



**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES
STATUTORY CONSULTATION
PROPOSED CLOSURE OF HOBKIRK PRIMARY SCHOOL**



CONSULTATION PERIOD

FROM 7 MARCH 2019 TO 2 MAY 2019

PUBLIC MEETING

AT WILLIAM LAIDLAW MEMORIAL HALL, BONCHESTER BRIDGE

ON 16 APRIL 2019 AT 7.00PM

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, subject to the outcome of this statutory consultation, that:-

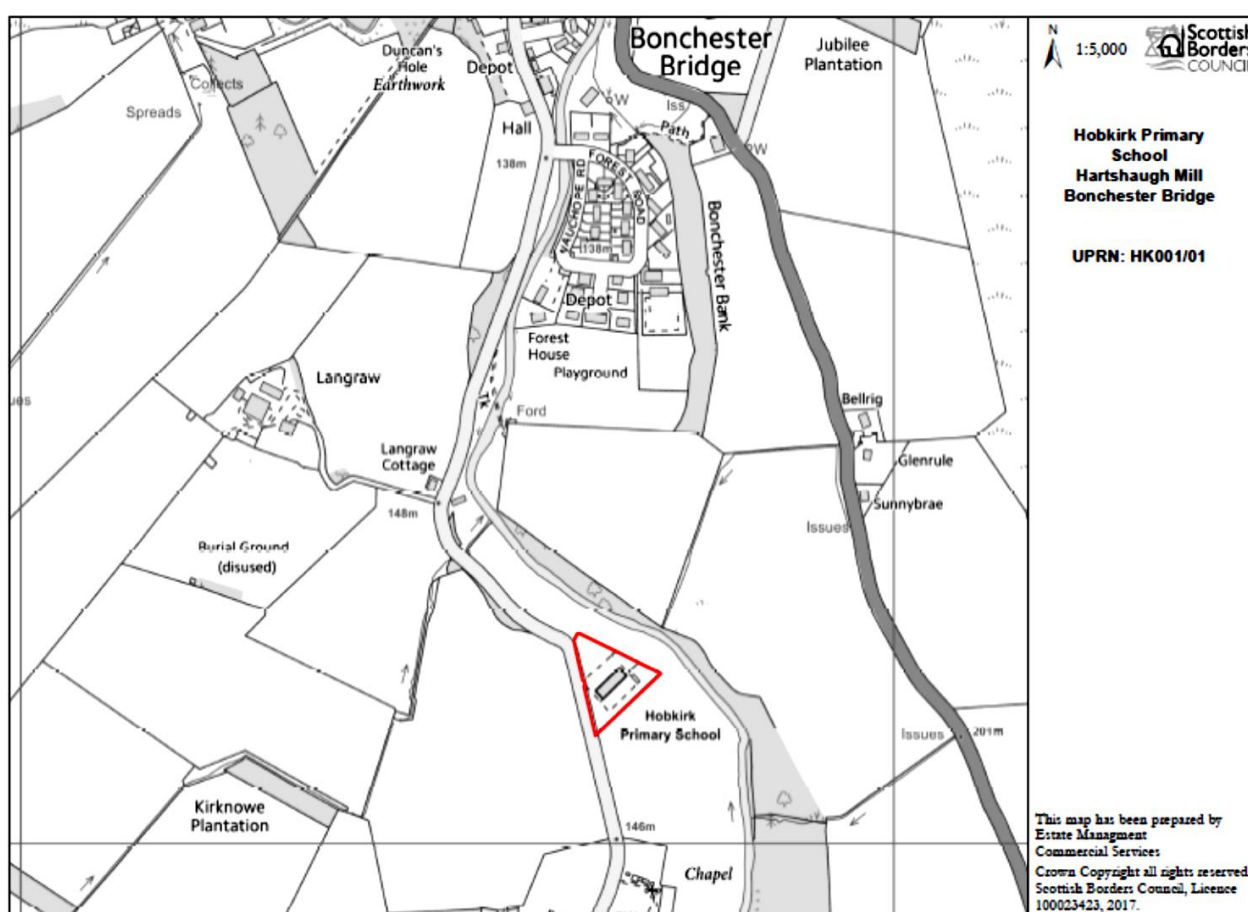
- Hobkirk Primary School (currently mothballed) is permanently closed on or around 20 August 2019; and
- If Hobkirk Primary School is closed, that its catchment area is permanently rezoned to the catchment area for Denholm Primary School (the **Proposals**).

