents and the wider community, as well as purpose built teaching accommodation for children with additional support needs. It would therefore have a positive impact on disability issues.

Mitigation of Adverse Effects

- 13.1 Adverse effects from the proposal could include the separation of pupils who previously attended the same school, with implications for existing friendships.
- 13.2 When Ness Castle Primary School opens, any pupils from within the delineated area of the new school who are already enrolled within the Nursery or P1-7 classes at Holm Primary, will be given the opportunity to enrol in the new school or to continue attending Holm Primary, without having to submit a placing request. Where the latter option is taken, this opportunity will also be extended to any younger siblings of pupils attending Holm Primary at the time of the younger child's admission. This is to enable siblings to attend the same school.
- 13.3 Subsequent to the opening of Ness Castle Primary School, any pupils not falling within the above categories will be enrolled in their catchment school. Parents who wish their children to attend an alternative school may submit placing requests to that effect.

Recommendation

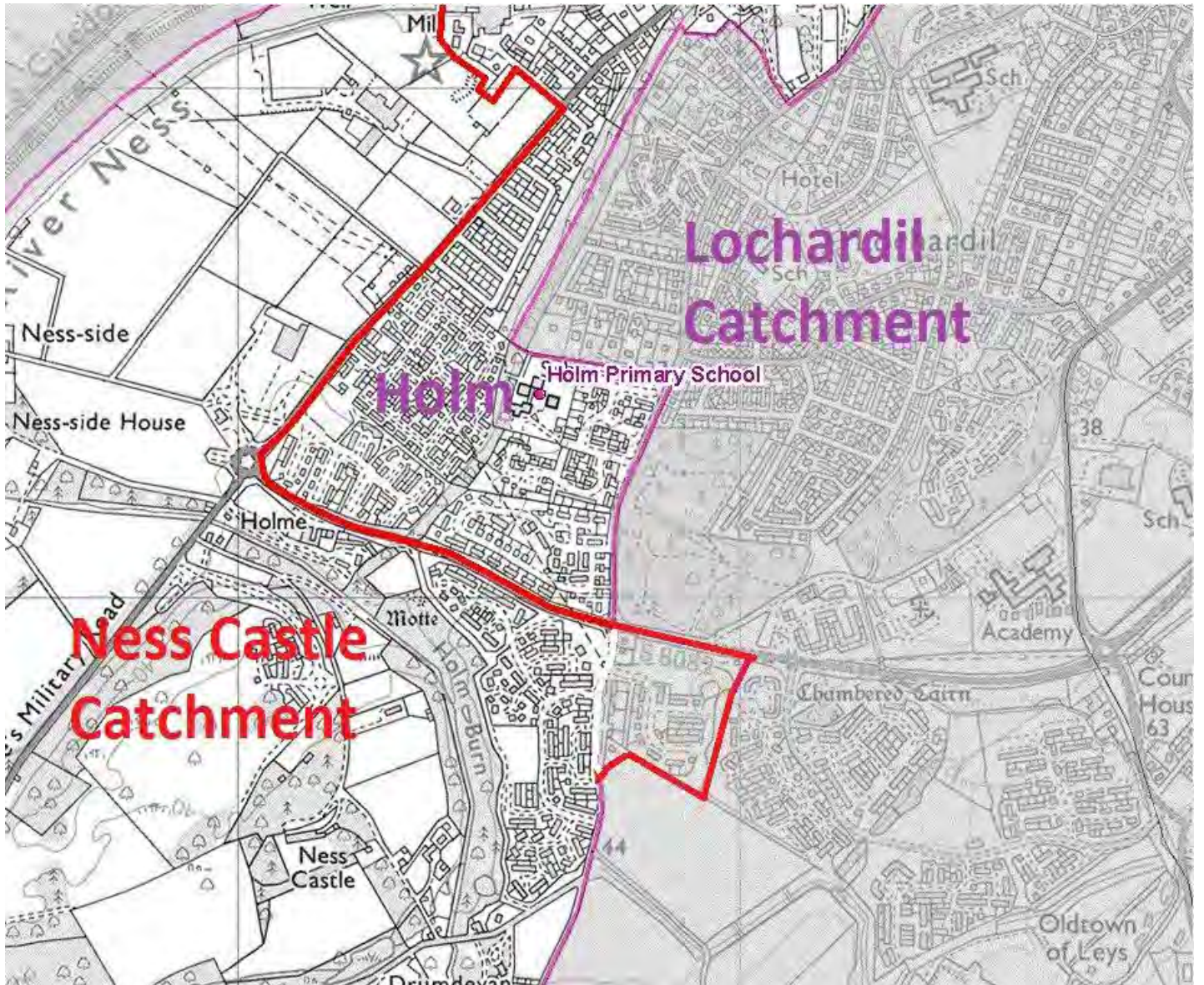
- 14.1 Taking the above into account Highland Council recommends that a new primary school is constructed to serve the Ness Castle and Ness-Side Housing Developments. The new school's catchment area would be chosen from one of the three options shown at Appendices A - C.
- 14.2 This proposal paper is issued in terms of the authority's procedures to meet the relevant statutory requirements. Following the consultation period, a report reviewing the consultations, and the submissions received, will be presented to the People Committee of the Highland Council.

