



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES
STATUTORY CONSULTATION
PROPOSED CLOSURE OF ECCLES LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL



CONSULTATION PERIOD

FROM 14 MARCH 2019 TO 10 MAY 2019

PUBLIC MEETING

AT ECCLES VILLAGE HALL

ON 25 APRIL 2019 AT 7PM

This Proposal Paper has been issued by Scottish Borders Council Children and Young People's Services in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended.

THE PROPOSALS

1 It is proposed that, subject to the outcome of this statutory consultation,-

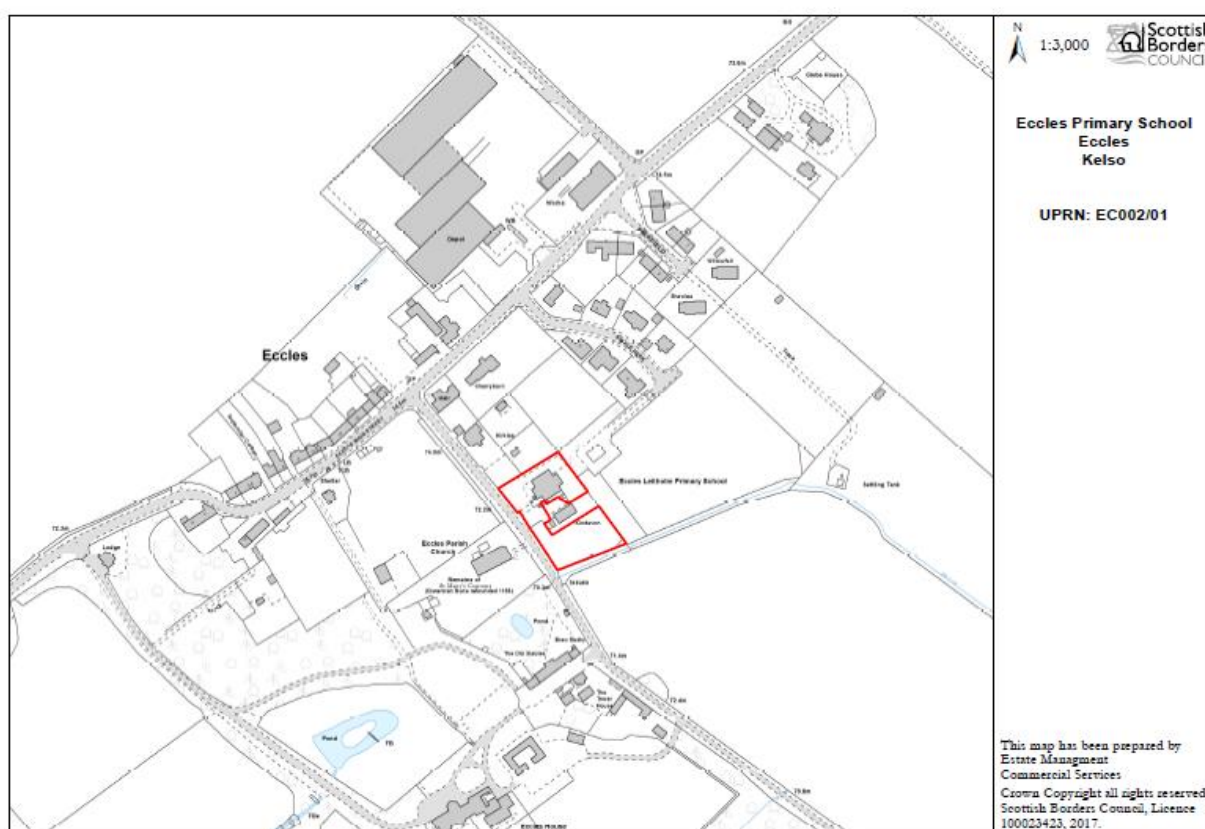
- Eccles Leitholm Primary School (currently mothballed) is permanently closed on or around 20 August 2019; and
- If Eccles Leitholm Primary School is closed, that its catchment area is permanently re-zoned to the catchment area of either Coldstream Primary School or Swinton Primary School
(the **Proposals**).

BACKGROUND

2 Eccles Leitholm Primary School

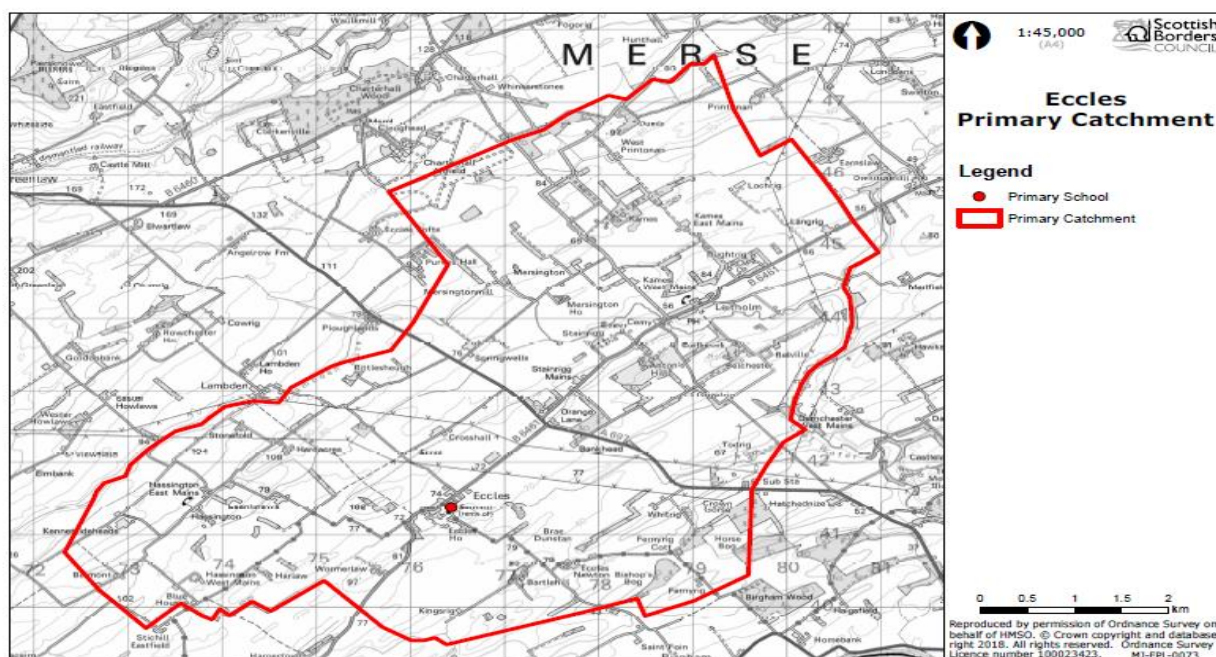
2.1 Eccles Leitholm Primary School, Eccles, is a non-denominational primary school that opened in 1964 and had capacity for 50 pupils. The school is in the catchment for Berwickshire High School and lies within the Berwickshire learning cluster of schools. The school has been designated as an accessible rural school by the Scottish Government¹.

2.2 Its location is shown on this map:-



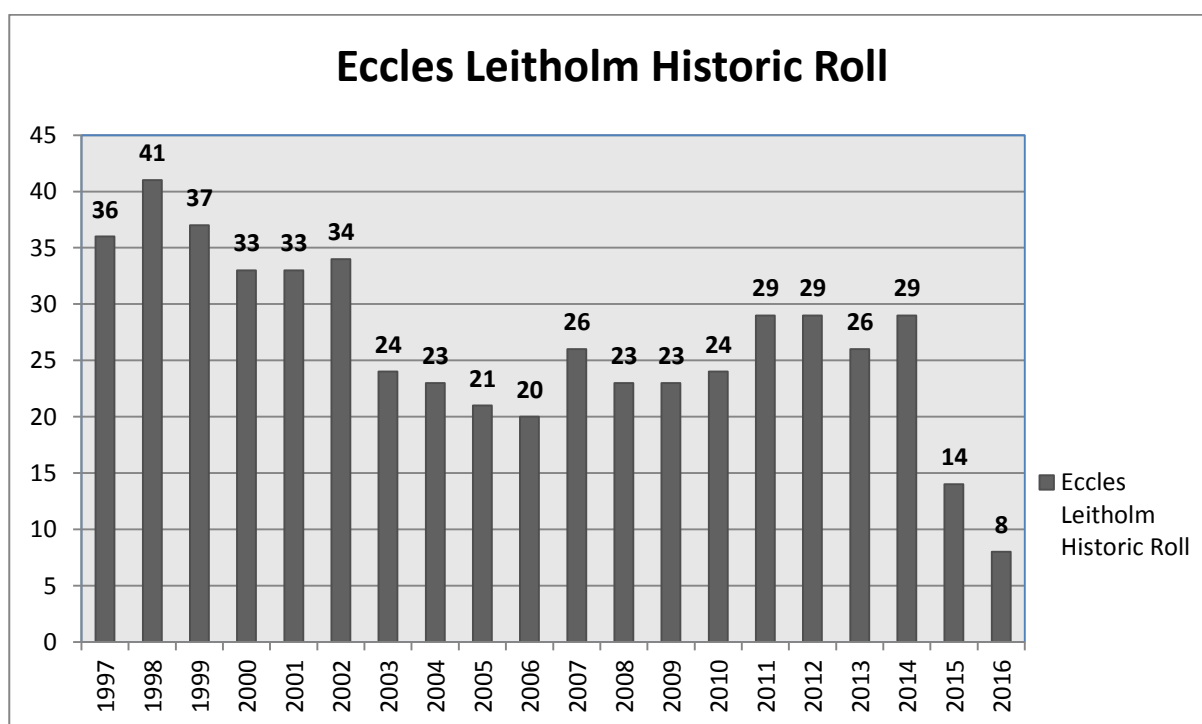
¹ [Scottish Government Rural Schools 2017](#)

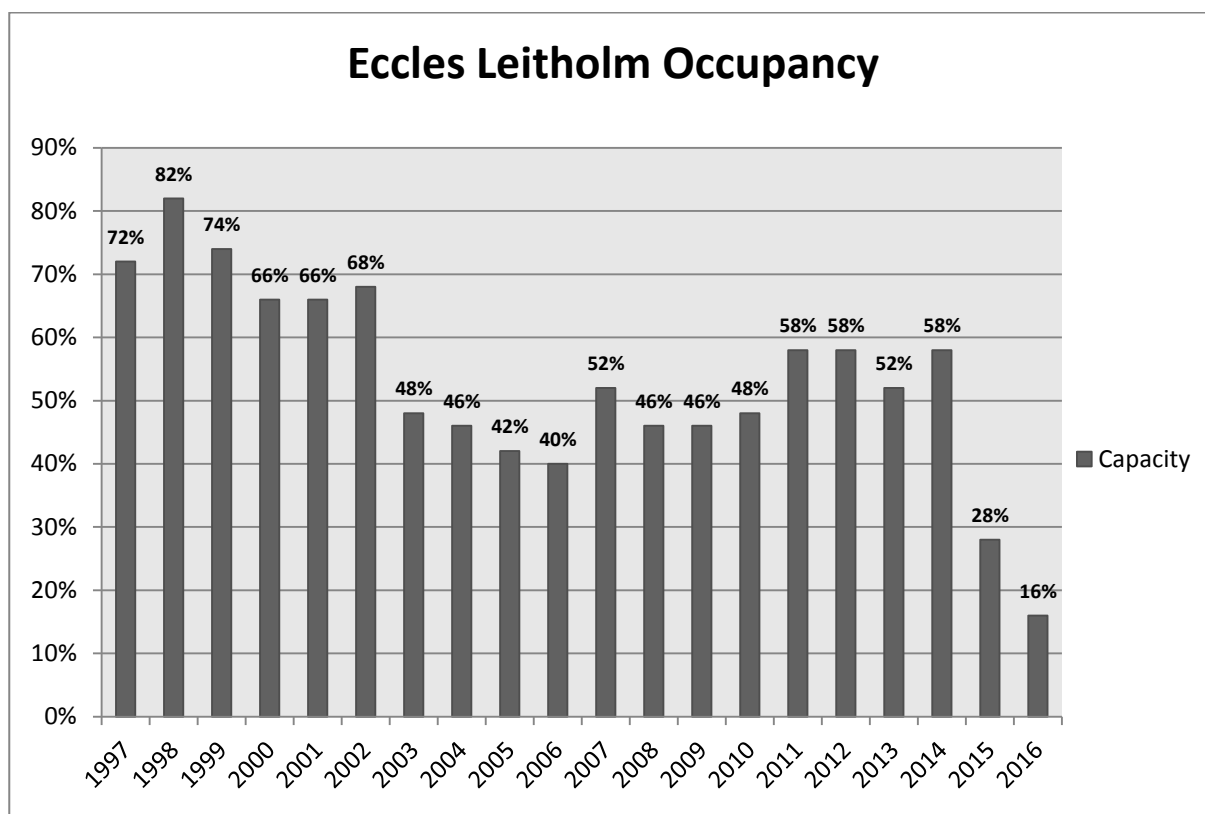
2.3 The catchment area is shown below:-



2.4 In August 2013 there were 29 pupils attending the school in 2 classes. The roll dropped dramatically in the next school year to 14 pupils (3 pupils had transitioned to high school, 6 placing requests had been made and 6 other pupils had left the area). Session 2015/16 started with a roll of 8, but this had decreased to 5 by April 2016. The School roll was forecast to fall to 3 pupils for 2016/17. Given the school capacity of 50 pupils this would have meant occupancy of the school was only 6%.

2.5 The historic school roll and occupancy levels are shown below:-



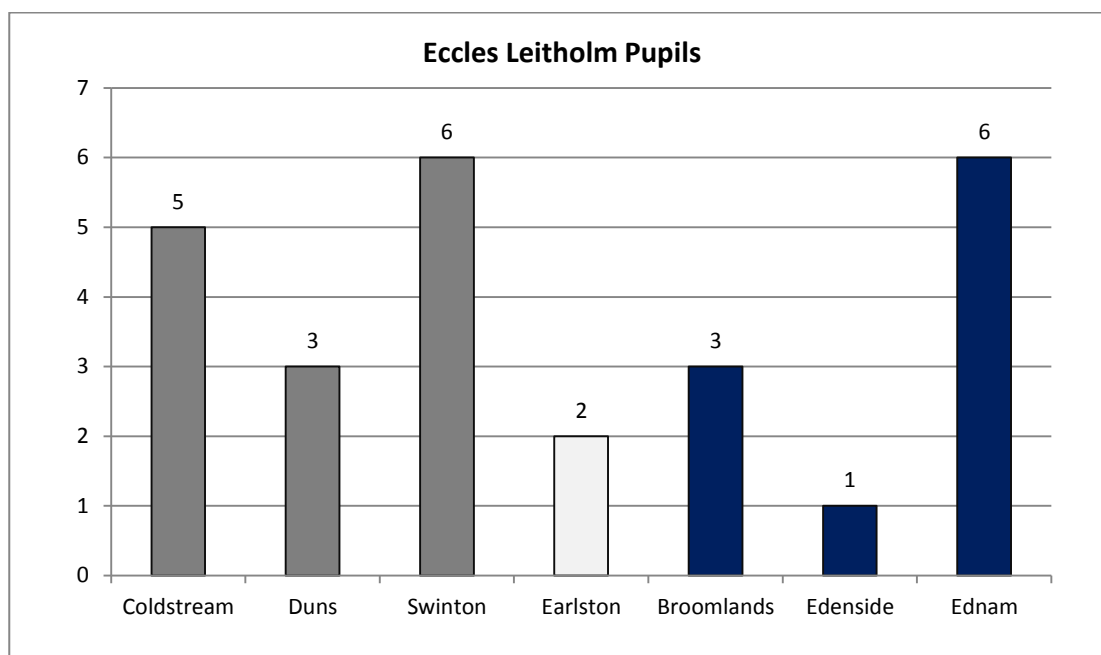


2.6 There had been an emerging pattern of placement requests to other schools, prior to mothballing.

	New Placing Requests	School	Roll	% of Catchment
2013 - 2014	2	Edenside PS	29	
	1	Duns PS		
	1	Broomlands PS		
Total	4			12%
2014 - 2015	3	Duns PS	14	
	2	Ednam PS		
	1	Swinton PS		
Total	6			30%
2015 - 2016	2	Duns PS	8	
	1	Coldstream PS		
	1	Edenside PS		
	1	Swinton PS		
Total	5			38%

2.7 In May 2016 there were 5 pupils at the school, with no pupils enrolled in P1-3. 2 of these pupils were in P7, so would be transitioning to high school during the summer. Given the considerable drop in the school roll, lack of enrolment at P1 for 3 years and number of placement requests being made, Council officers recognised that Eccles Leitholm Primary School was at risk. Discussions were held with the local councillors initially to consider all the options available regarding the school. It was recognised that there were challenges in providing a positive school experience to such a small roll and it was agreed that parental opinion should be sought.