BACKGROUND

2 Hobkirk Primary School

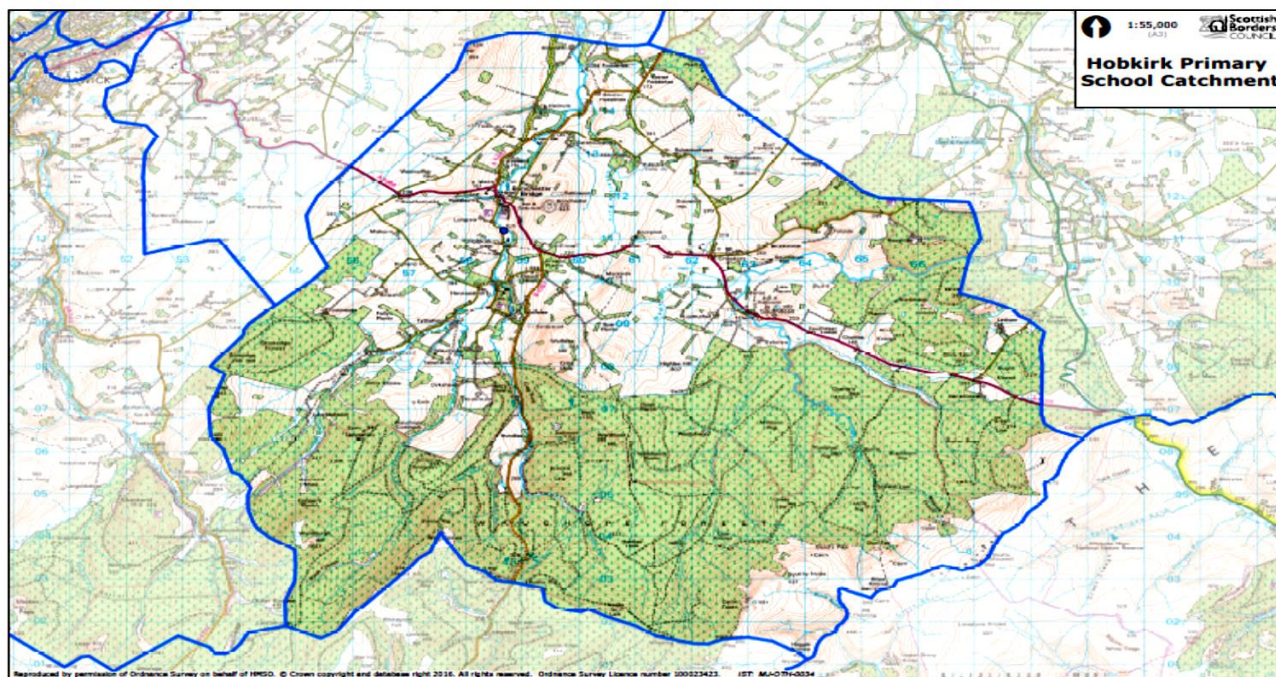
2.1 Hobkirk Primary School is a non-denominational primary school, with capacity for 75 pupils. Its catchment area serves the villages of Hobkirk, Bonchester Bridge and the surrounding area within Teviot and Liddesdale. The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2017¹ classifies Hobkirk as "Accessible-rural" which is an area with a population of less than 3,000 people, and within a 30 minute drive time of a settlement of 10,000 or more.