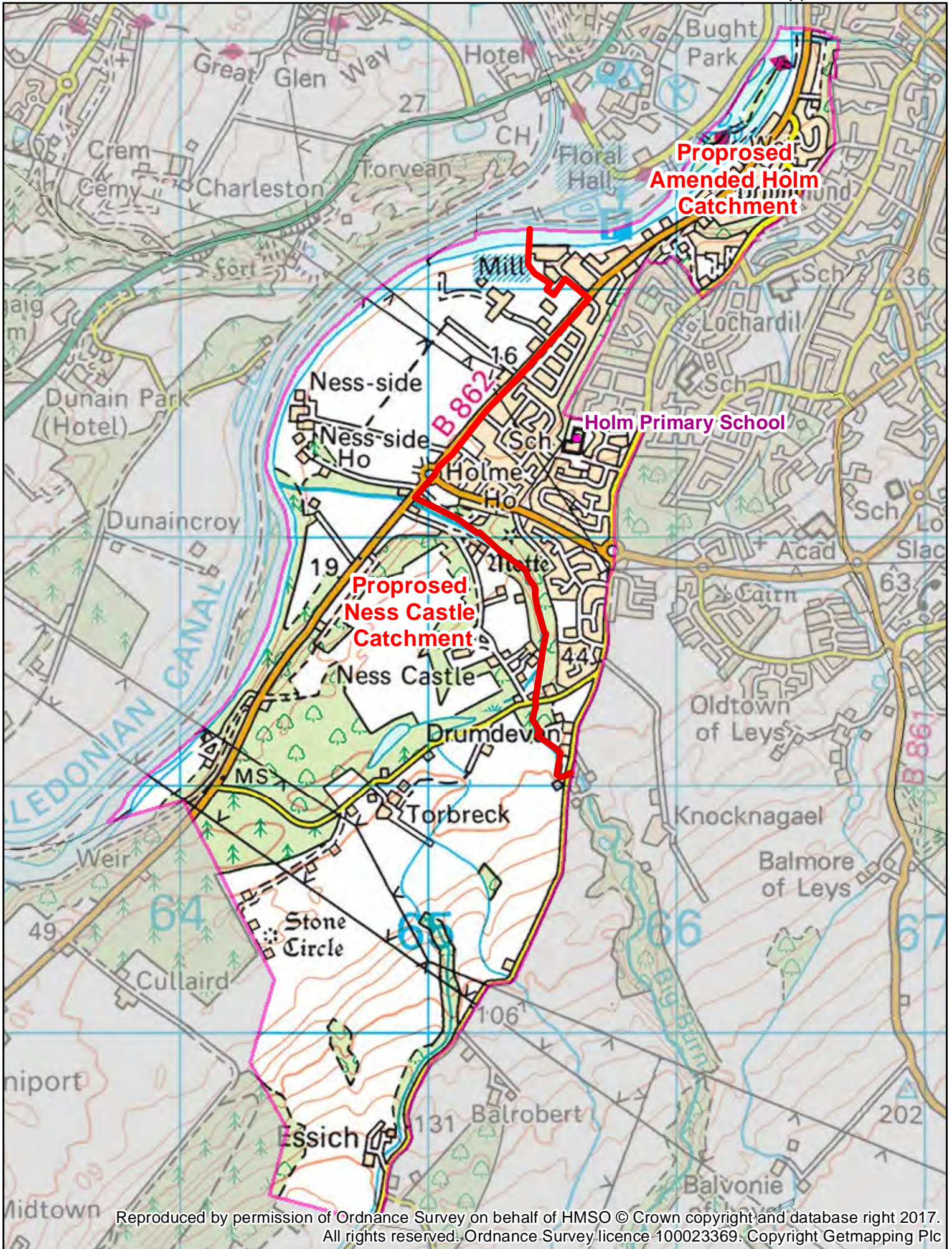


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Option A



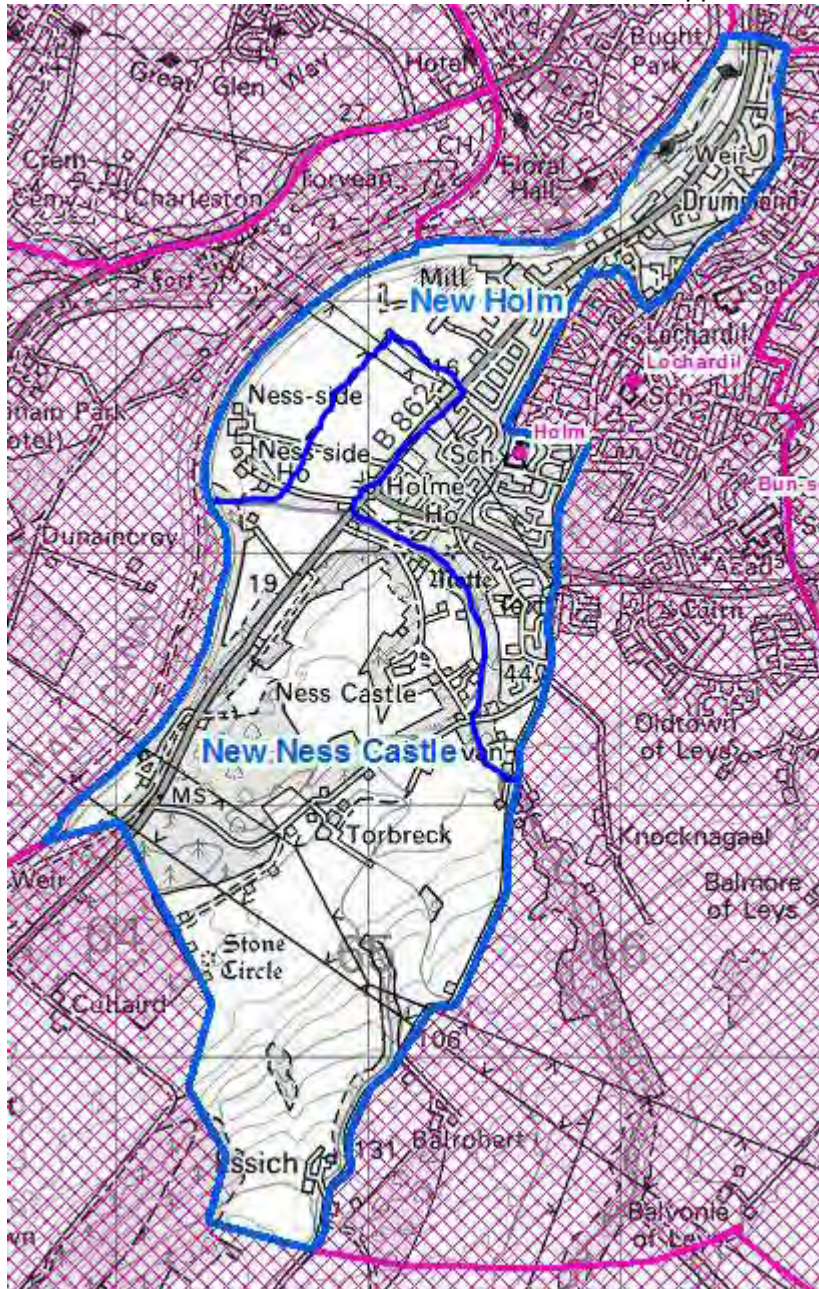




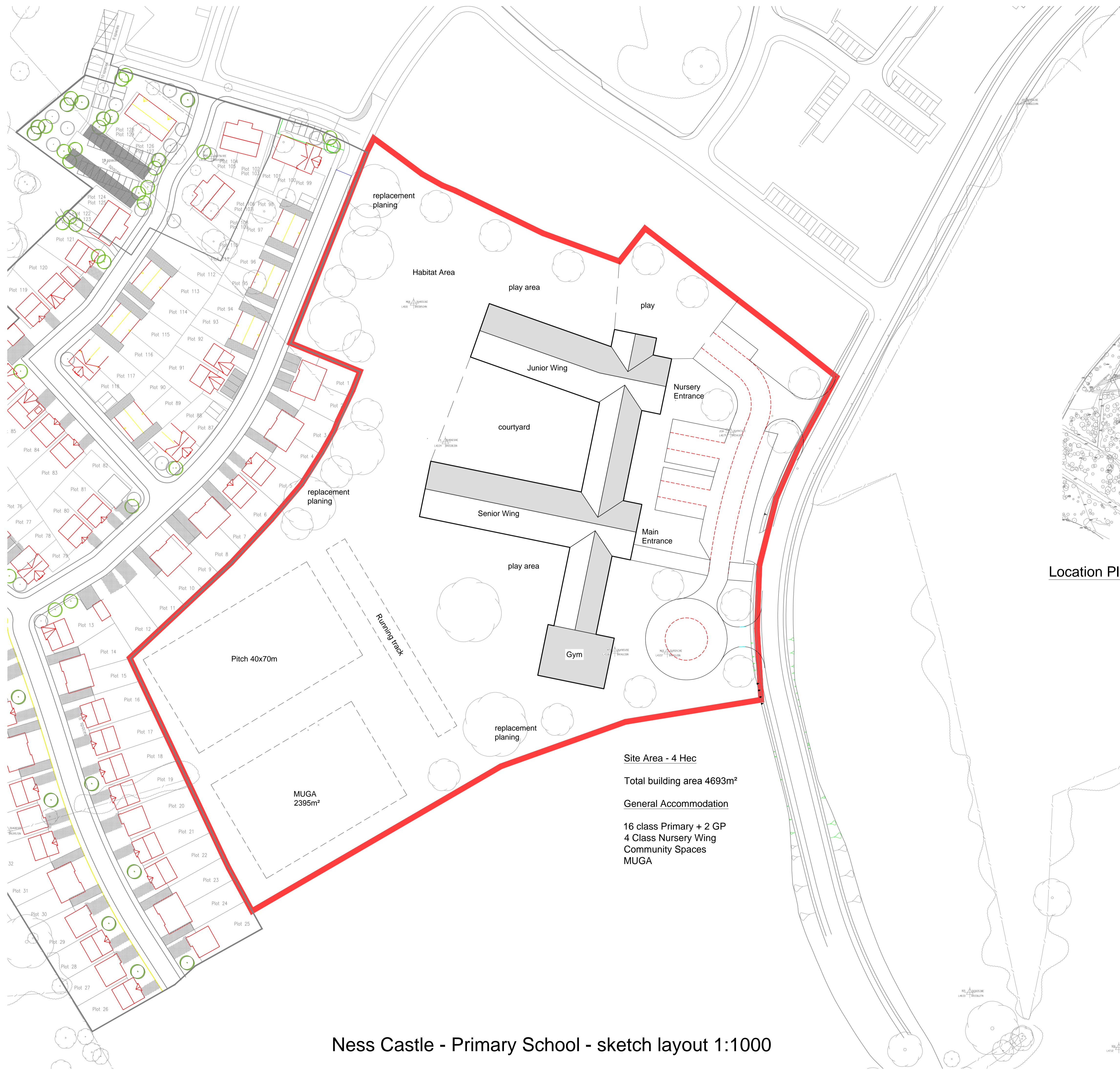
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Option B





Ness Castle Option C



Location Plan

Site Area - 4 Hec
 Total building area 4693m²
 General Accommodation
 16 class Primary + 2 GP
 4 Class Nursery Wing
 Community Spaces
 MUGA

Ness Castle - Primary School - sketch layout 1:1000

19 May 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

**Holm Primary School and Nursery Class
The Highland Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children are learning and achieving and how well the school supports children to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including approaches to developing the curriculum and children's involvement in setting targets for their own learning. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving children's education.

How well do children learn and achieve?

Children in the nursery and at the primary stages are keen to learn and are achieving well. All children say that they enjoy coming to school and that staff are helping them to become more confident. Nursery children are increasingly deciding what and how they will learn during their play. For example, they voted to learn about space and to have weekly baking sessions. They are learning to co-operate with each other by sharing toys and taking turns. Children are proud of their individual learning journey folders. Staff should develop the use of these folders further to encourage children to talk about the next steps on their learning journey. Overall, teachers in the primary classes plan interesting activities that often enable children to learn together in groups. Children willingly contribute to projects and activities linked to their school and community, such as their work on the Eco Schools Scotland initiative and their recent whole-school topic to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the school. Children have made a good start to setting personal targets for their learning and to evaluating their own work. They now need to be given more opportunities to develop high-order skills such as creativity and problem-solving, and to have more opportunities to learn outdoors. Children benefit from participating in a wide range of sporting, cultural and musical activities and often achieve awards at local and national competitions.