- 2.8 Parents recognised a number of issues relating to the size of Eccles Leitholm and the impact that that could have on their children's education. These included difficulties for children to form wide friendship groups with similar interests; anticipated difficulties with transition to High School; lack of opportunities for games and team sports and lack of links into a network of clubs and activities. Potential educational benefits were discussed should the children be able to attend a larger primary school: greater opportunities for socialisation; collaborative learning and greater opportunities for participation in team activities and greater opportunities to experience the skills and abilities of a wider staff group. There was also recognition that the children were not able to fully participate in the Curriculum for Excellence as opportunities for collaboration and peer working among learners were limited.
- 2.9 Following these discussions, the families of the remaining pupils chose to make placing requests to other schools in the area, which were granted. As a result of these placing requests no pupils were enrolled to attend the school in the 2016/2017 session.
- 2.10 In May 2016, Scottish Borders Council's Executive Committee agreed that Eccles Leitholm Primary School be mothballed for an interim period. The position of the school was to be monitored on an ongoing basis; with a decision to be made regarding the future of the school once all options had been assessed.
- 2.11 It was clear that the placing requests over the preceding years were to a number of different schools (15 children attending 6 schools), as the Council was supporting choice as far as possible. Council officers considered a number of factors (distance, travel times, safe routes to school, transition, staff and parental wishes) before making a proposal regarding the temporary rezoning of the Eccles Leitholm catchment.
- 2.12 Eccles Leitholm was a partner school with Coldstream Primary School and they had a shared head teacher. Pupils from Eccles Leitholm regularly accessed facilities and activities in Coldstream Primary. The schools were both within the same secondary cluster (Berwickshire) and worked in the same learning community. Improvement plans were aligned across the 2 schools, along with curricular and teaching plans. It was therefore considered by the Council at this time that this would result in an easier transition for pupils from Eccles Leitholm into classes at Coldstream and that their learning continuity and progression would be supported. The catchment area for Eccles Leitholm was therefore rezoned to Coldstream Primary School and transportation was provided for the children to their new school.
- 2.13 There are currently 26 primary aged children living in the Eccles Leitholm catchment. These children attend 7 different primary schools located in the Berwickshire cluster (Coldstream, Duns and Swinton) and the Kelso (Broomlands, Edenside and Ednam) and Earlston clusters.



- 2.14 There currently 12 pre-school aged children within the Eccles Leitholm catchment who are attending 5 different Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings across several locations. Prior to mothballing there was not an ELC setting at Eccles Leitholm Primary School.
- 2.15 The condition survey was carried out on Eccles Leitholm Primary School in 2015 and the overall site is rated as Condition B Satisfactory (Performing adequately but showing minor defects). Condition is an assessment of physical condition of the school and its grounds.
- 2.16 The suitability of Eccles Leitholm Primary School prior to mothballing was categories as B (Satisfactory) with elements of C (Poor). Suitability is a more subjective assessment of the school as a whole, its buildings, its grounds and the impact these have on the learning and teaching, leisure and social activities and health and wellbeing of all users.
- 2.17 The backlog maintenance costs at Eccles Leitholm are currently estimated to be £108,845. This would remedy the current issues; it is very likely that other costs would be incurred to re-open the building as a school. The facilities at the school would be adequate but there would most likely still be a requirement to share facilities with Coldstream Primary School for certain lessons and activities.

3 AREA DEMOGRAPHICS

- 3.1 Eccles Leitholm Primary School is situated in Eccles, Berwickshire within the Scottish Borders. The village of Leitholm is a 2.5 miles to the northeast of Eccles. Both villages are located less than 7 miles from Coldstream. As can be seen across the Scottish Borders, the area has witnessed a change in local population demographics. We have analysed data derived from the National Records of Scotland. We have considered data from 2 larger areas which comprise the Eccles Leitholm catchment zone. While this data does not directly reflect actual movements within the catchment area, it reflects population changes in the larger area.

Year		Swinton Leitholm and Fogo Area	%	Gordon and Hume Area	%
2011	0 to 15	177	18%	212	21%
	16 to 64	611	64%	577	58%
	65+	173	18%	209	21%
	All people	961		998	
2017	0 to 15	132	15%	204	19%
	16 to 64	555	63%	615	58%
	65+	199	22%	250	23%
	All people	886		1069	

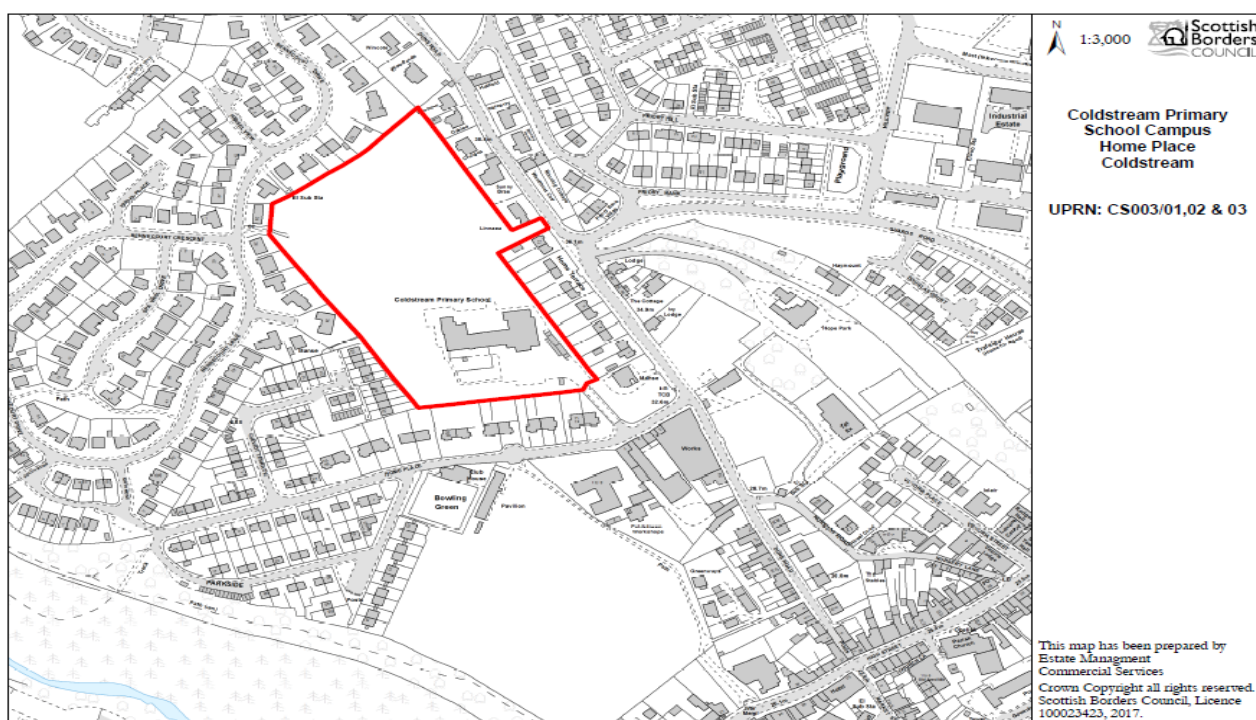
- 3.2 As the table above shows there has been a decline in the number of children within the area since the start of the decade, with the number of children in the Swinton, Leitholm and Fogo area declining by 25% and in Gordon and Hume by less than 4%. Overall the population in the Swinton and Leitholm area has only declined by 8% where the Gordon and Hume population has grown by 7%. Noticeably the population is aging in both areas.
- 3.3 The villages of Eccles & Leitholm fall within the Eastern Housing Market Area, while parts of the catchment area fall within the Central Housing Market Area, both as identified within the Scottish Borders Council Local Development Plan 2016 (**LDP**). The LDP allocates 2 housing sites within Eccles, namely: Cherryburn and Main Street. The former allocated housing site has an indicative site capacity of 7 units and the latter 5 units. One site is allocated within Leitholm, on Main Street. The allocated housing site has an indicative site capacity of 25 units. The Housing Land Audit (HLA) 2017 programmes the 12 units in Eccles to be built in 2021 and 2022. This has been informed using past completion rates and the lack of developer interest to date. The larger site in Leitholm is programmed to release 5 units a year from 2021. This level of development could be estimated to add pupils to the school rolls. However, taking on board the programming contained within the HLA, the delivery of housing within the area could be spread over several LDP periods.
- 3.4 In terms of potential new business ventures in the area, there have been no enquiries to the council's business & economic development team. They have advised that there are unlikely to be any significant changes to the population relative to Eccles & Leitholm Primary school catchment area as a result of business growth

4 COLDSTREAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

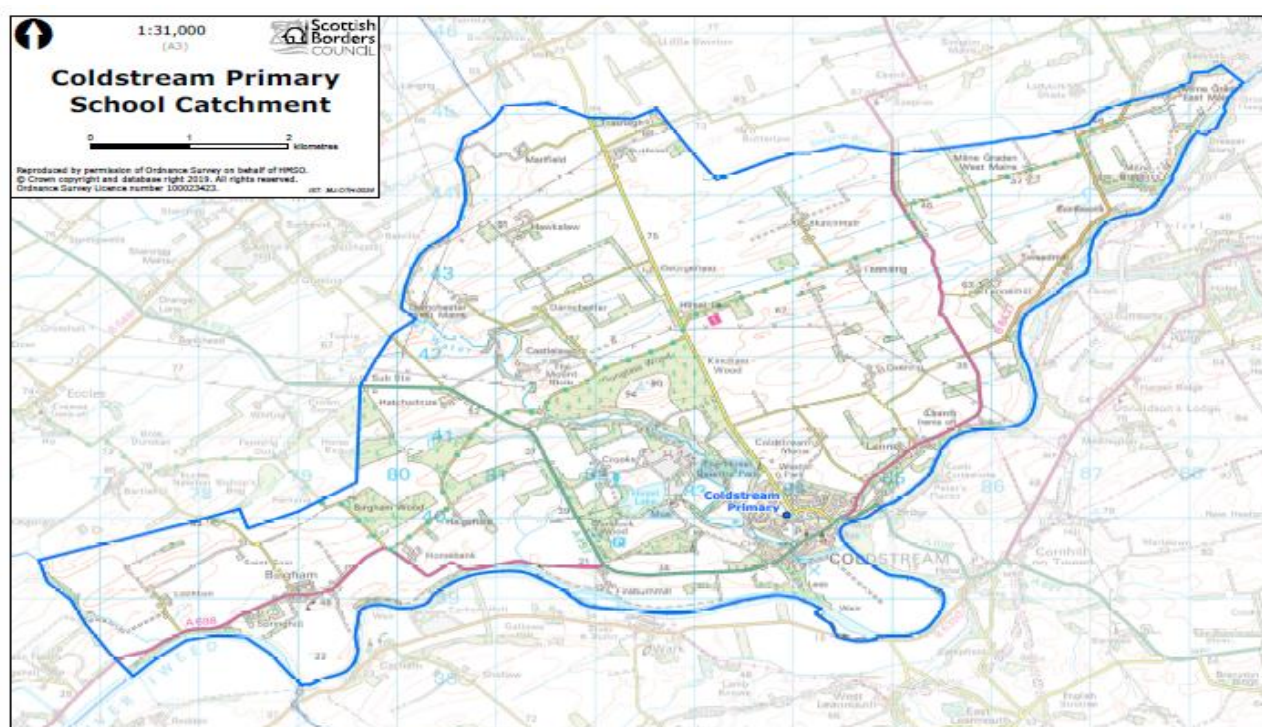
- 4.1 Coldstream Primary School provides non-denominational primary education to pupils from the village of Coldstream and surrounding area. The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2017² classifies Swinton Primary School as "Accessible-rural".

² [Scottish Rural Schools List 2017](#)

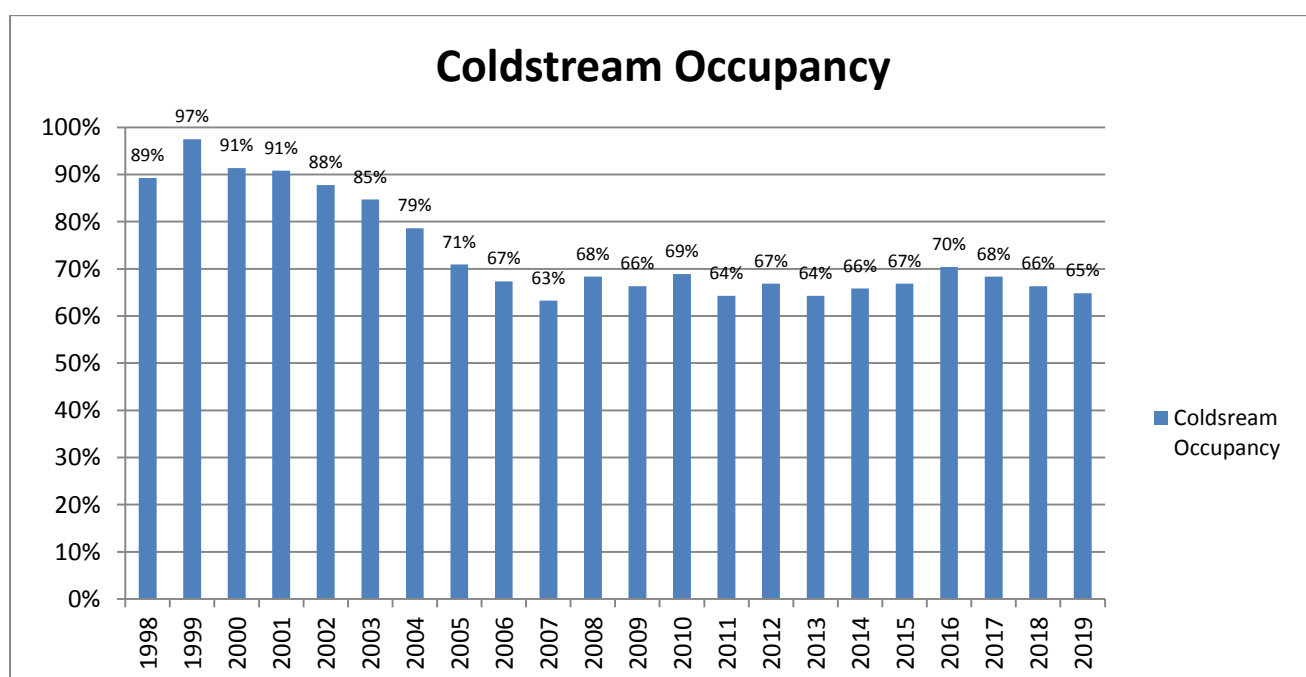
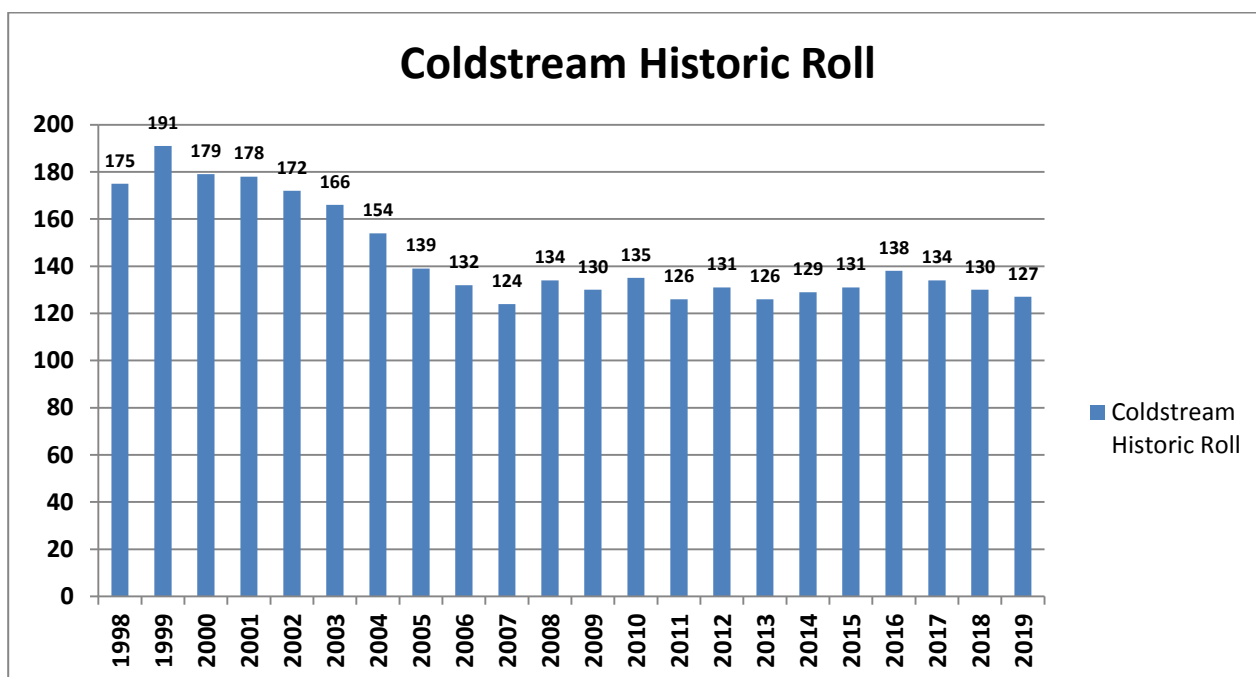
4.2 The location of Coldstream Primary School is shown here:



4.3. The catchment area for Coldstream Primary is shown here:-



4.4 The school has capacity for 196 pupils. The school roll is currently 127 which equates to 65% occupancy. The school roll has remained fairly steady over the last decade at an average occupancy of 67%.