2.2 The school's location is shown here:

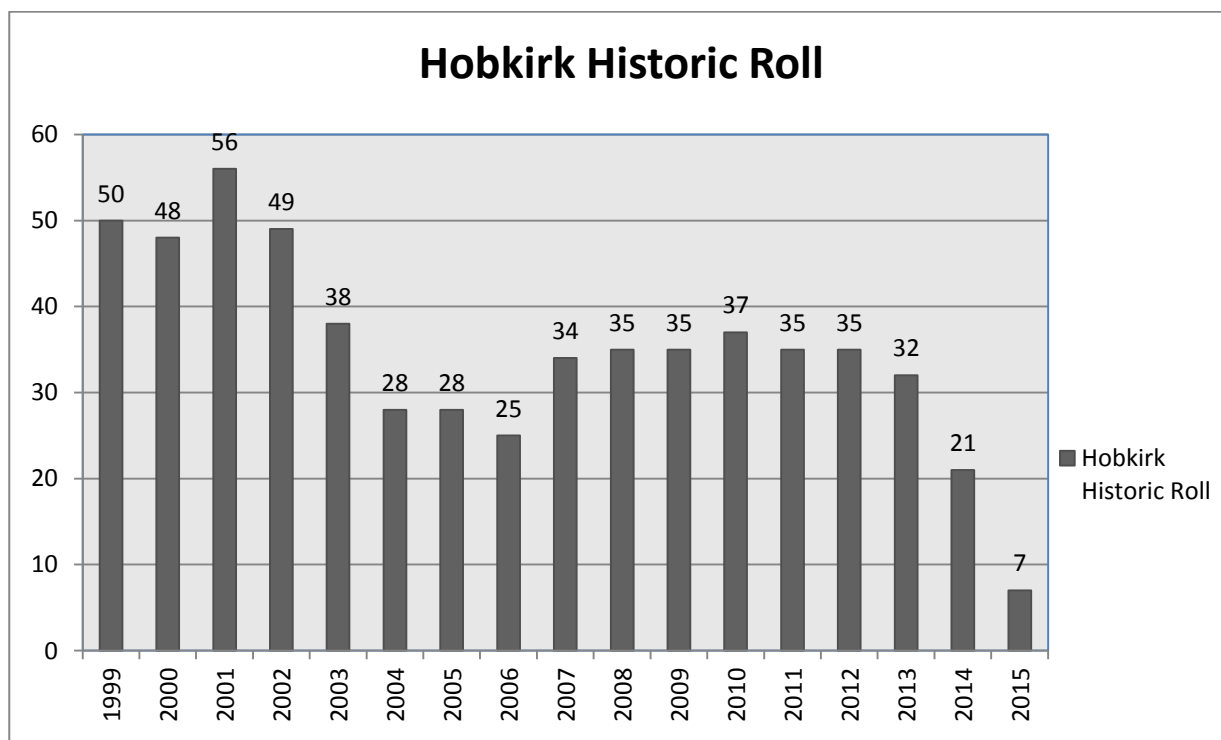


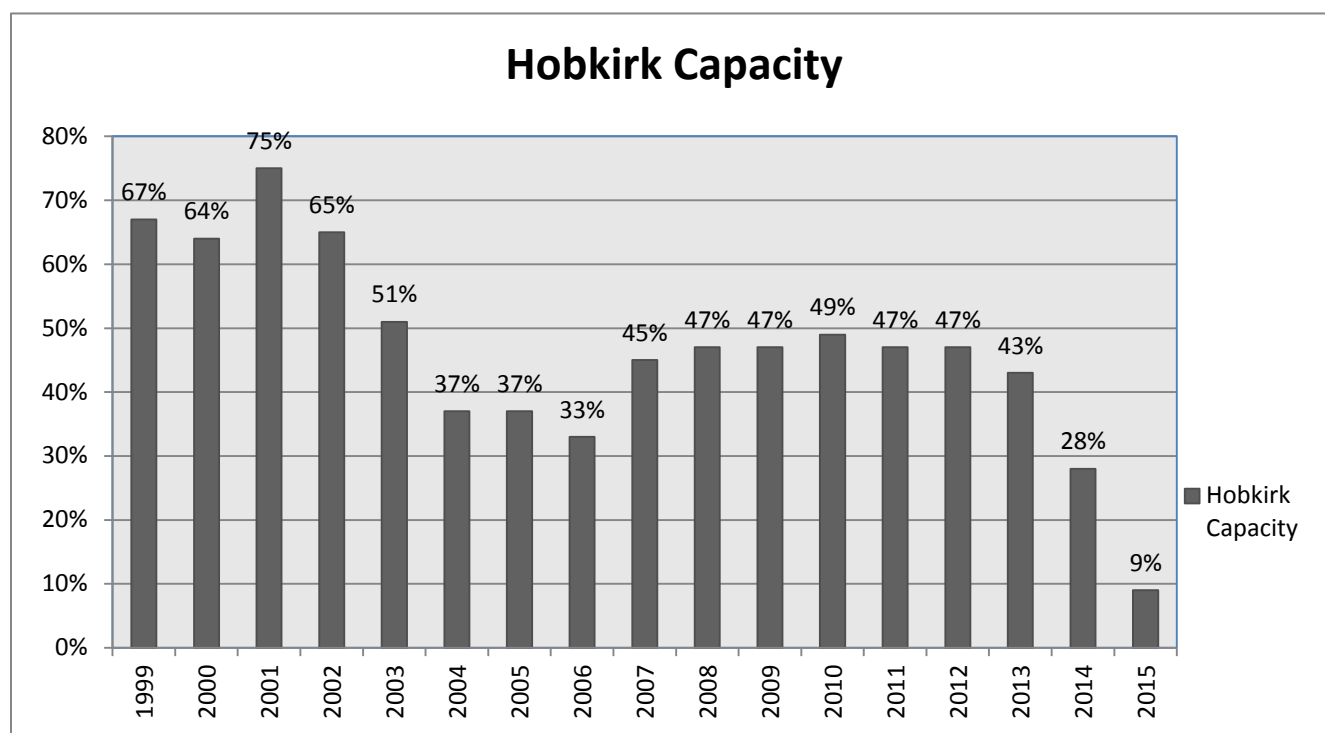
¹ [Scottish Rural Schools List 2017](#)

