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Glashieburn and Middleton Park Consultation
Education, Culture and Sport Aberdeen
City Council
Business Hub 13
Second Floor North
Marischal College
Broad Street
ABERDEEN
AB10 1AB

Dear Sir or Madam,

I write on behalf of the Leaders and Elders (Kirk Session) of St Columba's Church of Scotland in the Bridge of Don to make you aware of our views with regard to the Consultation about the future of Glashieburn and Middleton Park Schools.

The Kirk Session of St Columba's Church of Scotland is grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Consultation. It is vital to provide an opportunity for proposals to be made known, and for members of the community to be given a chance to respond. Having listened to the members of our community and to their concerns in light of the Proposal Document, the Kirk Session (Elders) of St Columba's Church of Scotland cannot identify any overriding merit in the proposal and do not support it. Indeed, we feel it is injurious to the wellbeing of the children of our community and are concerned that so many in our community now feel that trust in local government has been undermined.

We ask the Council, respectfully, to withdraw the proposal.

During the consultative process, the local community has charged the Proposal Document with factual inaccuracy and error. The Kirk Session of St Columba's Church of Scotland believes that a widespread community feeling of having been misled has seriously undermined confidence in the competency, honesty and transparency of the process.

The Kirk Session of St Columba's Church of Scotland is deeply concerned that aspirations for educational attainment and standards will not be achieved in a new

school with so great a pupil roll. We note the deep concerns in our community about accommodating such a large number of pupils on a site of the Glashieburn size, and we have serious concerns of our own about safety, not least of which is to do with large numbers of traffic and children all converging on one, small, site at the same time. We notice that the City Council has no advice to offer regarding parking at the new school other than to encourage parents not to drive their children to school. We believe that it is simply unrealistic to expect parents to walk their children to school, for considerable distances, in many cases, in poor weather, and that issues of safety and wellbeing have therefore not been addressed with sufficient carefulness or forethought. This is, for us, a matter of the greatest seriousness.

The Kirk Session of St Columba's Church of Scotland can see no educational benefit in the proposal to amalgamate the two schools. On the contrary, we see considerable educational difficulties ahead should two schools be shoe-horned into a space that is already cramped for existing pupils. We also believe that the unwillingness of the Council to address legitimate questions about the configuration of the teaching areas is, frankly, a cop-out. The Council could quite easily have allayed the understandable anxieties of parents. We share the anxieties of those parents that the configuration of the teaching areas has gone unaddressed. We believe that there is insufficient information concerning so important an issue for the proposal to proceed.

The Kirk Session of St Columba's Church of Scotland believes that community opposition to this proposal is so great that any determination on the part of the Council to proceed would seriously undermine trust in local government and would be perceived universally as an insult to eminently capable residents and thoughtful parents within our community.

The Kirk Session of St Columba's Church of Scotland notes from the Glashieburn School inspection of 2009 that teacher CPD was a cause of concern for teachers, as was the opportunity to be involved with setting priorities. We believe that a very large school on a small site is going to an exceptionally busy environment in which there are likely to be fewer opportunities for teacher CPD and goal-setting. We believe, too, that the views of pupils are far less likely to be heard or invited in a school that is simply too large for purpose.

For these reasons, the Kirk Session of St Columba's Church of Scotland believes that the proposals to amalgamate Middleton Park and Glashieburn Schools is unwise. We recognise the difficult decisions that need to be made by the Council. We are of the view that the disadvantages of amalgamating these two schools outweighs any perceived advantages, and we urge the Council to withdraw its proposal.

Yours sincerely,

Louis Kinsey
Minister
The Kirk Session of St Columba's Church of Scotland