- 4.5 A condition survey was carried out on the building in 2016 and the overall site is rated as Condition C - Poor (Showing major defect and/or not operating adequately)³. A suitability survey was carried out in 2016 on Coldstream Primary School and it was rated C - Poor (Showing major problems and /or not operating optimally)⁴. Both surveys are undertaken on a 5 year cycle and data is reviewed and investment planned accordingly annually.

³ Condition is an assessment of physical condition of the school and its grounds.

⁴ Suitability is an assessment of the school as a whole, its buildings, its grounds and the impacts these have on the learning and teaching, leisure and social activities and health and wellbeing of all users.

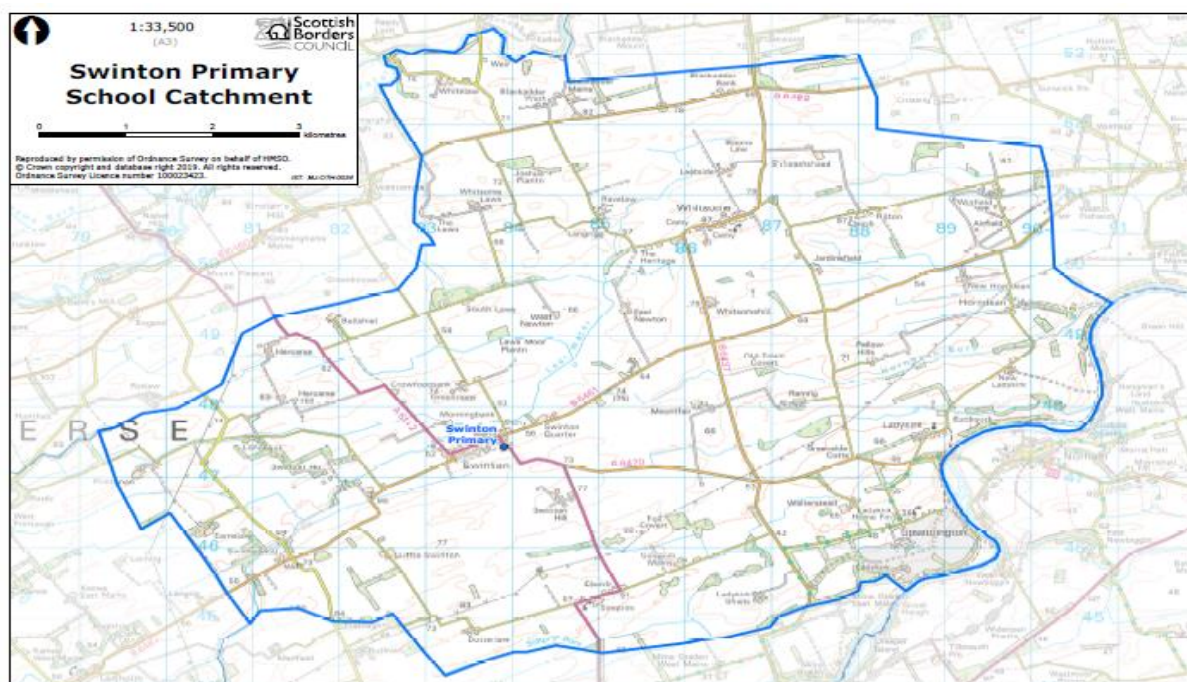
5 SWINTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

5.1 Swinton Primary School provides non-denominational primary education to pupils from the village of Swinton and surrounding area. The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2017⁵ classifies Swinton Primary School as "Accessible-rural".

5.2. The location of Swinton Primary is shown here:-

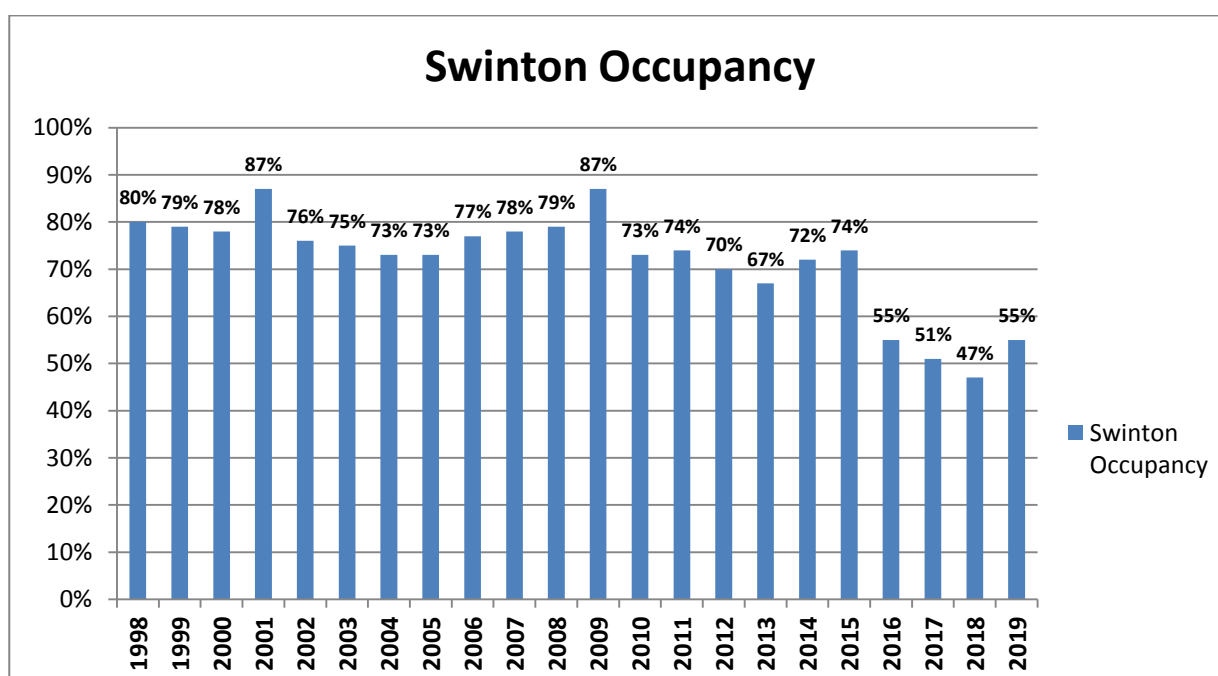
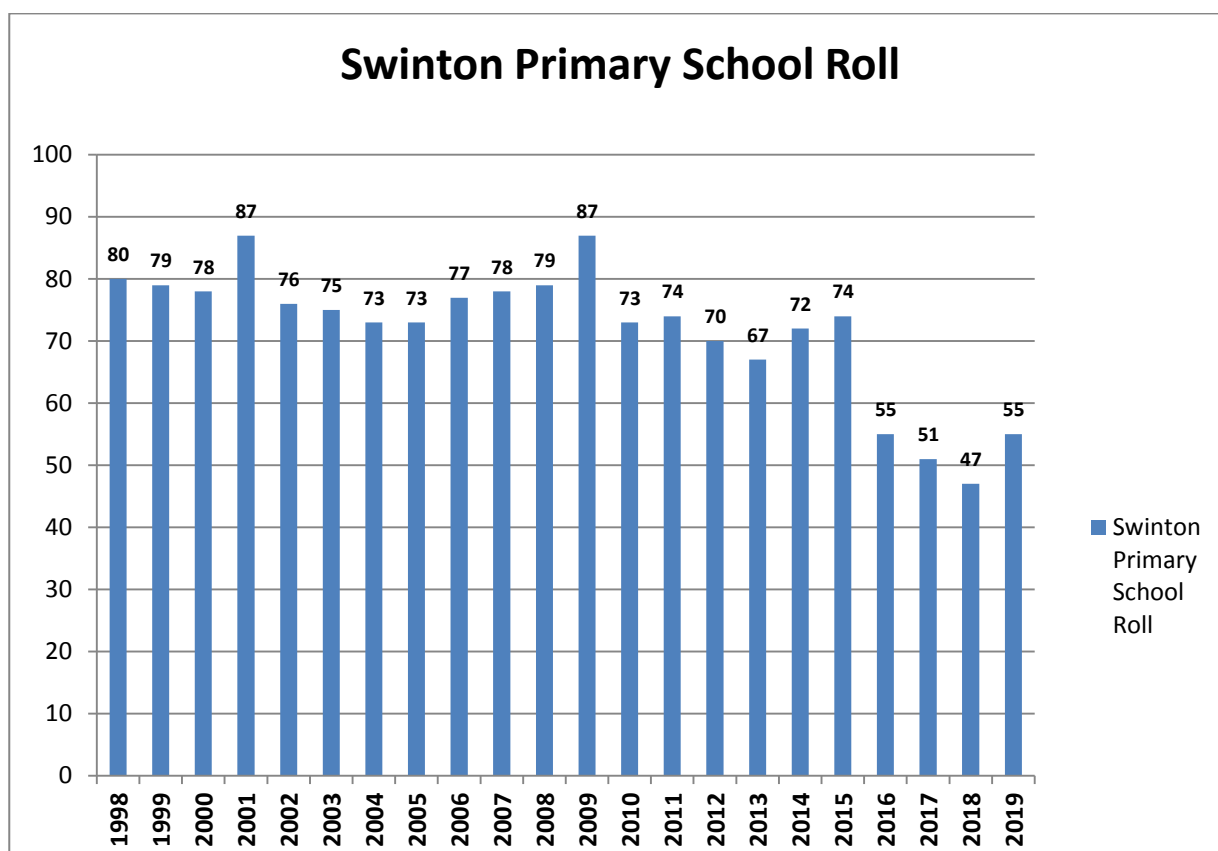


5.3 The catchment area of Swinton Primary is shown here:-



⁵ [Scottish Rural Schools List 2017](#)

- 5.4 The school has capacity for 100 pupils. The school roll is currently 55 which equates to 55% occupancy. The school roll has fluctuated over the years but has had an average occupancy over the last 10 years of 64%.



- 5.5 A condition survey was carried out on the building in 2017 and the overall site is rated as Condition C - Poor (Showing major defect and/or not operating adequately)⁶. A suitability survey was carried out in 2017 on Swinton Primary School and it was rated C - Poor (Showing major

⁶ Condition is an assessment of physical condition of the school and its grounds.

problems and /or not operating optimally)⁷. Both surveys are undertaken on a 5 year cycle and data is reviewed and investment planned accordingly annually

6 PRE-CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1 Scottish Borders Council commenced a pre-consultation process in 2016 focused on the current school estate provision and what it should aspire to look like across the region. The Council undertook to engage with all stakeholders to obtain information and opinions regarding all the current school estate and to seek views and ideas in respect of the vision of the future.
- 5.2 The five strategic principles that were adopted when reviewing the school estate were:
 - 5.2.1 Increased educational and learning opportunities for all generations within the community;
 - 5.2.2 Improved outcomes for children and young people;
 - 5.2.3 Sustainability;
 - 5.2.4 Future proofing the school estate; and
 - 5.2.5 Affordability.
- 5.3 In February 2016 the Council launched a Pre-consultation and Review of its School Estate, promoted through letters issued to every Press family group via school mail, all school user groups, elected members and Community Councils. Press releases, social media updates, posters and school newsletters were used to advertise the pre-consultation events. Nine consultation events were held, one in each High School. This included a review of the mothballed schools.
- 5.4 In November 2017 the Council's Executive (Education) Committee, as part of the next stage of the School Estate Review, approved a proposal to re-visit the mothballed schools.
- 5.5 As Eccles Leitholm Primary School is a Rural School, specific provisions under Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended (**2010 Act**) apply. Council officers have, in accordance with the 2010 Act, prepared detailed Options Appraisals in respect of Eccles Leitholm Primary School; analysing a range of available options to ensure that the most reasonable and appropriate course of action was identified.
- 5.6 A summary of the Options Appraisals is given in below. The complete Options Appraisal Report is attached as **Appendix 1**.
- 5.7 The Options Appraisal concludes that the closure of Eccles Leitholm Primary School is the most appropriate option. The statutory consultation process is set out in the 2010 Act. The principal purpose of the 2010 Act is to provide strong, accountable statutory consultation practices and procedures that local authorities must apply to their handling of all proposals for school closures and other major changes to schools. All consultation processes are expected to be robust, open, transparent and fair, and be seen to be so. They are also expected to be consistent across Scotland. This proposal paper has been prepared in accordance with the terms of the 2010 Act.

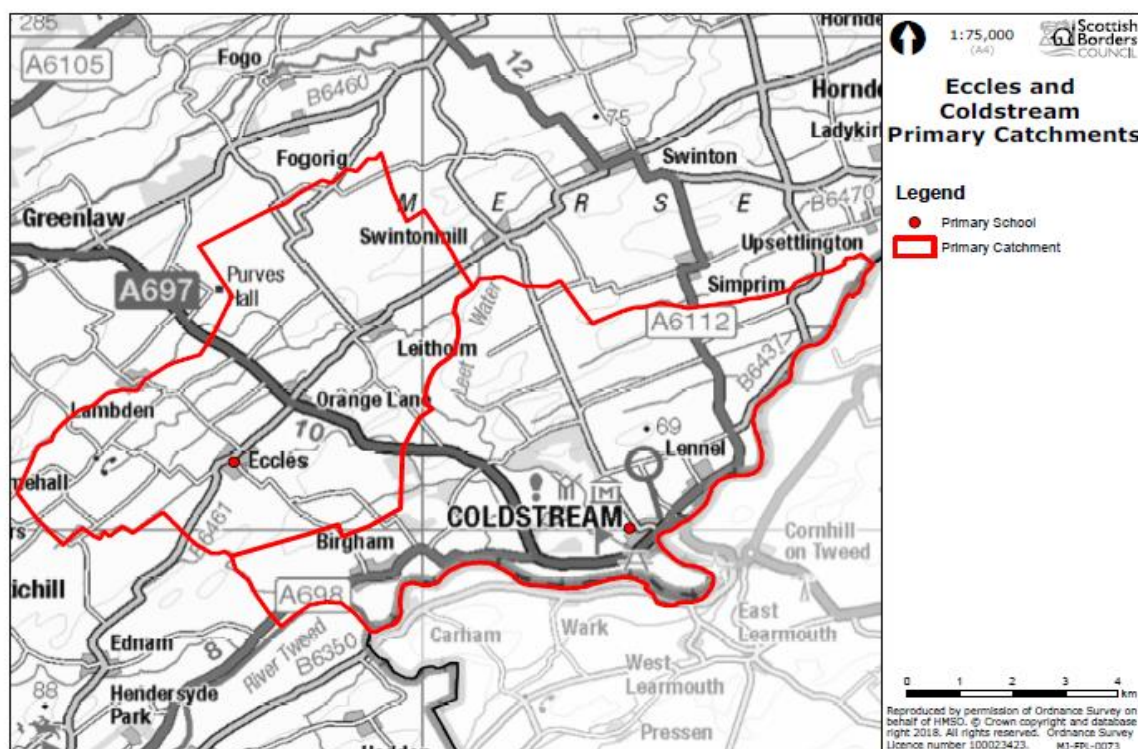
⁷ *Suitability is an assessment of the school as a whole, its buildings, its grounds and the impacts these have on the learning and teaching, leisure and social activities and health and wellbeing of all users.*