2.3 The catchment area is shown below:-



- 2.4 The school roll had declined significantly over recent years. In 2000/01 there were 56 pupils attending the school but by 2014/15 this reduced to 7 pupils, resulting in the school operating at only 9% of capacity.





- 2.4 In 2014/15 school year, there were 24 primary aged pupils residing within the Hobkirk catchment area; however only 7 were attending Hobkirk. 71% of catchment children attended other schools within the area through placement requests. 65% of these children had chosen to attend Denholm Primary School.
- 2.5 No children had enrolled in P1 at Hobkirk Primary School since 2013. Consultation in 2015 with the parents of pre-school children within the area indicated that they intended to submit placement requests for their children to attend either Denholm Primary School or primary schools in Hawick for P1 at the start of the new school year.
- 2.6 Given the considerable drop in the school roll, the Council recognised that Hobkirk Primary School was at risk. Discussions were held with the community to consider all the options available regarding the school. Parents expressed that their children had benefitted from and enjoyed their links with Denholm Primary School for ICT and PE. Many children had indicated that they wanted to spend more time at Denholm. Parents identified a number of concerns relating to the size of Hobkirk Primary School and the effects 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. The potential educational benefits were discussed should the children be able to attend a larger primary school: greater opportunities to experience the skills and abilities of a wider staff group, greater opportunities for socialisation and collaborative learning and greater opportunities for participation in team activities. There was also recognition that the children might not be able to fully participate in the Curriculum for Excellence due to its requirements for collaboration and peer working among learners.

- 2.7 Following these discussions, the families of the 7 remaining pupils chose to make placing requests to other schools in the area, which were granted. Accordingly no pupils were enrolled to attend Hobkirk Primary in the 2015/2016 session.
- 2.8 In November 2015, Scottish Borders Council Executive agreed that Hobkirk 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.
- 2.9 As the majority of placement requests from the area (65%) were to Denholm Primary School, indicating a parental preference, the decision was also made to temporarily rezone the catchment area for Hobkirk to Denholm Primary School. The two schools were already partner schools, sharing a head-teacher, with Hobkirk pupils accessing facilities and activities in Denholm on a regular basis. As the schools are in the same secondary catchment zones and worked across the same learning area, transition was straightforward given the alignment in curricular programmes and teaching plans. It was agreed that during the rezoning period that transport would be provided for any new pupils in the catchment to Denholm Primary School
- 2.10 A condition survey was carried out on Hobkirk Primary School in 2015 and the overall site is rated as Condition C Poor (Showing major defects and/or not operating adequately). Condition is an assessment of physical condition of the school and its grounds.
- 2.11 The suitability of Hobkirk 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.
- 2.12 The backlog maintenance costs at Hobkirk are currently estimated to be £229,000. 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 Denholm Primary School for subjects including ICT and PE.
- 2.13 In the current school year (2018/19) there are 24 primary school aged pupils residing in the Hobkirk catchment area; 88% of those children currently attend Denholm Primary School with the other 3 children attending primary schools in Jedburgh and Hawick through placement requests.

3 AREA DEMOGRAPHICS

- 3.1 The demographics of the local population have changed over recent years. The table below, derived from National Records of Scotland census data, shows the age group distribution for the datazone that includes Hobkirk Primary School catchment area and how it has changed between 2001 and 2017. In 2001 there were 157 children (aged 0 to 15) living in this area, which was 20% of the population. However by 2017 there were estimated to be 96 children (aged 0 to 15) living in this area, which is 12% of the population. This equates to a 39% reduction in young people over this period.

| Bonchester Bridge and Chesters Area (S01012358) | | | |
|--|------------------|-------------------|----------|
| Date of Census | Age Group | Population | % |
| 2001 | 0 to 15 | 157 | 20% |
| | 16 to 64 | 466 | 61% |
| | 65+ | 144 | 19% |
| | All people | 767 | 100% |
| 2011 | 0 to 15 | 93 | 12% |
| | 16 to 64 | 498 | 65% |
| | 65+ | 176 | 23% |
| | All people | 767 | 100% |
| 2017 – Estimate NRS | 0 to 15 | 96 | 12% |
| | 16 to 64 | 437 | 57% |
| | 65+ | 235 | 31% |
| | All people | 768 | 100% |