Children are making good progress in their learning. In the nursery, most children listen well at circle time and can express their ideas and opinions confidently to adults. They have explored what makes a good question and have created their own questions to learn about how babies are cared for. Most children enjoy books and listening to stories. They benefit from lots of opportunities to develop their early writing skills and write their own name when they self-register each day. A few children enjoy the challenge of writing less familiar words, such as the names of their friends. Most

children are developing early numeracy skills well. In their pretend shop, they are exploring the use of money in a meaningful way. They would benefit from more opportunities to develop their early reading, writing and numeracy skills in real-life situations and nursery routines. Overall, across the primary classes, most children are making good progress in literacy and English language. Almost all children listen attentively and most build very well on each other's contributions during group and class discussions. At the upper stages, children are developing their listening and talking skills by taking part in topical debates. Staff have recently introduced new approaches to teaching writing and this is leading to improvement. Across the primary stages, children write well, often linked to topic work or to an enterprise task. Children are encouraged to read for pleasure and many children choose to do so. At the upper stages, children would now benefit from reading and talking about more challenging texts. Staff have identified the need to review and improve the teaching of phonics beyond the early stages. Across the primary classes, most children are making good progress in mathematics. Children are learning the relevance of numeracy and mathematics through activities and tasks linked well to school life. For example, all classes are using the Easter Fayre as a context for developing children's skills in using money. Children at P7 are enthusiastic about mathematics. They enjoy the ways in which their teacher makes mathematics lessons interesting for them. They are able to use problem-solving strategies well and can explain their thinking. At P4, children are good at estimating the reasonableness of their answers, and their speed, fluency and accuracy in mental mathematics is very good. The school has identified the need to ensure that children's application of their skills in mental mathematics is strong at all primary stages.

How well does the school support children to develop and learn?

In the nursery and at the primary stages, staff work well as a team to provide a very caring and supportive ethos for children. All staff contribute to helping children feel safe and well cared for. They proactively seek advice and help from a range of partners and charities in order to support children and their families. In the nursery class, staff meet the learning needs of children well. They take good account of what children already know and provide support to those who need extra help. Parents are increasingly involved in children's learning, for example through organised sessions such as Rhyme Time and Stay and Play, and through the routine sharing of children's learning journey folders. In the primary classes, most lessons are pitched at the right level for most children. However, tasks and activities are at times not challenging enough to meet the needs of higher-achieving children. Whilst staff are good at identifying children who have barriers to their learning, aspects of the school's arrangements for supporting children with additional needs require to be improved. We have asked staff to provide clearer, better-planned support for children who need individual programmes for their learning.

The curriculum ensures a broad and balanced range of learning for all children. In the nursery and at the primary stages, staff are improving programmes of work by using Curriculum for Excellence guidance. Teachers have recently improved the programmes for English and mathematics. As a result, children now use information and communications technology in more creative ways to enhance their learning, for example to produce blogs and make movies of puppet shows which they produce. Staff should now continue with their plans to develop the curriculum further to ensure

that children progress well across all areas of their learning. Children are particularly well supported in moving from the Pink Panthers pre-school group into nursery, and then as they move on to P1. Early years staff are working together closely to develop these transition arrangements yet further. Well established links with Inverness Royal Academy help children at P7 to prepare well for secondary school.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

The headteacher knows the strengths and development needs of the school very well. She is well respected by children, parents and staff. They appreciate the way she has improved the school ethos for all and led developments in learning and teaching and in refreshing the curriculum. In order to maintain this pace of change in a sustainable and effective way, the remits of the school leadership team need to be reviewed. Along with staff, the leadership team should use self-evaluation approaches in a more focused way to bring about further improvements. Children across the school are now more involved in taking aspects of school improvement forward through working in their citizenship groups. Parents are also keen to work with staff and children in helping to improve the school.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Articulate and confident children who are keen to learn and very proud of their school and nursery.
- Very effective approaches to ensuring younger children make a smooth start to nursery and to P1.
- The commitment of all staff to providing a caring and supportive ethos for learning.
- The headteacher's leadership in improving the school ethos, managing change and in leading learning.

We discussed with staff and The Highland Council how they might continue to improve the school and nursery class. This is what we agreed with them.

- Improve arrangements for meeting the needs of children who require additional support.
- Use self-evaluation in a focused way to secure further improvements in children's attainment; learning and teaching approaches; and curriculum development.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, The Highland Council will inform parents about the school's progress.

Lesley A Johnstone
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/HolmPrimarySchoolHighland.asp>

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