6 PROPOSALS AND REASONS FOR THE PROPOSALS

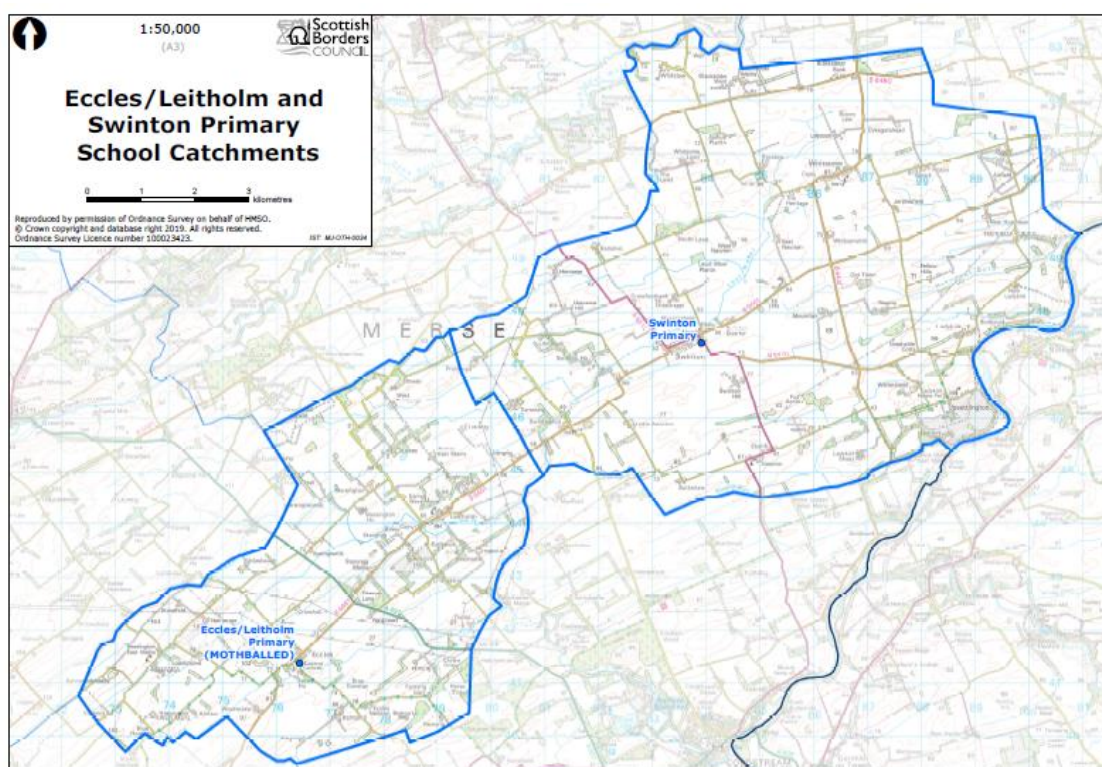
- 6.1. The Council wishes to consult with parents, pupils, staff and the community on a proposal to permanently close Eccles Leitholm Primary School and then re-zone its catchment area permanently.
- 6.2 Recognising that the children from the original Eccles Leitholm catchment currently attend 7 different primary schools, it is clear that there is not a preferred school option for the re-zoning of the catchment area. At the time of mothballing the decision was made to temporarily re-zone the catchment to Coldstream; given the shared head teacher between the schools and as the pupils accessed Coldstream for certain lessons and to share the facilities. However, only 19% of the children from the Eccles Leitholm catchment currently attend Coldstream Primary School. It is therefore proposed that there should be consultation on which school would be the preferred option for the permanent re-zoning of the catchment area. We have examined the pattern of enrolment for primary schools across the Berwickshire school cluster and it proposed that views and comments should be sought regarding whether the Eccles Leitholm catchment should be re-zoned to either Coldstream Primary School or Swinton Primary School.
- 6.2 There are a number of reasons why the Council wishes to consult on these Proposals:-
 - 6.2.1 Councils have a statutory duty in terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to make adequate and efficient provision of school education across their entire area for the current school population and future pattern of demand. The school education provided has to be flexible to fit individual needs and to be tailored by age ability and aptitude.
 - 6.2.2 Councils also have a statutory responsibility in terms of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 to achieve best value and optimum efficiency. The Council is therefore required to regularly review services. The organisation of the school estate is kept under regular review, including the need for school provision and other factors, such as altering catchment areas and the implementation of shared headships.
 - 6.2.3 Scottish Borders Council is committed to promote exemplary learning environments to support dynamic learner progression from early years through to entry into employment, vocational study or further and higher education.
 - 6.2.4 Prior to Eccles Leitholm Primary School being mothballed, the roll numbers had experienced a significant decline (down 73% from 2014 to 2016). Part of the reason for the fall in roll was that many parents/carers had decided to make placing requests for their children to be educated in a range of other primary schools, including schools in other high school clusters. Since 2016 there have been no enquiries made in relation to children enrolling at Eccles Leitholm Primary School and no children are likely to attend the school in the future.
 - 6.2.6 It is considered that the low pupil roll at Eccles Leitholm Primary School had presented challenges in providing the breadth of learning, social and emotional experiences required to meet the needs of pupils. Prior to mothballing, Eccles Leitholm pupils were already accessing Coldstream for certain lessons, with increasing number choosing to attend other schools in preference to Eccles Leitholm (15 children attending 6 other schools in the 3 years prior to mothballing).
 - 6.2.7 Following mothballing, pupils from the Eccles Leitholm catchment area have been attending a variety of schools. If Eccles Leitholm Primary school was to re-open in August 2019 (with the same catchment or increased catchment) it is unclear how many if any pupils would wish to enrol at the school. Council officers have been unable to identify demand in the local area to re-open Eccles Leitholm Primary School.

Parents/carers appear satisfied with their children's learning experiences and outcomes at the schools they are attending.

- 6.2.9 If Eccles Leitholm was to reopen in 2019, there would still be a requirement to visit Coldstream for certain lessons and to access facilities.
- 6.2.10 There are currently 5 children from the Eccles Leitholm catchment attending Coldstream Primary School. However 2 of these children are due to transition to High School this year. Currently only 8% of the parents of pre-school children, in the original catchment for Eccles Leitholm, have indicated that they wish to enrol their child at Coldstream Primary School.
- 6.2.11 There are currently 6 children from the original Eccles Leitholm catchment attending Swinton, with 4 P1s from the area having enrolled into this school year. None of the parents of the pre-school children in the area have currently indicated a preference for Swinton Primary School. Although this may change once an Early Learning and Childcare setting opens at the school in August 2019 offering 1140 hours funded childcare, as there will be improved transition from Early Learning to Primary School.
- 6.2.12 Currently 77% of parents/carers pre-school children residing in the original catchment area for Eccles Leitholm have indicated a preference for their children to attend a primary school in the Kelso cluster. However it is proposed that the consultation regarding a permanent re-zoning of the Eccles Leitholm catchment be limited to schools within the Berwickshire cluster as otherwise a large scale consultation would be required to amend the secondary catchment areas. It is important to note that Parents still retain the right to make a placing request for another school of their choice as outlined in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, as amended, the Council will continue with its policy to support this choice as far as possible.
- 6.2.13 This map indicates the enlarged catchment area if consultees indicate a preference for the catchment area for Eccles Leitholm to be permanently re-zoned to Coldstream Primary School:-



- 6.2.14 Council officers consider that the proposal for pupils from the Eccles Leitholm catchment to attend Coldstream Primary School would have educational benefits for pupils. Permanently re-zoning the catchment area will increase pupils' resilience through being part of a larger school community and will also help promote their social and emotional development by providing greater challenge as well as the opportunity to be part of a wider, age-appropriate peer group.
- 6.2.15 This map indicates the enlarged catchment area if consultees indicate a preference for the catchment area for Eccles Leitholm to be permanently re-zoned to Swinton Primary School:-



- 6.2.16 Council officers consider that there would be educational benefits to the children attending Swinton Primary School as this would provide a rural school option for children within their community. The school currently has 55 pupils so can provide the pupils with a chance of a smaller school experience, with the opportunity for composite classes and a wider peer group than would be available at Eccles Leitholm.

7 OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 7.1 Scottish Government guidance indicates that local authorities should review a mothballed school within 3 years of mothballing. As Eccles Leitholm is a rural school, the 2010 Act requires that prior to making a proposal to closure that all reasonable alternatives to closure are considered by a Council, with a closure proposal only being made if it is the most appropriate option. In order to determine the options available regarding the future of the school, Council officers have identified several potential options and assessed these to assist in identifying the most reasonable option to make a proposal to Councillors. The analyses has taken consideration of the provisions of the 2010 Act; in particular the provisions regarding rural schools. Through the Options Appraisal process a number of possible options were identified by the Council for the future of Eccles Leitholm Primary School's namely:

OPTIONS FOR ECCLES LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL	
Option 1	Reopen Eccles Leitholm Primary School with its original catchment area
Option 2	Reopen Eccles Leitholm Primary School with an expanded catchment area
Option 3	Continue mothballing Eccles Leitholm Primary School, with the catchment area remaining zoned to Coldstream Primary School
Option 4	Close Eccles Leitholm Primary School, with the catchment area zoned permanently to either Coldstream Primary School or Swinton Primary School

- 7.2 A summary of the Options Appraisals is given in below. The complete Options Appraisal Report is published on the Scottish Borders Council website: <https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/ecclesleitholm> and attached as **Appendix 1**.

8. **OPTION 1** **REOPEN ECCLE LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH ITS ORIGINAL CATCHMENT AREA**

- 8.1 It is considered that this was not a reasonable alternative to closure. Council officers have been unable to identify a demand within the community to re-open the school; the parents/carers appear satisfied with the education and experiences that their children receive at their current schools. In line with other rural areas there has been a decline in the population the 0-15s age group as working patterns change across the country with many rural schools witnessing a decline in pupil numbers. We have been unable to establish any planned development or business activity that would be likely to impact on the current demographics of the area.
- 8.2 At the time of mothballing Eccles Leitholm was rated as a B and C for Condition and Suitability. The Council's estates team estimate that it would cost £108,845 to remedy the current defects with the building. These works would allow the school building to be re-opened however pupils would still require to travel to Coldstream Primary School to access facilities and certain lessons.
- 8.3 It is considered that while Eccles Leitholm reopening would be likely to allow for greater involvement with its community, there could be educational disadvantages in reopening Eccles Leitholm Primary School with a small school roll versus the opportunity for combined provision that is currently being consulted upon regarding the re-zoning of the catchment area to Coldstream or Swinton. Many of the educational benefits that can be considered to arise from attending a smaller rural school also apply to both Coldstream and Swinton; with close bonds across year groups and opportunities to collaborate across the age range. Both these schools provide the opportunity for smaller class sizes and composite classes, which cannot exceed 25 pupils
- 8.4 Changes to travel arrangements cannot be accurately quantified as currently only 5 children are being transported to Coldstream from the Eccles Leitholm catchment area. If the school was to re-open it is difficult to estimate how many children would wish to enrol at the school and

whether they would require transport to and from school. It is clear that the provision of funded transport has not been a material concern for parents when choosing which school they wish to enrol their child.

- 8.5 In conclusion it is not considered a reasonable or sustainable option to re-open Eccles Leitholm Primary School with its original catchment zone.

9 **OPTION 2** **REOPEN ECCLES LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL AND REDELINEATE THE CATCHMENT AREA**

- 9.1 Given the questions raised in **Option 1** about levels of demand in the area for the school to be re-opened, it was deemed reasonable to consider whether expanding the catchment area would allow the school to be re-opened to provide a viable primary school for an enlarged catchment.
- 9.2 A mapping exercise of the postcodes of children in the neighbouring catchment areas has been carried out. This confirmed that there were almost no children in the neighbouring catchments living closer to Eccles Leitholm Primary School than their current catchment school. Given the rurality of the area, safe travel routes were also considered and it was concluded that the current travel plans would be preferable. Given the impact that amending catchment areas can have on schools this is not considered a reasonable option. Particularly as any changes to catchment areas would require a Statutory Consultation with identified Educational Benefits. Officers do not consider that there would be an arguable basis for catchment amendment on the basis of demand or Educational Benefits. No evidence of demand to attend Eccles Leitholm has been identified and there appears to be satisfaction with the current primary schools attended. Accordingly the option to amend/extend the Eccles Leitholm catchment area is not considered a reasonable option as it is unlikely that the catchment area could be made more sustainable on this basis.
- 9.3 In conclusion this is not considered a reasonable option as the mapping exercise only identified a few children who might live closer to Eccles Leitholm than their current catchment school, however when taking into account travel time and safe routes to school it is difficult to establish if there would be any children that might prefer to attend Eccles Leitholm. Council officers have also been unable to establish persuasive educational benefits to support a change in catchment to attempt to re-open the school, particularly when taking cognisance of the parental choice away from the school had preceded the mothballing decision.

10 **OPTION 3** **CONTINUE MOTHBALLING ECCLES LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH THE PUPILS ZONED TO COLDSTREAM PRIMARY SCHOOL**

- 10.1 This option considers whether the school should continue to be mothballed as re-opening is not immediately viable but may be reasonably viable in the future. The school has been mothballed for almost 3 years. The statutory guidance to the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 states: *"the maximum length of its duration is likely to depend on the location of the school and the desirability of maintaining capacity to reopen a school there, but it is unlikely that it should exceed three years in areas that are not very remote."*
- 10.2 The school has been mothballed for over 3 years. Pupil numbers in the area are not projected to rise in the future and there is currently no significant planned housebuilding or business development to increase population numbers.

- 10.3 At the community meetings people were disappointed that the school was still mothballed and generally considered it was already in effect closed. They considered that the building could be better utilised and that resources were being wasted by keeping the school mothballed. The community viewed the long term utilisation of the building by the community or otherwise as an opportunity for the community.
- 10.4 On the basis that pupil numbers will not increase, mothballing is not considered a good use of resources and the building could be used to benefit the community, continued mothballing is not viewed as a reasonable option.

11 OPTION 4 – THE PROPOSAL
CLOSE ECCLES LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL PERMANENTLY AND RE-ZONE THE CATCHMENT AREA TO EITHER COLDSTREAM PRIMARY SCHOOL OR SWINTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

- 11.1 Option 4 would result in the permanent closure of the school and the permanent re-delineation of the catchment zone. However the new catchment area is still to be determined. It is therefore part of this consultation process to obtain views regarding which catchment the Eccles Leitholm catchment should be merged with. Once views on the catchment have been obtained a formal recommendation will be made to the Councillors. If the decision is made to close Eccles Leitholm, Children and Young People Services will declare the school building as surplus and alternative uses for the building could then be progressed. It should be noted that it is proposed that if the decision is made to change the catchment area to Swinton Primary School, the children currently attending Coldstream Primary School, along with their siblings (providing the older sibling is still attending the school) will continue to receive funded transport to Coldstream until their transition to high school.
- 11.2 In the analysis of **Options 1, 2 and 3** it has been concluded that it would not be reasonable to re-open the school with its current or an extended catchment and that continuing to mothball would not be a reasonable conclusion

Evidence of Demand for Eccles Leitholm

- 11.3 Eccles Primary School was mothballed in November 2015 after a rapid decline in the school roll (73% reduction 2012 - 2015) and an increase in placement requests (9% of the roll in 2013/14 increasing to 43% at the start of 2015), with the pupils from the catchment attending 7 different schools in the current school year. There are currently 26 primary school aged children residing in the catchment area for Eccles Leitholm Primary School. These pupils attend primary schools in the Berwickshire (54%), Kelso (38%) and Earlston (8%) clusters. Council officers have not identified demand for the school to be re-opened and have been advised that the community already considers the school is closed.
- 11.4 Both Coldstream Primary School and Swinton Primary School have capacity to accommodate all the children in the Eccles Leitholm catchment.
- 11.5 There are no areas of housing or business or economic development currently planned or expected that would lead to any significant changes to the population relative to Eccles Leitholm Primary school catchment area that would be likely to generate demand for the school to re-open.

Educational Benefits

- 11.6 The Council has statutory duties relating to the provision of education in the Scottish Borders. Children and Young People's Services key priorities are to improve well-being, inclusion, experiences and opportunities for all our children and young people, both within and outwith the formal curriculum. As part of a multi-agency partnership, the following priorities have been identified within the Children and Young People's Services Plan:
- 11.6.1 Keeping children and young people safe;
 - 11.6.2 Promoting the health and well-being of all children and young people and reducing health inequalities;
 - 11.6.3 Improving the well-being and life chances for our most vulnerable children and young people;
 - 11.6.4 Increasing participation and engagement
 - 11.6.5 Raising attainment and achievement for all and closing the gap between the lowest and highest achievers.
- 11.7 The Curriculum for Excellence is the national curriculum for Scottish schools. It aims to ensure that all children and young people in Scotland develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they will need if they are to flourish in life, learning and work now and in the future. The Council has a further duty to deliver a service which meets the criteria for best value, in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, economy and equal opportunities, and which meets the agreed priorities in the Single Outcome Agreement and Scottish Borders Council's Corporate Plan.
- 11.8 The purpose of the Curriculum for Excellence is encapsulated in the four capacities to enable each child or young person to be:
- a successful learner;
 - a confident individual;
 - a responsible citizen; and
 - an effective contributor.
- 11.9 The Curriculum for Excellence encourages children and young people to develop through different learning experiences. These can include:-
- 11.9.1 Collaborative learning - where children can work collectively within a group setting. This allows children to learn from each other and to share experiences and skills;
 - 11.9.2 Individual learning- where children are given opportunities to make choices about their own learning. This encourages children to learn in the most effective way for them;
 - 11.9.3 Peer to peer learning and assessment;
 - 11.9.4 Relevance in learning, where children learn through experiences;
 - 11.9.5 Outdoor learning – where learning takes place out of the classroom or school setting.
- 11.10 The Educational Benefits of the Proposals have been assessed taking account of the requirements under legislation and the priorities and aims of the Children and Young People's Services Plan and having regard to the terms and guidance of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

Educational Benefits for the Pupils

11.11 The educational benefits of the Proposals have been considered:-

- 11.11.1 Given the low roll before mothballing and the limited likelihood of many (if any) of the pupils in the Eccles Leitholm catchment area wanting to attend Eccles Leitholm, it is considered that by attending Coldstream or Swinton, pupils would be attending a school with a larger peer group where the children will be able to experience a variety of learning and teaching experiences offered through flexibility of grouping.
- 11.11.2 Some of the educational benefits arise not just from larger pupil numbers but also because a larger staff and parent body increases the likelihood of adults leading a range of activities will support the provision of a richer and higher quality curriculum.
- 11.11.3 As part of the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce the aim is to develop increased awareness of the world of work, social skills and employability skills. Such knowledge and understanding and skills acquisition very much benefit from discussions and dialogue with peers of the same age/stage.
- 11.11.4 The level to which pupils are able to become skilled in social interaction will depend to an extent on the opportunities afforded to them. The forging of close friendships and the development of self-esteem is enhanced by each pupil being enabled to be part of an age appropriate peer group of a sufficient size to allow a range of interactions and relationships to form and reform.
- 11.11.5 A very small school roll can restrict opportunities for team sports and other active recreational activities. This applies even to individual sports, where successful learning of skills is helped by talking and sharing experiences. It further applies to the health and wellbeing element of the curriculum which involves discussion between pupils about health lifestyle choices. Whilst these problems can be overcome by taking the pupils to participate in activities in a neighbouring school, that in itself involves time out of school travelling there and back.
- 11.11.6 As with sports, the larger roll would also provide a greater likelihood of pupils benefitting from a wider range of solo and group musical and artistic opportunities.
- 11.11.7 The development of an Early Learning and Childcare structure across a larger catchment area involving more pupils provides a viable service-children at a younger age will have benefit from having an Early Learning and Childcare provision within the area with children attending who have similar interests and life experiences; the richness of the rural life will come through in an early level curriculum driven by child centred learning experiences. There is currently an Early Learning and Childcare setting in Coldstream and there will be one opening at Swinton in August 2019.