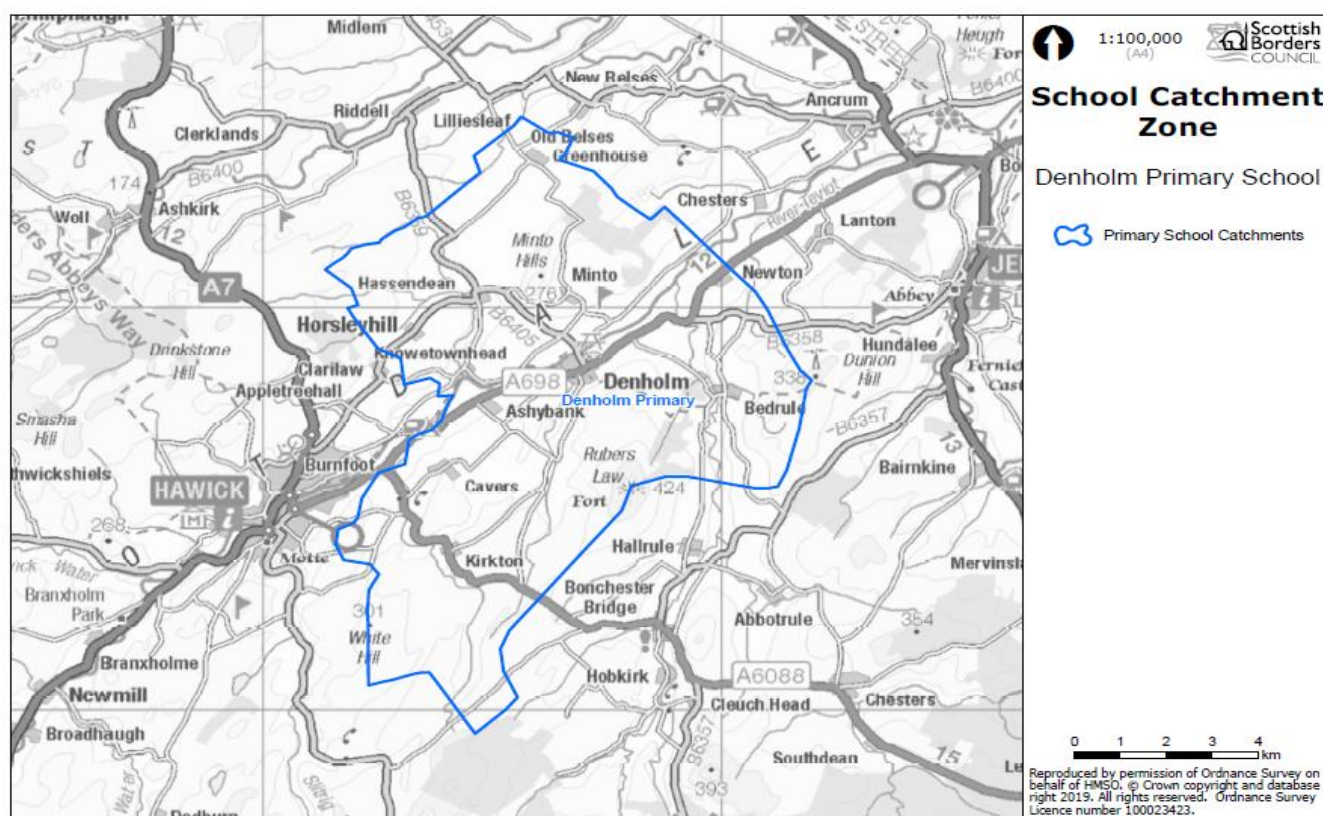
- 3.2 Council records (based on Early Learning and Primary enrolment forms) indicate that there are currently 8 pre-school aged children (aged 3+) in the Hobkirk catchment area; along with 24 primary school aged pupils.
- 3.3 The current Local Development Plan 2016 does not anticipate much development in the area; one housing site within Bonchester Bridge is allocated for development. This site is located opposite the Memorial Hall and has an indicative site capacity of 8 units. No houses have been completed to date. The Housing Land Audit (HLA) 2018 programmes the site as being effective from 2021; with 2 units a year being built over a 4 year period. This has been informed using past completion rates and the level of developer interest to date within the area. It is not anticipated that this development would significantly impact on pupil numbers.