Educational Benefits and Impacts on Staff

- 11.12 While it is recognised that some staff may prefer working in a small team, staff recruitment and retention can be more challenging in a small school. Staff can feel more isolated in a single teacher school and may not be able to receive the same support in providing an inclusive curriculum and nor be able to work collaboratively with other teachers. Staff can benefit from being part of a larger team and being able to share planning and curricular resources and also learning from each other.

Impact on Pupils at Other Schools in the Council Area

- 11.13 The impact on pupils at other schools is considered to be minimal as the children currently within the Eccles Leitholm catchment area are attending seven different schools. It is considered that closing the school will not have much impact as officers do not expect that many children would move or change schools. Scottish Borders Council's policy of supporting parental choice for schools will continue with placement requests being accommodated as far as possible.

Educational Benefits - Impact upon the Community

- 11.14 The closure of Eccles Leitholm Primary school would have little effect in terms of the community's educational access to the school and its resources. The building prior to mothballing was not used by any community groups or organisations and this remains the case post mothballing.
- 11.15 Both Coldstream and Swinton Primary Schools are in the heart of their communities. Each school presents a different option, with Coldstream offering a slightly larger school environment and Swinton a smaller rural school option. More children being located within either school may bring a greater sense of the larger community.

Likely Effect on the Local Community

- 11.16 As Eccles Leitholm Primary School is a rural school, special regard was paid to the rural school factors in the Options Appraisal stage. It is considered that the Proposals will not adversely impact on local, social or economic activities of that area. The Primary School has been mothballed for some time and the communities main issue is that they wish the school building to be put to some better use within the area.
- 11.17 The community made limited use of Eccles Leitholm Primary School prior to mothballing for community events given that both Eccles and Leitholm have their own village halls for community use. Views varied in the community regarding the long term use of the Eccles Leitholm school building with a large number of suggestions at community events. People were clear about the challenges that faced the community, less employment, fewer families, less pupil and more holiday homes for weekenders.

Likely Effect Caused By Different Travelling Arrangements

- 11.18 The rurality of the area considered fully in the Options Appraisal stage. All three schools are in rural locations and all present their different challenges regarding access to services and facilities. The current proposal may result in some changes to travelling arrangements, particularly if the decision is made to re-zone the catchment area to Swinton as this will require new travel arrangements to be established. It is hard to quantify the impact of this change (both in terms of money and environmental impact) until there is more visibility of the numbers involved and what the demand is within the community.

Financials

- 11.19 See Appendix 2 for detailed financial information. The approximate cost to bring the property into an acceptable condition for reopening is £108,845. It should be noted that there may be potential further costs for further works if the building were to reopen permanently. Based on the number of pupils at the time of mothballing if the school was to re-open it is projected that it would cost c£31k per pupil to operate the school.

- 11.20 It is envisaged that should this closure proposal be approved, the Children and Young People's Services Directorate would then declare the building surplus to requirements and thereafter the Place Department of the Council will make recommendations on its future use or disposal in line with Council policy. There would be a discussion with the community the possibility and implications of a community asset transfer.

Rural Factors – Impact from Travel Arrangements

- 11.21 Currently there are 5 pupils being transported to Coldstream Primary School from the Eccles Leitholm catchment area. This arrangement will continue for all the pupils currently attending the school and for their future siblings (if the decision is taken to change the catchment area).

Rural Factors - Community Impact

- 11.22 Council officers have considered the impact upon the community and will hold meetings with the community and the Community Council to discuss the proposals for the school. To date the majority of comments from the community have been supportive of the mothballing. People have been clear about the challenges that faced the community; less employment, fewer families, less pupil and more holiday homes for weekenders. Many people supported the school closure and had suggestions for the building's use after closure. However a number of people did comment that they were sad to see the school go. There has been a general feeling that continued mothballing was not an option and that a final solution was required. Particularly there are concerns regarding the maintenance of the building.
- 11.23 The local Community Council has indicated that it is investigating opportunities that will arise from the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. The proposed future use of the building is still to be agreed.

Conclusions

- 11.24 The number of primary school aged children, in the catchment, wishing to attend Eccles Leitholm Primary School declined rapidly prior to mothballing. Officers have been unable to identify a demand within the community for the school to be re-opened. So it is possible that if it the school was to re-open in August 2019 that there might be no pupils enrolling at the school. Pupil projections in the catchment area do not indicate that the potential pupil numbers will increase in the future.
- 11.25 Officers have been unable to establish a demand to re-open the school in the 3 years since mothballing. Pupil numbers are not projected to rise within the Eccles Leitholm catchment and there is no significant planned housebuilding.
- 11.26 Councillors have advised that the community is disappointed that the school is still mothballed and generally consider that it is already in effect closed. It is considered that the building could be better utilised and that resources were being wasted by keeping the school mothballed. The long term utilisation of the building by the community or otherwise can be viewed as an opportunity for the community.
- 11.27 Coldstream Primary School and Swinton Primary School are both located approximately 7 miles from Eccles Leitholm Primary School. Given the rurality of the area it is recognised that there will several different journey times for pupils to access either school.

- 11.28 It is estimated that it would cost c£109k to remedy the current defects at the school. Pupils attending Eccles Leitholm would still be required to travel to Coldstream to access certain facilities and lessons.
- 11.29 The Options Appraisal has demonstrated that the option for the permanent closure of Eccles Leitholm Primary School with the pupils zoned to either Coldstream or Swinton Primary Schools is both reasonable and the most appropriate.

12. SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS FOR THIS PROPOSAL PAPER

- 12.1 This Proposal Paper has been prepared by the Council's Children and Young People's Services in accordance with the 2010 Act. The 2010 Act sets out a consultation procedure that a Local Authority must follow for certain proposals affecting schools in their area. The 2010 Act and its explanatory notes are available for reference at the following websites, respectively:

[Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#)

[Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010 - Explanatory Notes](#)

- 12.2 The proposals to close Eccles Leitholm and to re-delineate the catchment area are deemed relevant proposals in terms of the 2010 Act (the **Proposal**) and is therefore subject to the statutory consultation procedure specified in the 2010 Act.

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

- Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, TD6 0SA
- Coldstream Primary School, Coldstream, TD12 4DN
- Swinton Primary School, Swinton, TD11 3JJ
- Berwickshire High School, Duns, TD11 3QG
- Coldstream Library, Gateway Centre, Coldstream, TD12 4AE

and published on the Scottish Borders Council website: <https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/ecclesleitholm>

- 12.4 Copies of this Proposal Paper are available in English and other languages upon request) from:

Eccles Leitholm Primary School Consultation
Children and Young People's Services
Scottish Borders Council
Council Headquarters
Newtown St Boswells
Melrose
TD6 0SA
Telephone: 01835 825080
E-mail: schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk

- 12.5 Formal notice of the Proposal and relevant information will be given and be made available, free of charge, to the consultees listed as follows:
- the parents/carers of the children who attend an affected school;
 - the Parent Council of an affected school;

- the parent/carers of any children likely to attend an affected school within two years of the date of the publication of the Proposal Paper;
- the pupils attending an affected school;
- the Staff (teaching and non-teaching) at an affected school;
- any Trade Union which is representative of the staff;
- The Community Councils;
- the community planning partnership (as defined in section 4(5) of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015) for the area where an affected school is situated or any other community planning partnership that the Education Authority considers relevant;
- the constituency Member of the Scottish Parliament;
- the constituency Member of Parliament;
- the List Members of the Scottish Parliament.

12.6 **Advertisement in Local Media**

Advertisements were placed in the relevant local media the week beginning 18 March 2019, giving the dates for the consultation period and for the public meeting.

12.7 **Consultation Period**

The consultation for the Proposals will run from 14 March 2019 and will end 10 May 2019. This period allows for the statutory minimum of six weeks, including at least thirty school days.

12.8 **Public Meetings**

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

Eccles Village Hall on 25 April 2019 at 7pm

12.9 **Format of Public Meeting**

Anyone wishing to attend the public meeting is invited to do so. The meeting, which will be convened by Scottish Borders Council, will be addressed by Children and Young People's Services and other relevant parties.

The meetings will provide an opportunity to:

- Hear more about the Proposals
- Ask questions about the Proposals
- Have your views recorded so that they can be taken into account as part of the proposal process.

A note will be taken at the meeting of comments, questions and officer responses. These notes will be published on the Council website and a copy will be made available on request. These notes will be forwarded to Education Scotland, along with other submissions and comments received by the Council during the consultation process.

12.10 **Meetings with Pupils and Staff**

Meetings will be held with pupils and staff in the affected schools. A record of questions, responses and views will be taken and this will be published in the Consultation Report.

HAVE YOUR SAY - RESPONDING TO THE PROPOSALS

- 13.1 A consultation regarding a proposed change to your child's or your community's school is your chance to share your views. Your responses can really shape and influence future decisions; you can play your part by:
- Submitting a written or electronic response to the Council as outlined below;
 - Attending the public meeting on 25 April 2019 at Eccles Village Hall at 7pm- ask questions; raise concerns/issues; make suggestions;
 - Speaking to your local Councillors;
 - Engaging with your school's Parent Council. The Parent Council can play a key role in engaging with the Council throughout the process;
 - Make representations as part of your Community;
 - Informing Scottish Borders Council if you think that this Proposal Paper has significant inaccuracies or omissions.
- 13.2 All interested parties are invited to respond to the Proposals by making written or electronic submissions to:
- Eccles Leitholm School Consultation
Children and Young People's Services
Scottish Borders Council
Council Headquarters
Newtown St Boswells
Melrose
TD6 0SA
Or
- Web Address: <https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/ecclesleitholm>
- 13.3 A response form is available from Children & Young People's Services, Scottish Borders Council, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose TD6 0SA or online at [Eccles Leitholm Consultation](#).
- 13.4 Use of the response form is not compulsory. If you wish to respond by letter or electronically, you are invited to state your relationship with the school – for example, "pupil", "parent", "carer", "relative", "former
- 13.5 Those sending in a response, whether by letter or electronically, should note that their response will be open to public scrutiny and may be supplied to anyone making a reasonable request to see it. If they do not wish pupil", "teacher in school", "member of the community" etc. Responses from Parent Councils, staff and Pupil Councils are particularly welcome. If anyone does 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 Scottish Borders Council and officers of Education Scotland and the Scottish Government". Otherwise, it will be assumed that the person making the response agrees to it being made publicly available.
- 13.6 All written responses must be received by the last day of the consultation period, **10 May 2019**.

- 13.7 Education Scotland has prepared guidance regarding School Consultations. This can be accessed at [Education Scotland's Guidance on School Consultations](#)

14 INVOLVEMENT OF EDUCATION SCOTLAND

A copy of this Proposal document will be sent to Education Scotland by the Council. Education Scotland will also receive a copy of any relevant written representations that are received by the Council from any person during the consultation period or, if Education Scotland agree, a summary of them. Education Scotland will further receive a summary of any oral representations made to the Council at the public meeting that will be held and, as available (and so far as otherwise practicable), a copy of any other relevant documentation. Education Scotland will then prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposals not later than 3 weeks after the Council has sent them all representations and documents mentioned above. In some cases, it is possible for them to extend the 3 weeks with the agreement of the Authority. However, for the avoidance of doubt, the 3 week period will not start until after the consultation period has ended. In preparing their report, Education Scotland may enter the affected school(s) and make such reasonable enquiries of such people there as they consider appropriate and may make such reasonable enquiries of such other people as they consider appropriate.

15. PREPARATION OF CONSULTATION REPORT

- 15.1 The Council will review the Proposals having regard to the Education Scotland report, the written representations that it has received and oral representations made to it by any person at the public meeting. It will then prepare a Consultation Report.
- 15.2 This Report will be published in electronic and printed formats and will be advertised in local newspapers. It will be available on the Council website and from Council Headquarters, the public library in Coldstream as well as Eccles Leitholm, Coldstream and Swinton Primary Schools and Berwickshire High School free of charge. Anyone who made written representations during the consultation period will also be informed about the report. The report will include a record of the total number of written representations made during the consultation period, a summary of the written representations, a summary of the oral representations made at the public meeting, the Authority's response to the Education Scotland Report as well as any written or oral representations it has received, together with a copy of the Education Scotland Report and any other relevant information, including details of any alleged inaccuracies and how these have been handled.
- 15.3 The Consultation Report will be published and available for further consideration for a period of three weeks, before it is presented to Full Council at the next scheduled Council meeting.

16. NOTE ON CORRECTIONS

- 16.1 If you consider that there is an inaccuracy or omission in this Paper please contact Scottish Borders Council at

Eccles Leitholm Primary School Consultation
Children and Young People's Services
Scottish Borders Council
Council Headquarters
Newtown St Boswells
Melrose
TD6 0SA

Telephone: 01835 825080

E-mail: schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk

- 16.2 If any inaccuracy or omission is discovered in this Proposal Paper, either by Scottish Borders Council or any person, Scottish Borders Council will determine if relevant information has been omitted or there has been an inaccuracy. It will then take appropriate action which may include the issue of a correction or the re-issuing of the Proposal Paper, or the revision of the timescale for the consultation period, if appropriate. In that event, relevant consultees and Education Scotland will be advised

17 SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL DECISION AND SCOTTISH MINISTERS CALL-IN

- 17.1 No decision will be taken in regard to the Proposals or any changes put into effect by either the Council or the Council's Executive (Education) Committee until the statutory consultation process has been properly completed.
- 17.2 If the Council makes a final decision to implement the proposal to close Eccles Leitholm Primary School, it will require to notify the Scottish Ministers of that decision, and provide them with a copy of the Proposal document and Consultation Report. This must be done within 6 working days of that decision. The Council must also publish on its website the fact that it has notified Scottish Ministers of its decision and of the period during which consultees have the opportunity to make representations to Ministers.
- 17.3 The Scottish Ministers have an 8 week period from the date of that final decision to decide if they will call-in a proposal regarding a closure. During the first three weeks of this period, anyone is able to make representations to Ministers on whether the decision should be called-in. Within the first 3 weeks of that 8 week period, the Scottish Ministers will take account of any relevant representations made to them by any person. Until the outcome of the 8 week call-in process is known, the Council cannot proceed to implement the Proposals. Ministers may come to a decision sooner than eight weeks (but not before the three weeks for representations to be made to them has elapsed).
- 17.4 The Scottish Ministers may issue a call-in notice only if it appears to the Scottish Ministers that the Council has:-
- 17.4.1 failed, in significant regard, to comply with the requirements of the 2010 Act in terms of a closure proposal; or
 - 17.4.2 failed to take proper account of a material consideration relevant to the decision to implement the closure proposal.
- 17.5 If Scottish Ministers decide to call in a closure proposal, they must refer it to the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels for determination by a School Closure Review Panel. The Council, as the Education Authority, may not implement the closure proposals (wholly or partly) unless the Panel has granted consent to it (with or without conditions) and either the period for making an appeal to the Sheriff has expired or, if an appeal has been made, it has either been abandoned or the Sheriff has confirmed the Panel's decision.
- 17.6 The School Closure Review Panel may refuse to consent to the closure proposal, refuse consent and remit the closure proposal back to the Council as the Education Authority or grant their consent to the closure proposals subject to conditions or unconditionally.

- 17.7 The 2010 Act, as amended, gives Ministers and School Closure Review Panels the right to call on advice from Education Scotland in relation to a closure proposal at the call-in or determination stage.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Easingwood', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Stuart Easingwood

Interim Service Director of Children & Young People

14 March 2019

APPENDIX 1 – OPTIONS ANALYSIS REPORT



THE SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES OPTIONS APPRAISAL REPORT



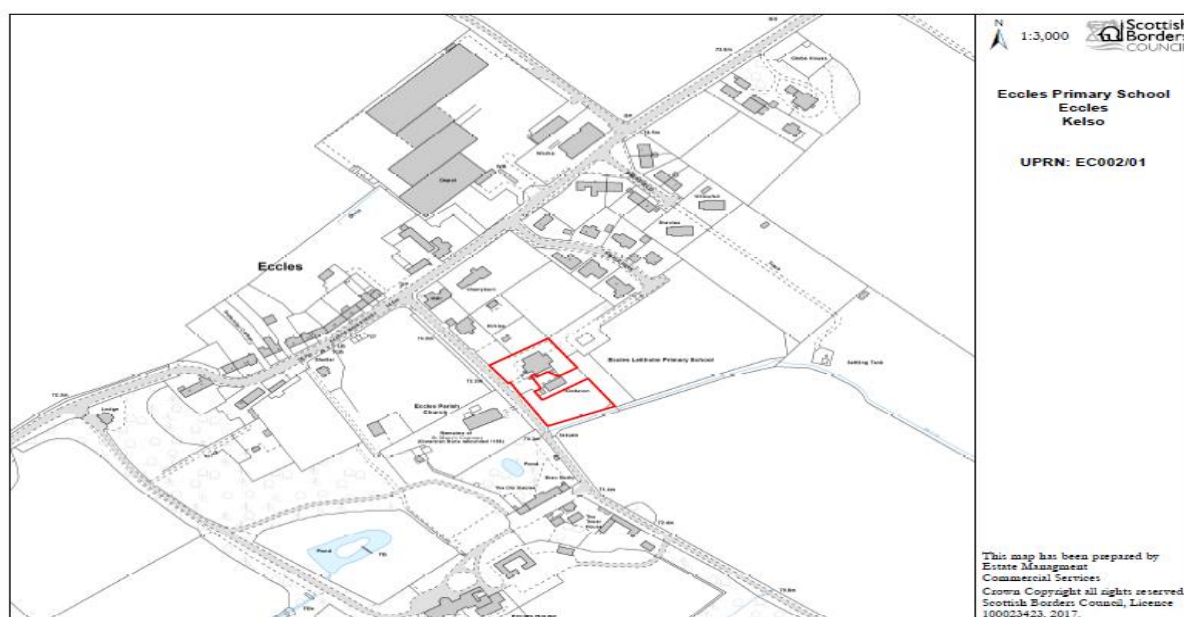
ECCLES LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Scottish Borders Council commenced a School Estate Review in 2015, of all the schools across the region, seeking to deliver the maximum educational benefits for all the children and young people in the area. On 7 November 2017, the Council's Executive (Education) Committee approved amended guiding principles to the School Estate Review to ensure that a strategic approach is taken whilst delivering:
- increased education and learning opportunities for all generations within the community;
 - improved outcomes for the community;
 - sustainability;
 - a future-proof school estate; and
 - affordability.
- 1.2 In November 2017, the Council's Executive (Education) Committee also agreed to review the schools that had been previously mothballed and make a decision on their future. In order to determine what the next steps should be. Council officers have carried out detailed option analyses in respect of each school, considering all reasonable options. The analyses also consider the impact of each of the options on the wider community. This process adheres to the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 (**2010 Act**) - which contains specific provisions regarding rural schools.
- 1.3 This report details the options analysis process for Eccles Leitholm Primary School which was mothballed in 2016.

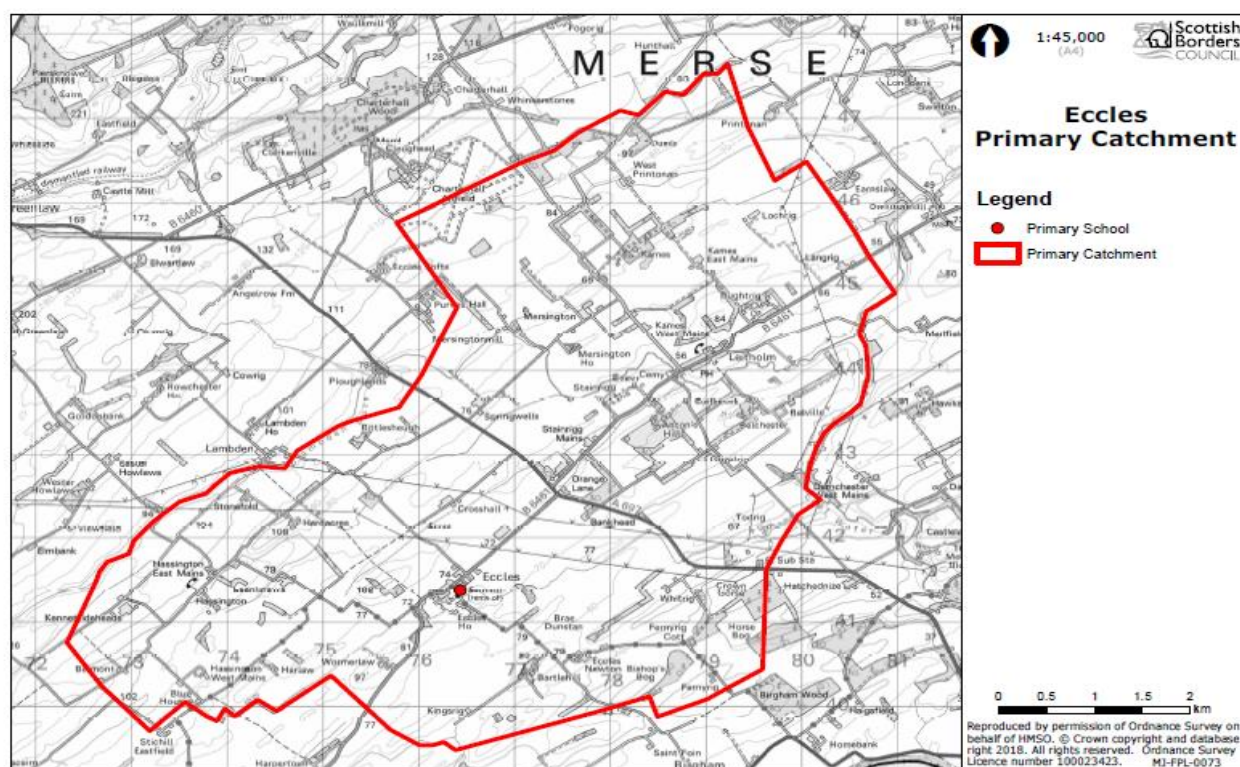
2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Eccles Leitholm Primary School, Eccles, is a non-denominational primary school. It opened in 1964 and had capacity for 50 pupils. The school is in the catchment for Berwickshire High School and lies within the Berwickshire learning cluster of schools. The school has been designated as an accessible rural school by the Scottish Government⁸. Its location is shown on this map:-



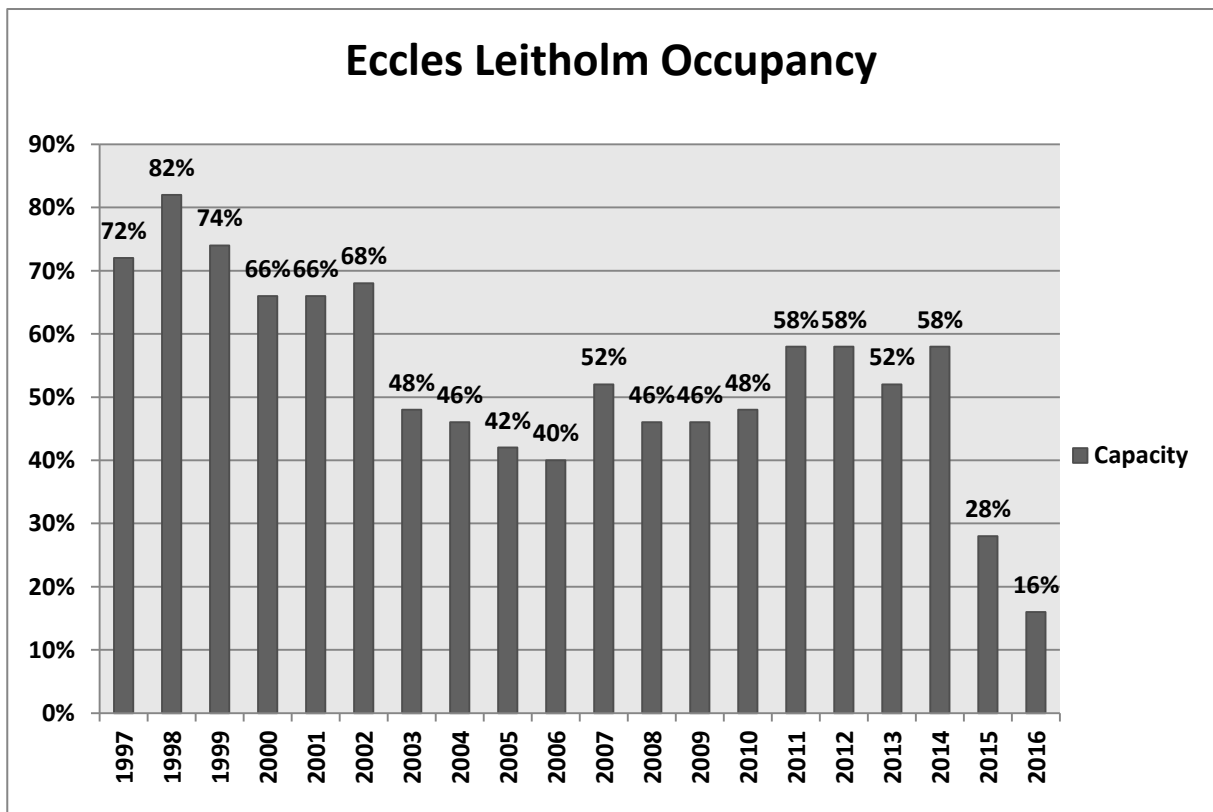
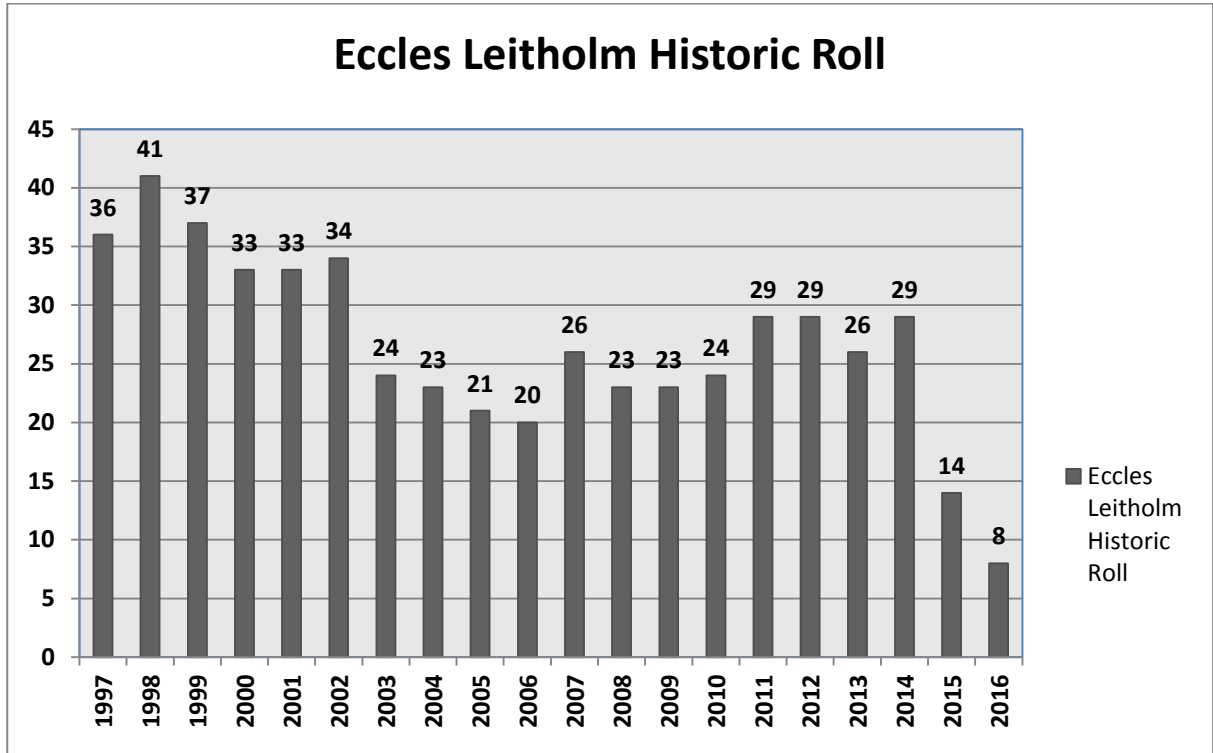
⁸ [Scottish Government Rural Schools 2017](#)

2.2 Eccles Leitholm's catchment area is shown below:-



2.3 In August 2013 there were 29 pupils attending the school in 2 classes. Despite only 3 children transferring to high school, the roll dropped dramatically in the next school year to 14 pupils - 6 had made placing requests and 6 pupils had left the area. Session 2015/16 started with a roll of 8, but this had decreased to 5 by April 2016. The School roll was forecast to fall to 3 pupils for 2016/17. Given the school capacity of 50 pupils this would have meant occupancy of the school was only 6%.

2.4 The school roll and occupancy levels are shown below:-



2.5 In May 2016 there were 5 pupils at the school, with no pupils enrolled in P 1-3.

Primary 4	2 pupils
Primary 5	1 pupil
Primary 7	2 pupils

2.6 There had been an emerging pattern of placement requests to other schools.

	New Placing Requests	School	Roll	% of Catchment
2013 - 2014	2	Edenside PS	29	
	1	Duns PS		
	1	Broomlands PS		
Total	4			12%
2014 - 2015	3	Duns PS	14	
	2	Ednam PS		
	1	Swinton PS		
Total	6			30%
2015 - 2016	2	Duns PS	8	
	1	Coldstream PS		
	1	Edenside PS		
	1	Swinton PS		
Total	5			38%

2.7 Given the considerable drop in the school roll, the lack of enrolment of Primary 1 pupils for 3 years and the number of placement requests being made, Council officers recognised that Eccles Leitholm Primary School was at risk. Discussions were held with the local councillors initially to consider all the options available regarding the school. It was recognised that there were challenges in providing a positive school experience to such a small roll and it was decided that parental opinion should be sought.

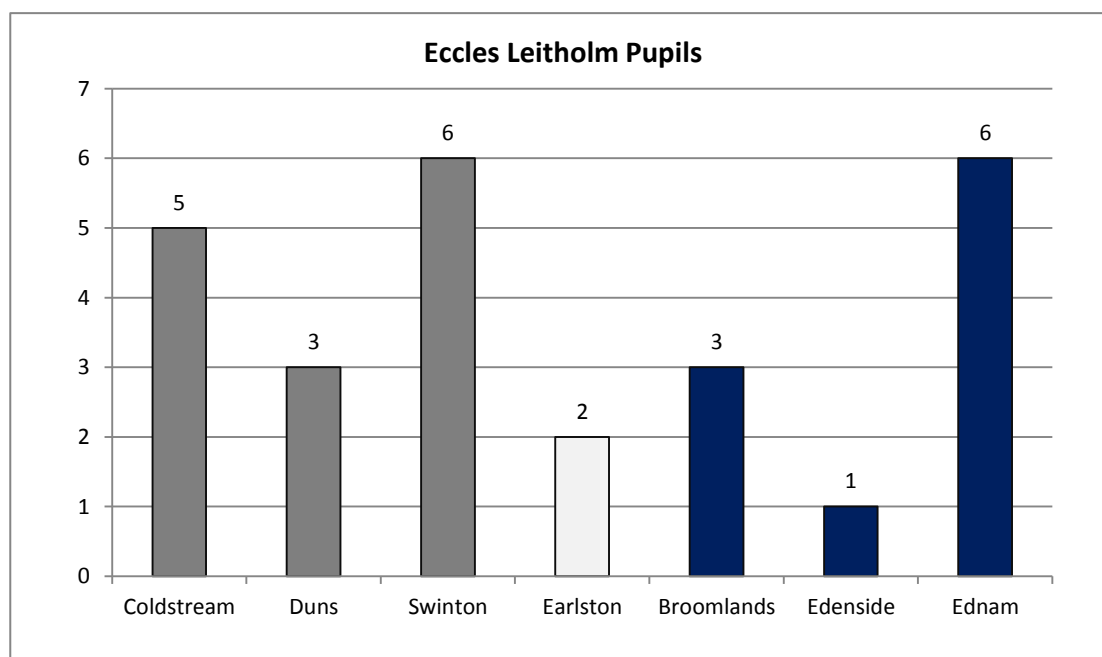
2.8 The parents recognised a number of issues relating to the size of Eccles Leitholm and the impact that that could have on their children's education. These included difficulties for children to form wide friendship groups with similar interests; anticipated difficulties with transition to High School; lack of opportunities for sports and arts; lack of links into a network of clubs and activities. Potential educational benefits were discussed should the children be able to attend a larger primary school: greater opportunities for socialisation; collaborative learning and greater opportunities for participation in team activities and greater opportunities to experience the skills and abilities of a wider staff group. There was also recognition that the children were not able to fully participate in the Curriculum for Excellence as opportunities for collaboration and peer working among learners were limited.