4 DENHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL

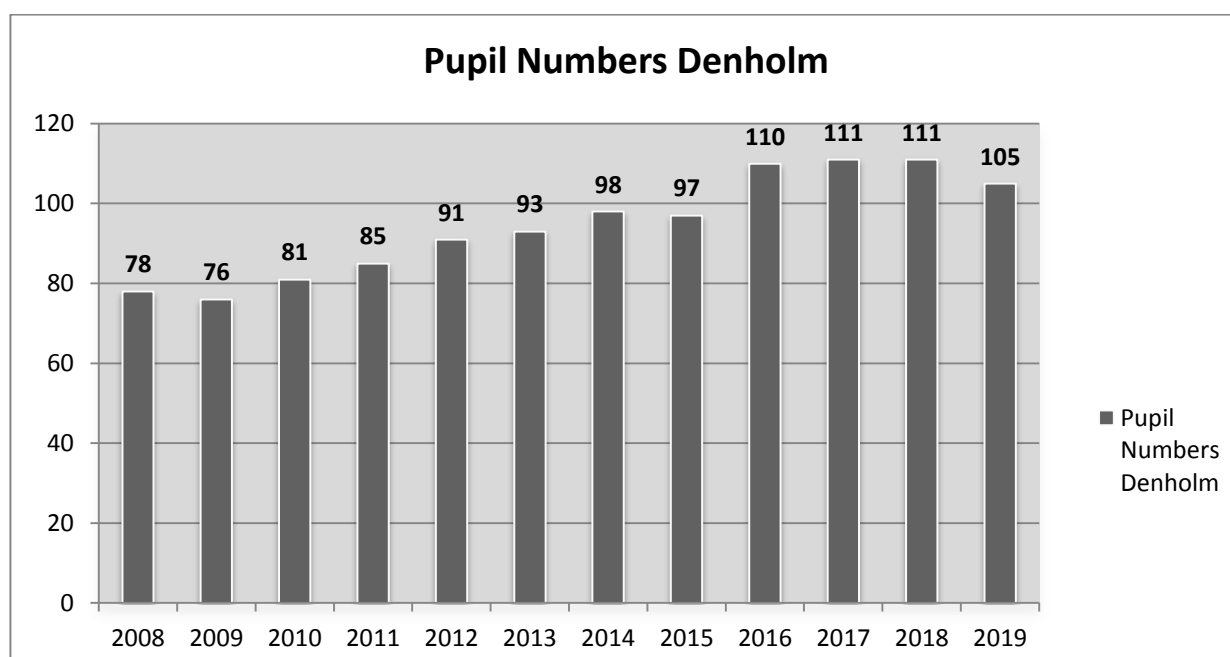
- 4.1 Denholm Primary School provides non-denominational primary education to pupils from the village of Denholm and surrounding area. The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2017² classifies Denholm Primary School as "Accessible-rural".

² [Scottish Rural Schools List 2017](#)

4.2. The catchment area for Denholm Primary is shown here:-



- 4.3 The school has capacity for 125 pupils. There are currently 105 pupils attending the school, in 5 composite classes.
- 4.4 Denholm Primary School was rebuilt and re-opened in October 2008 after a fire had damaged the original building. The school building is modern and spacious and has been designed to be environmentally efficient to run. The school roll has grown steadily over the years and is currently operating at 84% of capacity. There are 21 pupils residing in the Hobkirk Primary catchment area that currently attend Denholm Primary.



- 4.5 A condition survey was carried out on the building in 2016 and the overall site is rated as Condition A - Good (Performing well and operating efficiently)³. A suitability survey was carried out in 2012 on Denholm Primary School and it was rated A - Good (performing well and operating efficiently)⁴. Both surveys are undertaken on a minimum of a 5 year cycle and data is reviewed and investment planned accordingly annually.
- 4.6 The most recent inspection carried out by HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) in 2015 and can be accessed by the following link:-
[Education Scotland Inspection Report June 2015](#)

5 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 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 Hobkirk 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 regarding in respect of Hobkirk Primary School; analysing a range of available options to ensure that the most reasonable and appropriate course of action was identified. A summary of the Options Appraisals is given in below. The complete Options Appraisal Report is attached as **Appendix 1**.
- 5.6 The Options Appraisal concludes that the closure of Hobkirk 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