2.9 Following these discussions, the families of the remaining pupils chose to make placing requests to other schools in the area, which were granted. As a result of these placing requests no pupils were enrolled to attend the school in the 2016/2017 session.

2.10 In May 2016, Scottish Borders Council's Executive Committee agreed that Eccles Leitholm Primary School be mothballed for an interim period. The position of the school was to be

monitored on an ongoing basis; with a decision to be made regarding the future of the school once all options had been assessed.

- 2.11 It was apparent that the placing requests that the parents/carers had made were to a number of different schools (15 children attending 6 schools), as the Council had supported choice as far as possible. Council officers considered a number of factors (distance, travel times, safe routes to school, transition, staff and parental wishes) before making a proposal regarding the temporary rezoning of the Eccles Leitholm catchment.
- 2.12 Eccles Leitholm was a partner school with Coldstream Primary School and they had a shared head teacher. Pupils from Eccles Leitholm regularly accessed facilities and activities in Coldstream Primary. The schools were both within the same secondary cluster (Berwickshire) and worked in the same learning community. Improvement plans were aligned across the 2 schools, along with curricular and teaching plans. It was therefore considered by the Council at this time that this would result in an easy transition for pupils from Eccles Leitholm into classes at Coldstream and that their learning continuity and progression would be supported. The catchment area for Eccles Leitholm was therefore rezoned to Coldstream Primary School and transportation was provided for the children to their new school.
- 2.13 There are currently 26 primary aged children living in the Eccles Leitholm's original catchment area, attending 7 different primary schools located in the Berwickshire cluster (Coldstream, Duns and Swinton) and the Kelso cluster (Broomlands, Edenside and Ednam) and the Earlston cluster. There were 6 Primary 1 aged pupils starting school this year from the catchment – 67% of them have chosen Swinton Primary School. No P1 child from the Eccles Leitholm's original catchment chose to attend Coldstream Primary School.



- 2.14 There currently 12 pre-school aged children within the Eccles Leitholm catchment who are attending 5 different Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings across several locations. Prior to mothballing there was not an ELC setting at the Eccles Leitholm.
- 2.15 In February 2016 the Council launched a Pre-consultation and Review of its School Estate, promoted through letters issued to every family group via school mail, all school user groups, elected members and Community Councils. Press releases, social media updates, posters and school newsletters were used to advertise the pre-consultation events. Nine consultation events were held, one in each High School. This included a review of the mothballed schools.

3. AREA DEMOGRAPHICS

- 3.1 Eccles Leitholm Primary School is situated in Eccles, Berwickshire within the Scottish Borders. The village of Leitholm is a 2.5 miles to the northeast of Eccles. Both villages are located less than 7 miles from Coldstream. As can be seen across the Scottish Borders, the area has witnessed a significant change in local population demographics. We have analysed data derived from the National Records of Scotland. We have considered data from 2 larger areas which comprise the Eccles Leitholm catchment zone. While this data does not directly reflect actual movements within the catchment area, it reflects population changes in the larger area.

Year		Swinton Leitholm and Fogo Area	%	Gordon and Hume Area	%
2011	0 to 15	177	18%	212	21%
	16 to 64	611	64%	577	58%
	65+	173	18%	209	21%
	All people	961		998	
2017	0 to 15	132	15%	204	19%
	16 to 64	555	63%	615	58%
	65+	199	22%	250	23%
	All people	886		1069	

- 3.2 As the table above shows there has been a decline in the number of children within the area since the start of the decade, with the number of children in the Swinton, Leitholm and Fogo area declining by 25% and in Gordon and Hume by less than 4%. Overall the population in the Swinton and Leitholm area has only declined by 8% where the Gordon and Hume population has grown by 7%. Noticeably the population is aging in both areas.
- 3.3 The villages of Eccles & Leitholm fall within the Eastern Housing Market Area, while parts of the catchment area fall within the Central Housing Market Area, both as identified within the Scottish Borders Council Local Development Plan 2016 (**LDP**). The LDP allocates 2 housing sites within Eccles, namely: Cherryburn and Main Street. The former allocated housing site has an indicative site capacity of 7 units and the latter 5 units. One site is allocated within Leitholm, on Main Street. The allocated housing site has an indicative site capacity of 25 units.

The Housing Land Audit (HLA) 2017 programmes the 12 units in Eccles to be built in 2021 and 2022. This has been informed using past completion rates and the lack of developer interest to date. The larger site in Leitholm is programmed to release 5 units a year from 2021. This level of development could be estimated to add pupils to the school rolls. However, taking on board the programming contained within the HLA, the delivery of housing within the area could be spread over several LDP periods.

- 3.4 In terms of potential new business ventures in the area, there have been no enquiries to the council's business & economic development team. They have advised that there are unlikely to be any significant changes to the population relative to Eccles & Leitholm Primary school catchment area as a result of business growth.

4 OPTIONS ANALYSIS

- 4.1 Scottish Government guidance indicates that local authorities should review a mothballed school within 3 years of mothballing. In order to determine the options available regarding the future of the school, Council officers have identified several potential options and assessed these to assist in identifying the most reasonable option to make a proposal to Councillors. The analyses has taken consideration of the provisions of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended (**2010 Act**); in particular the provisions regarding rural schools.
- 4.2 A number of possible options were identified for the future of Eccles Leitholm Primary School namely:

Option 1	Reopen Eccles Leitholm Primary School with its original catchment area
Option 2	Reopen Eccles Leitholm Primary School with an expanded catchment area
Option 3	Continue mothballing Eccles Leitholm Primary School, with the catchment continuing to be zoned to Coldstream Primary School
Option 4	Permanently close Eccles Leitholm Primary School, rezoning the catchment area to either Coldstream Primary School <u>or</u> Swinton Primary School

5 OPTION 1

REOPEN ECCLES LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH ITS ORIGINAL CATCHMENT AREA

Demand

- 5.1 To assess whether it would be a reasonable proposal to re-open the school, officers examined available information on the number of pre-school and primary aged children in the catchment area. Current records indicate there are currently 26 primary pupils in the catchment area, attending 7 different primary schools. There are also 12 pre-school aged children living in the catchment attending 5 different Early Learning and Childcare settings.

Eccles Leitholm Pupils' School Choices		
High School Cluster		
Berwickshire	Coldstream Primary	19%
	Duns Primary	12%
	Swinton Primary	23%
Earlston	Earlston Primary	8%
Kelso	Broomlands Primary	12%
	Edenside Primary	4%
	Ednam Primary	23%

- 5.2 Pupil numbers had fallen dramatically before Eccles Leitholm Primary school was mothballed – a fall of almost 90% in the 5 year period preceding mothballing. It was also evident that immediately prior to mothballing that almost 90% of catchment pupils were choosing to attend an out of catchment school; while this may have been for numerous reasons it does indicate a significant drift from the school. The Council has not received any enquiries regarding enrolment at the school since mothballing and during the pre- consultation process in 2016, there were no comments made regarding the school.
- 5.3 From meetings with the community council and discussions with the community we have been unable to identify demand within the community for the school to be reopened. It is not certain how many or if any of the pupils from Eccles Leitholm Primary School catchment area would chose return to the school if it were it to reopen.

Condition and Suitability

- 5.4 The most recent condition survey was carried out on the building in 2012 rated the site as Condition B (performing well but showing minor deterioration). Condition is an assessment of physical condition of the school and its grounds. The suitability of was categorised as B (performing well but with minor problems) with elements of C (Poor). Suitability as an assessment of the school as a whole, its buildings, its grounds and the impacts these have on the learning and teaching, leisure and social activities and health and wellbeing of all users. It is currently estimated that approximately £109,000 would be required to remedy the current defects in the school building. If the school was to re-open is likely that pupils will still be required to access Coldstream Primary School to share facilities and to participate in aspects of the Curriculum for Excellence.

Educational Benefits

- 5.5 The potential Educational Benefits were considered if the school was to be re-opened.

Pros

- A smaller school can play an important role in the community and provide opportunities for members of the community to become involved in learning. Closer ties to the community can provide specific learning opportunities and experiences which can enhance the sense of community across the generations.
- Students at small schools may be engaged in their school community, leading to a sense of personal responsibility for the community. Pupils may have greater exposure to friends across a wider age range, which can assist with social skills and development
- Students at small schools can develop strong relationships with their peers and their teachers. This can increase confidence and reduce the fear of making mistakes

- The nature of composite classes can encourage pupils to work together across the age ranges and abilities which can have a positive impact on all learners
- Travel time to school may be less which then allow more time for pupils for homework, hobbies and out of school activities.

Cons

- Pupils attending a school with a small peer group may not be able to experience a variety of learning and teaching experiences offered through flexibility of groupings.
- A small roll can result in a smaller number of staff and parent body reducing the opportunity of adults leading a range of activities to support the provision of a richer and higher quality curriculum. This can reduce the likelihood of pupils benefitting from a wide range of solo and group musical and artistic opportunities when compared with a school with a larger roll.
- As part of the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce the aim is to develop increased awareness of the world of work, social skills and employability skills. Such knowledge and understanding of skills acquisition can benefit from discussions and dialogue with peers of the same age and stage. This would be very difficult to achieve in a small school roll.
- The level to which pupils are able have social interaction can be impacted by the opportunities afforded to them. The forging of close friendships and the development of self-esteem can be enhanced through being part of an age-appropriate peer group of a sufficient size to allow a range of interaction and relationships to form and reform. The pupils in the Eccles Leitholm catchment currently all attend larger schools which can provide increased opportunity for social interaction and wider friendship groups.
- A small roll can restrict opportunities for team sports and other active recreational activities as well as participation in individual sports. Whilst some of these problems can be overcome by taking pupils to participate in activities in a neighbouring school, that in itself involves time out of school travelling there and back. As was seen, prior to mothballing, the partnership between Eccles Leitholm and Coldstream primaries did not boost the roll number at Eccles Leitholm but in fact increased the number of placement requests as children wished more access to the facilities at other schools.
- A smaller roll and a smaller peer group may result in pupils requiring more support in the transition to secondary school.

Educational Benefits and Impacts on Staff

- 5.8 While it is recognised that some staff may prefer working in a small team, it must be noted that staff recruitment and retention can be more challenging in a very small school. Potentially staff could feel more isolated in a single teacher school and may not be able to receive the same support in providing an inclusive curriculum and nor be able to work collaboratively with other teachers. Staff can benefit from being part of a larger team and being able to share planning and curricular resources and also learning from each other.

Rural Factors – Travel Arrangements

- 5.9 Following the decision to mothball Eccles Leitholm Primary School in 2016 the Council agreed to provide school transportation to all pupils, who resided in the Eccles Leitholm catchment area, attending Coldstream Primary School. These travel arrangements have been in place for over 2 years. There are currently 5 children from the Eccles Leitholm catchment area attending Coldstream Primary School. The impact for some children is that it has resulted in a longer home to school journey, while for others it has shortened the journey. If this proposal was to go ahead and parents and children took up the option to return to Eccles Leitholm Primary School this provision may require to be altered however as has been stated above this may result for some children in longer journeys and some children in shorter journeys versus the status quo of

them currently going to Coldstream Primary School. If the decision was taken to re-open the school, future pupils in the Eccles Leitholm catchment would no longer be provided funded transport to Coldstream but would only be provided transportation to their catchment school, if appropriate. Pupils currently attending Coldstream and any younger siblings enrolling at the school (while the older sibling continues to attend) would still receive funded transport to and from school.

- 5.10 It is recognised that adverse weather in the winter currently impacts on travel arrangements in this area. There are likely to be issues in the area because of the rural nature of the location. Headteachers take into account the local circumstances when deciding to close the school and/or send pupils home early. There is an emergency closure plan for severe weather in place for all schools across the region.

Rural Factors – Community Impact

Community Feedback

- 5.11 At the time of mothballing, the community in general viewed the mothballing as appropriate. Subsequent interaction has indicated that people do not wish the mothballing to continue indefinitely and are supportive of a final decision being made. The general consensus was that there was concern that a school with a small roll the size of Eccles Leitholm's at the point of mothballing (3 pupils) could impact on the breadth of their children's education. The Community considered that the building could be better utilised and that resources were being wasted by keeping the school mothballed and wished to consider long term plans regarding the use of the building.
- 5.12 From our discussions it would appear that children attending other schools are happy with their current arrangement and the impression is that the school has already been closed.
- 5.13 The school was not used for external lets prior to being mothballed; there was no use of the building outwith school hours, other than in respect of school meetings. Since mothballing there has continued to be no community use of the building. We have been advised that the halls in both Eccles and Leitholm serve the community requirements and opinions have been expressed that the school building should be used for another purpose; the exact purpose is as yet unclear. Some members of the community view the freeing up of the building through closure of the school as a potential opportunity and enquiries have been received in this regard.

Financial Impact

- 5.14 The backlog maintenance costs at Eccles Leitholm are currently estimated to be £108,845. This would remedy the current issues; it is very likely that other costs would be incurred to re-open the building as a school. The facilities at the school would be adequate but there would most likely still be a requirement to share facilities with Coldstream Primary School for ICT and PE. Based on the pupil numbers at the point of mothballing (5), it is estimated that it would cost c£31,000 per pupil to operate the school. The average in the Borders is c£4,000 per annum.

Environmental Impact

- 5.15 The reduced travel for some of the children to Eccles Leitholm Primary would be cancelled out by the impact of reinstating services having to travel further to access the school

- 5.16 The school building at Eccles is dated and has a flat roof. It is considered that it would be expensive to reinstate and to operate. In addition the children would still require to be transported to Coldstream Primary School for certain lessons and activities.

CONCLUSION:

- 5.17 We have been unable to identify a demand within the community to re-open the school; the parents/carers appear satisfied with the education and experiences that their children receive at their current schools.
- 5.18 In line with other rural areas there has been a decline in the population the 0-15s age group as working patterns change across the country, with many rural schools witnessing a decline in pupil numbers
- 5.19 In terms of the current arrangements, Coldstream has good facilities and with strong educational outcomes and experiences. However less than 20% of the Eccles Leitholm catchment are choosing this school. The facilities offered at Eccles Leitholm, after investment to improve the school to a functional standard, would not be of a similar standard to those at Coldstream. It is considered that while Eccles Leitholm reopening would be likely to allow for greater involvement with the Eccles and Leitholm communities, the pupils within the catchment are currently benefitting from the facilities and schools in nearby larger towns which have strong links with the wider communities. It could be considered that there would be educational disadvantages in reopening Eccles Leitholm Primary School with a small school roll versus the current education provision. The catchment pupils are attending a variety of schools; most of which still provide the opportunity for smaller class sizes and composite classes, which cannot exceed 25 pupils. Many of the educational benefits considered to arise from attending a smaller rural school also apply to the schools that the children are currently attending, with close bonds across year groups and opportunities to collaborate across the age range. It is considered that few children and parents would be likely to support the resultant change in their catchment area to Eccles Leitholm, which had seen a significant number of placement requests away from the school year on year prior to mothballing.
- 5.20 Travel arrangements for pupils have been in place for some time and the impacts are fairly neutral in terms of some pupils having to travel further and some less than before.
- 5.21 In conclusion it is not considered a reasonable or sustainable option to re-open Eccles Leitholm Primary School with its original catchment zone.

6 OPTION 2 REOPEN ECCLES LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL AND REDELINEATE THE CATCHMENT AREA

- 6.1 Given the questions raised in **Option 1** about levels of demand in the area for the school to be re-opened, it was deemed reasonable to consider whether expanding the catchment area would be a reasonable option to allow the school to be re-opened to provide a viable primary school for an enlarged catchment.

Catchment Area Options

- 6.2 A mapping analysis of pupil addresses has been carried out to identify whether the catchment area for Eccles Leitholm could be made more sustainable by extending it into one or more of the neighbouring catchment areas of Coldstream, Greenlaw or Swinton. Given that Eccles Leitholm is in the secondary catchment for Berwickshire High School, it was considered that the exercise should be limited to schools within the same cluster as any change to secondary catchments would be a significant undertaking, requiring extensive consultation and it could be

argued that it could prove challenging to establish the Educational Benefits for such a proposal. As these schools are all located in rural area, the geography and options in relation to safe travel are limited. The summary of the findings is as follows:

- Coldstream Primary School currently has 127 pupils, which equates to 65% occupancy of the school. A significant majority of pupils live either in or very close to the village. 4% of the pupils attending Coldstream reside in the former Eccles Leitholm catchment zone. The mapping exercise has confirmed that almost all of the pupils living close to the boundary of Eccles Leitholm and Coldstream's catchment areas live closer to Coldstream Primary School. Where children live closer to Eccles Leitholm it is marginal and the routes to Coldstream are more established. It is considered that it would be unlikely that a choice would be made to attend Eccles Leitholm, in preference to Coldstream, as the journey times would be roughly the same and Eccles Leitholm would have lesser facilities and the curriculum offer would not be as full.
- Greenlaw Primary School currently has 51 pupils, which equates to 51% of capacity within the school. The mapping exercise did not identify any pupils that live closer to Eccles Leitholm than Greenlaw, so it is considered that there would not be support for a catchment change.
- Swinton Primary School Community currently has 55 pupils, which equates to 55% of capacity. Currently 11% of these pupils reside in the Eccles Leitholm catchment area. The mapping exercise did not identify any pupils that live closer to Eccles Leitholm than Swinton so it is considered that there would not be support for a catchment change. In addition, reducing the number of pupils attending Swinton Primary School may in turn impact on its sustainability, resulting in more parents/carers choosing to send their children to other schools.