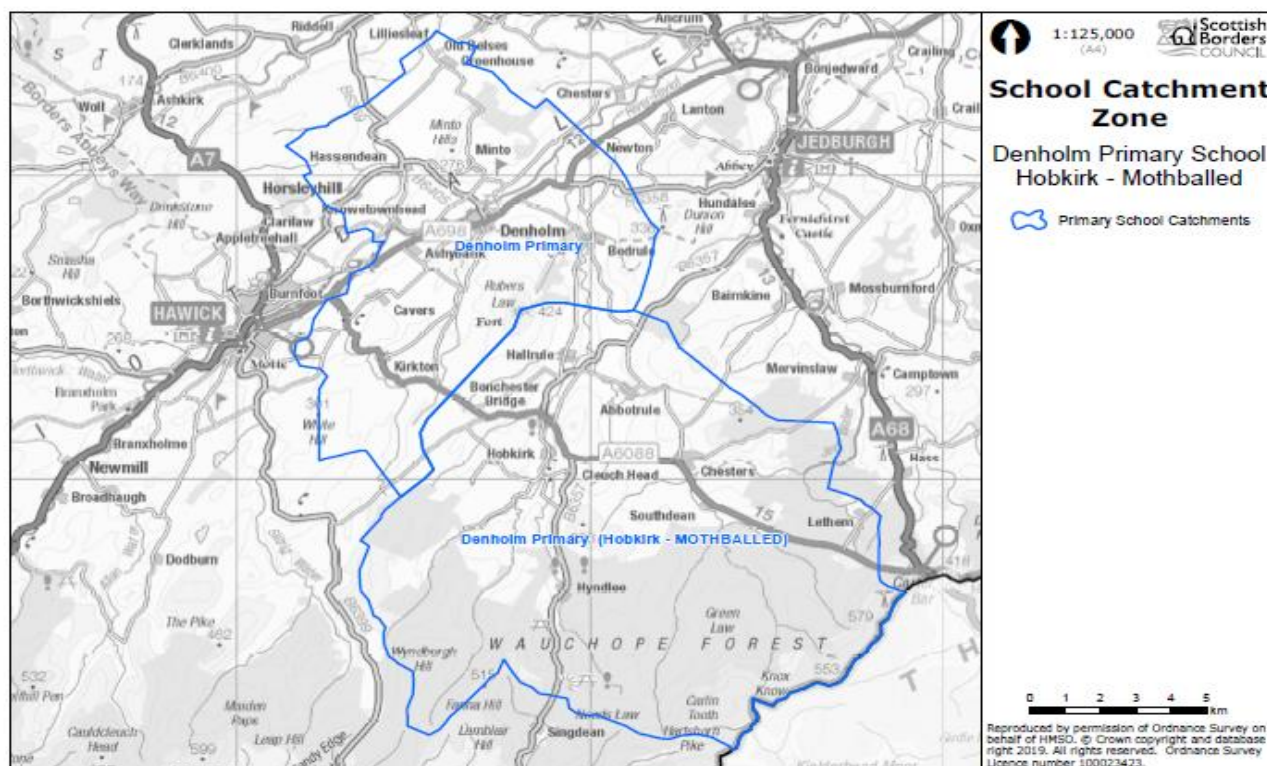
³ Condition is an assessment of physical condition of the school and its grounds.

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.

across Scotland. This proposal paper has been prepared in accordance with the terms of the 2010 Act.

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 Hobkirk Primary School. It is also proposed that, following the closure of Hobkirk, the catchment area for Hobkirk will be permanently re-zoned into the catchment area for Denholm Primary School.
- 6.2 The proposed combined catchment area will be as follows:-



- 6.3 There are a number of reasons why the Council wishes to consult on these Proposals:-

- 6.3.1 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.
- 6.3.2 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.
- 6.3.3 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.
- 6.3.4 Prior to Hobkirk Primary School being mothballed, the roll numbers at Hobkirk had experienced a significant decline (down 88% from 2001-2014). 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 Denholm Primary School and primary schools in Jedburgh and Hawick. Since November 2015 there have been no enquiries made in relation to children enrolling at Hobkirk Primary School and no children are likely to attend the school in the future.