- 6.3 From our analysis of the postcodes of the school aged children it is not considered likely that there would be a significant demand for spaces at a re-opened Eccles Leitholm Primary School. Almost all the pupils that reside near the catchment boundaries currently have shorter and quicker journeys to their current catchment school. Given the geography of the area careful consideration has been paid to the distance of journeys and to safe routes to school; it is the Council's policy to support placement requests wherever possible and officers have been unable to identify a reasonable proposal that could be consulted upon to expand Eccles Leitholm catchment area.

Educational Benefits

- 6.4 In order to change a catchment area a statutory consultation would be required in terms of the 2010 Act. A proposal paper for the consultation would require to detail the Educational Benefits attached to the proposal. It is not considered that there would be any significant educational benefits arising from a proposal to change any or all of the above catchment zones. It is also considered that a proposal to amend the catchment zones of Coldstream, Greenlaw and/or Swinton Primary School would be unlikely to receive support from those communities.
- 6.5 As was identified in **Option 1** that the re-opening of Eccles Leitholm would be likely to allow for greater involvement within that community however educationally it could be argued that there are few other educational reasons to change the current catchment zones.

Educational Benefits and Impacts on Staff

- 6.6 These will be the same as **Option 1**.

Rural Factors – Travel Arrangements

- 6.7 The re-opening of the school and increasing the catchment would most likely result in shorter journeys for some and longer for others. Any decision to change catchment would require careful consideration of safe routes to school. In addition this would be likely to result in increased costs to the Council. Currently journeys are often planned to transport children to both primary and secondary schools; changing the catchment would result in some children travelling in the opposite direction, which would be likely to increase the costs, times and environmental impact.

Rural Factors – Community Impact

- 6.8 The impact on the community requires careful consideration of the positive and negative impact that amending catchment zones may have on all affected communities. The biggest impact in amending the catchment area could be felt in 3 rural communities. The re-opening of the school with an increased catchment might have a positive impact on the local community of Eccles and Leitholm. However this would depend on the level of enrolment at the school. Given the geography of the local catchment zones and the impact those changing catchment zones may have on the other villages it is not considered that there would be support to change the catchment nor strong demand to enrol at Eccles Leitholm Primary School.

Financial Impact

- 6.9 As in **Option 1**.

Environmental Impact

- 6.10 The reduced travel for some of the children to Eccles Leitholm Primary would be cancelled out by:-
- the requirement for procurement of new transport which may be against the direction of travel of most journeys going to the Secondary school
 - services and staff having to travel further to access Eccles Leitholm Primary School.

CONCLUSION:

- 6.11 Following the mapping exercise, it is unlikely that the catchment area could be made more sustainable with the options examined; this is because most pupils in the neighbouring catchment areas live closer to their current catchment school or would be most likely to have a quicker and safer journey to school. It is therefore not considered a reasonable option given that this would require a successful Statutory Consultation with identified Educational Benefits. No evidence of demand to attend Eccles Leitholm Primary School has been identified and there appears to be satisfaction with the current primary schools attended. Accordingly the option to amend/extend the Eccles Leitholm catchment area is not considered a reasonable option.

7 **OPTION 3** **CONTINUE MOTHBALLING ECCLES LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL**

- 7.1 This option considers whether the school should continue to be mothballed as re-opening is not immediately viable but may be reasonably viable in the future. The school has been mothballed for almost 3 years. The statutory guidance for the 2010 Act, in relation to mothballing, states: *“the maximum length of its duration is likely to depend on the location of the school and the desirability of maintaining capacity to reopen a school there, but it is unlikely that it should exceed three years in areas that are not very remote.”*
- 7.2 Pupil numbers are not projected to increase over the next four years. There has been a downward trend in the number of people under 16 living in the catchment area in recent years. This reflects a change in demographics seen across rural area in the region. There are few new homes projected to be built in the area and their impact is not considerable significant to projected figures given the predicted protracted development timelines.

Community Impact

- 7.3 There was a significant view at the community meetings that mothballing the school over a long period was wasteful it was also the view at the community meetings that the school was already viewed as closed. There have been a number of suggestions for how the building could be utilised in the future. The negative impacts as outlined in respect of the closure of the school would largely remain, but there would be the added uncertainty of it being mothballed and without it being able to be put to more fully put to other uses or potentially being transferred to the community. The community is keen to have the school building closed so that it can be put to an alternative use. There is therefore little argument for continuing the mothballing.

Financial Impact

- 7.4 The financial impact of the decision to continue mothballing the school is not quantifiable at this stage; however the building will continue to deteriorate through lack of use over time which may have a negative impact on the neighbourhood and ultimately result in greater expense for the Council or any new proprietor once a final decision is made regarding the future of the school.

Environmental Impact

- 7.5 N/A

Conclusion

- 7.6 The school has been mothballed for almost 3 years. Pupil numbers are not projected to rise in terms of pre-school children living within the catchment and there is no significant planned housebuilding.
- 7.7 Community member have expressed their disappointment that the school was still mothballed and generally considered it was already in effect closed. They considered that the building could be better utilised and that resources were being wasted by keeping the school mothballed. The community viewed the long term utilisation of the building by the community or otherwise as an opportunity for the community.

- 7.8 On the basis that pupil numbers will not increase mothballing is not considered a good use of resources and the building could be used to benefit the community, continued mothballing is not viewed as a reasonable option.

8 **OPTION 4**

PERMANENTLY CLOSE ECCLES LEITHOM PRIMARY SCHOOL AND RE-DELINEATE THE CATCHMENT ZONE

- 8.1 This option would result in the permanent closure of the school and the permanent re-delineation of the catchment zone.
- 8.2 In the analysis of **Options 1, 2 and 3** it has been concluded that it would not be reasonable to re-open the school with its current or an extended catchment and that continuing to mothball would not be a reasonable conclusion

Demand for School

- 8.3 Eccles Leitholm Primary School was mothballed in May 2016 after a rapid decline in the school roll (c90% reduction in the 5 years preceding mothballing) and a very significant increase in placement requests to numerous schools across the area. In 2018/19 there 26 primary school aged children residing in the catchment area for Eccles Leitholm Primary School attending 7 different schools. Council officers have not been able to identify a demand for the school to be re-opened and have been advised that the community already considers the school is closed.
- 8.4 There are no areas of housing or business or economic development currently planned or expected that would lead to any significant changes to the population relative to Eccles Leitholm Primary school catchment area that would be likely to generate demand for the school to re-open.

Placement Requests and Catchment Area

- 8.5 Parents/carers have decided to choose several different schools for their children's education, with no one school attracting a majority of placement requests. While it is recognised that there a number of reasons that parents chose a particular school it is evident that there is no clear preference in the area. Currently parents/carers are choosing to enrol 47% of Eccles Leitholm children in primary schools outwith the Berwickshire learning cluster.

Eccles Leitholm Pupils' School Choices		
High School Cluster		
Berwickshire	Coldstream Primary	19%
	Duns Primary	12%
	Swinton Primary	23%
Earlston	Earlston Primary	8%
Kelso	Broomlands Primary	12%
	Edenside Primary	4%
	Ednam Primary	23%

- 8.6 At the time of mothballing the decision was taken to re-delineate the schools catchment to Coldstream Primary, with transport being provided. This decision was made for a number of reasons which included familiarity as pupils attended the school to utilise facilities and to access aspects of the curriculum for excellence; proximity; safe routes to travel; shared head teacher

and curriculum. However currently only 5 pupils are attending Coldstream, which equates to only 19% of the original catchment area pupils.

- 8.7 Given that Eccles Leitholm is in the Berwickshire High School catchment it is considered reasonable that only other primary schools within that catchment should be contemplated as alternatives for re-zoning the Eccles Leitholm catchment area. It is therefore proposed that views should be sought as soon as possible, as part of any statutory consultation process, regarding the catchment zone. Based on the current choice of parents it is proposed that parents should be consulted on whether the catchment is permanently re-zoned to Coldstream Primary School or Swinton Primary School.

Educational Benefits - Impact on Pupils

- 8.8 The Educational Benefits of delineating the catchment area to either Coldstream or Swinton Primary Schools:-:

- 8.8.1 Pupils would be attending a school with a larger peer group which will allow more opportunities to experience a variety of learning and teaching experiences offered through flexibility of grouping.
- 8.8.2 There are and will be greater opportunities for team sports and other active recreational activities. This applies even to individual sports, where successful learning of skills is helped by talking and sharing experiences. It further applies to the health and wellbeing element of the curriculum which involves discussion between pupils about health lifestyle choices. Whilst these problems can be overcome by taking the pupils to participate in activities in a neighbouring school, that in itself involves time out of school travelling there and back.
- 8.8.3 There is and will be a larger staff and parent body increases the likelihood of adults leading a range of activities will support the provision of a richer and higher quality curriculum.
- 8.8.4 As with sports, the larger roll would also provide a greater likelihood of pupils benefitting from a wider range of solo and group musical and artistic opportunities.
- 8.8.5 As part of the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, the aim is to develop increased awareness of the world of work, social skills and employability skills. Such knowledge and understanding and skills acquisition very much benefit from discussions and dialogue with peers of the same age/stage.
- 8.8.6 The level to which pupils are able to become skilled in social interaction will depend to an extent on the opportunities afforded to them. The forging of close friendships and the development of self-esteem is enhanced by each pupil being enabled to be part of an age appropriate peer group of a sufficient size to allow a range of interactions and relationships to form and reform.

Educational Benefits - Impact on staff

- 8.9 As part of a larger team, staff will be able to share planning and curricular resources. They can also learn from each other to provide improved approaches to learning and teaching. Eccles Leitholm as a one teacher school would present challenges in attracting and supporting staff. In larger schools staff will be able to receive support in providing an inclusive curriculum and work together to

Educational Benefits-Impact upon the community

- 8.10 The closure of Eccles Leitholm Primary school would have little impact in terms of the community's educational access to the school and its resources. The building prior to

mothballing was not used by any community groups or organisations and this remains the case post mothballing.

Rural Factors – Impact from Travel Arrangements

- 8.10 The schools in the area are relatively close, with both Swinton and Coldstream located within c7 miles of Eccles Leitholm Primary School. However given the rurality of the area some journeys may require more time than others.
- 8.11 Transport is currently provided for children in the Eccles Leitholm catchment attending Coldstream. If the decision is made to change the catchment to Swinton then the funded transport to Coldstream would continue for those pupils currently enrolled at Coldstream and their siblings (but only if they enrol at the school while the older sibling still attends). Future transport provision would be required to be put in place for Swinton. This cannot yet be quantified until it can be established how many children would require transport and where they reside.

Rural Factors - Community Impact

- 8.12 Council officers have considered the potential impacts upon the community of the school closure. Discussions have been previously with Councillors, the community and the Community Council regarding proposals for the school. The majority of comments from the community was supportive of the mothballing and understood the implications of closure of the school. People were clear about the challenges that faced the community; less employment, fewer families, less pupil and more holiday homes for weekenders. Many people supported the school closure and had suggestions for the building's use after closure. However a number of people did comment that they were sad to see the school go. There was a general feeling that continued mothballing was not an option and that a more final solution was required.
- 8.13 Opportunities for the community arise in terms of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 for future use of the building. The proposed future use of the building is still to be agreed but the Community Council has indicated that the building could be developed into a meaningful asset for the area and beyond.

Financial Implications

- 8.14 The backlog maintenance costs at Eccles Leitholm are currently estimated to be £108,845. This would remedy the current issues; it is very likely that other costs would be incurred to re-open the building as a school. The facilities at the school would be adequate but there would most likely still be a requirement to share facilities with Coldstream Primary School for certain lessons and activities. Based on the pupil numbers at the point of mothballing, it is estimated that it would cost c£31,000 per pupil to operate the school. The average in the Borders is c£4,000 per annum.

Environmental Impact

- 8.15 The environmental impact of the proposal is not considered material. Given the rurality of the area many of the pupils all require to be transported to school. However operating another school which is not designed to be environmentally efficient will have some negative impact.

Conclusions

- 8.17 It is considered that closing Eccles Leitholm Primary School is the most reasonable option. Council officers have been unable to detect any demand to re-open the school and it is

considered that the Educational Benefits of the children attending a larger Primary School are particularly persuasive as the school can offer a fuller curriculum and the modern facilities required to support the pupils' learning journey. Both Coldstream and Swinton Primary Schools have the capacity to continue to accommodate the projected pupil numbers and are located in the larger community. The closure of Eccles Leitholm Primary School is not considered to have been detrimental to the area and pupil numbers have remained consistent. The school building is seen as an opportunity for the community and several interested parties have already made enquiries. Accordingly this option is considered to be the most appropriate for all the reasons given above.

9 CATCHMENT AREA

- 9.1 Given that over 80% of the children in the Eccles Leitholm catchment are currently choosing to not to attend the school that their catchment was re-zoned to following mothballing, it is considered that a consultation should be carried out with the parents and community to establish which school the preference would be for the re-zoning.
- 9.2 The decision was made to re-zone to Coldstream, at the time of mothballing for a number of reasons. Eccles Leitholm was a partner school with Coldstream Primary School and they had a shared head teacher. Pupils from Eccles Leitholm regularly accessed facilities and activities in Coldstream Primary. The schools were both within the same secondary cluster (Berwickshire) and worked in the same learning community. Improvement plans were aligned across the 2 schools, along with curricular and teaching plans. It was therefore considered by the Council at this time that this would result in an easy transition for pupils from Eccles Leitholm into classes at Coldstream and that their learning continuity and progression would be supported. The catchment area for Eccles Leitholm was therefore rezoned to Coldstream Primary School and transportation was provided for the children to their new school.
- 9.3 However it is clear that parental choice has led to the children from the Eccles Leitholm catchment attending a number of schools across 3 different High School clusters (Berwickshire, Kelso and Earlston). Council officers consider that any catchment re-zoning should remain within its High School cluster as the re-zoning of secondary catchments would be a significant undertaking which would require clear and identifiable Educational Benefits.
- 9.4 It is therefore considered reasonable that a consultation should be carried out to establish views on which school the catchment area should be re-zoned to. Council officers are satisfied that there would be strong educational benefits attached to both proposals and wish to establish what their views and preferences are within the Eccles Leitholm area before a final proposal is made to Councillors.

APPENDIX 2- FINANCIAL TEMPLATE

Table 1	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
Row 1	Current revenue costs for school proposed for closure			
Row 2	Name of School Eccles Leitholm	Costs for full financial year (projected annual costs)	Additional financial impact on receiving school [enter name of school]	Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 3)
Row 3	School costs			
Row 4	Employee costs - note 1			
Row 5	teaching staff	115,603		56,860
Row 6	support staff	25,729		25,729
Row 7	teaching staff training (CPD etc)			
Row 8	support staff training	1,128		0
Row 9	Supply costs - note 2			
Row 10				
Row 11	Building costs:			
Row 12	property insurance			
Row 13	non domestic rates			
Row 14	water & sewerage charges			
Row 15	utilities costs	7,622		7,622
Row 16	cleaning (contract or inhouse)	4,169		4,169
Row 17	building repair & maintenance			
Row 18	grounds maintenance			
Row 19	facilities management costs - note 6			
Row 20	revenue costs arising from capital			
Row 21	Other			
Row 22				
Row 23	School operational costs:			
Row 24	learning materials			

Table 2					
Capital costs				School proposed for closure	Receiving school
Capital Life Cycle cost - note 7					
Third party contributions to capital costs					

Table 3	
Annual Property costs incurred (moth-balling) until disposal	
property insurance	
non domestic rates	
water & sewerage charges	
energy costs	
cleaning (contract or inhouse)	
security costs	
building repair & maintenance	
grounds maintenance	
facilities management costs	
other	
TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL	

Row 25	catering (contract or inhouse)	3,607		3,607
Row 26	SQA costs			
Row 27	other school operational costs (e.g. licences)			
Row 28				
Row 29	<i>Transport costs: note 3</i>			
Row 30	home to school			
Row 31	other pupil transport costs			
Row 32	staff travel			
Row 33	SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL	157,857		97,986
Row 34				
Row 35	Income:			
Row 36	Sale of meals	-2,917		-2,917
Row 37	Lets			
Row 38	External care provider			
Row 39	Other			
Row 40	SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL	-2,917		-2,917
Row 41				
Row 42	TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL	154,940		
Row 43				
Row 44	UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR (based on 5 pupils at mothball)	30,988		

Table 4

Non-recurring revenue costs	
TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS	

Table 5

Impact on GAE - note 5	
	-14,000
GAE IMPACT	-14,000

END OF PAPER