- 6.3.5 It is considered that the low pupil roll at Hobkirk Primary School had presented challenges in providing the breadth of learning and social and emotional experiences required to meet the needs of pupils. Prior to mothballing Hobkirk pupils were already accessing Denholm for certain lessons, with increasing number choosing to attend Denholm in preference to Hobkirk.
- 6.3.6 Following mothballing, c83% of pupils from the Hobkirk catchment area has been attending Denholm Primary School. Denholm Primary School offers a modern learning environment that encourages high levels of achievement and provides a wide range of opportunities for children to achieve their full potential as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.
- 6.3.7 If Hobkirk Primary school were 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 Hobkirk Primary School. Parents/carers appear satisfied with their children's learning experiences and outcomes at the schools they are attending.
- 6.3.8 The learning environment and facilities at Denholm Primary are rated A; even with works carried out to rectify some of the building and fabric issues at Hobkirk, there would still be a requirement to share facilities with Denholm for certain subjects including PE and ICT.
- 6.3.9 A partner provider currently provides Early Learning and Childcare at Denholm Primary School. We have been unable to identify and demand for additional provision to be provided in the Hobkirk area, with children from the Hobkirk catchment currently attending Denholm. From August 2019 the Council will be providing funding for 1140 hours early learning and childcare for all 3-4 and eligible 2 year olds, in the Denholm catchment area.
- 6.3.10 Given the strong parental preference that has been indicated, it is proposed that Hobkirk Primary School's catchment area is permanently re-zoned to Denholm Primary School. Parents will continue to retain the right to make a placing request for another school of their choice as outlined in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, as amended. It is Council's policy to support placement requests as far as reasonably possible.
- 6.3.11 Council officers consider that the proposal for pupils from the Hobkirk area to attend Denholm Primary School has strong 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. Council officers have considered the provision of primary education within the Hobkirk area in the context of the needs of the pupils and the local community, both now and in the future. Information has been collated on pupil numbers, housebuilding, finances, the school, travel arrangements, environmental impact and the local area and community to inform the options.
- 6.3.12 The Council has engaged with stakeholders and has considered other uses for the premises prior to formulating these Proposals. The school has now been mothballed for over 3 years and the community has expressed a view that it is 'wasteful' to continue this in the long term, and that resources within the school and the school itself should have a future. At the community events, people were clear about the challenges which faced their community, less employment, fewer families, fewer pupils and more holiday

homes or weekenders. However, they were positive about the possibilities and opportunities which could be created, if the school building was developed or sold.

- 6.3.13 Denholm is projected to sustain in the long term. Staffing at Denholm is settled. It would be challenging to create a leadership model for Hobkirk Primary School and attract staff to the school. The roll of the Denholm Primary School will be more sustainable if their catchment be permanently redrawn to include the catchment for Hobkirk Primary School. In turn this school may be more likely to maintain effective staffing levels and staff will have better opportunity to collaborate with colleagues. It will allow children to have larger more diverse peer groups and to increase their networks and have improved experiences and outcomes.

7 OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 7.1 Scottish Government guidance indicates that local authorities should review a mothballed school within 3 years of mothballing. As Hobkirk 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 Hobkirk Primary School's namely:

| OPTIONS FOR HOBKIRK PRIMARY SCHOOL | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Option 1 | Reopen Hobkirk Primary School with its original catchment area |
| Option 2 | Reopen Hobkirk Primary School with an expanded catchment area |
| Option 3 | Continue mothballing Hobkirk Primary School, with the catchment area remaining zoned to Denholm Primary School |
| Option 4 | Close Hobkirk Primary School, with the catchment area zoned permanently to Denholm Primary School |

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

8. OPTION 1 REOPEN HOBKIRK 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 Hobkirk is currently rated as a C for Condition and Suitability. The Council's estates team estimate that it would cost c£229,000 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 Denholm Primary School to share facilities (including PE and ICT).
- 8.3 It is considered that while Hobkirk reopening would be likely to allow for greater involvement with the Hobkirk community, there could be educational disadvantages in reopening Hobkirk Primary School with a small school roll versus the combined provision that is currently provided. Many of the educational benefits that can be considered to arise from attending a smaller rural school also apply to Denholm; with close bonds across year groups and opportunities to collaborate across the age range. The majority of Hobkirk catchment pupils attend Denholm, which provides the opportunity for smaller class sizes as the school comprises 5 composite classes, which cannot exceed 25 pupils. It is considered that few children and parents would be likely to support the resultant change in their catchment area to Hobkirk and removing the funded transport option to Denholm.
- 8.4 Changes to travel arrangements would be fairly neutral; some pupils would travel further and some less than before.
- 8.5 In conclusion it is not considered a reasonable or sustainable option to re-open Hobkirk Primary School with its original catchment zone.

9 **OPTION 2** **REOPEN HOBKIRK 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 no children in the neighbouring catchments living closer to Hobkirk Primary School than their current catchment school. In fact the majority of pupils in the neighbouring catchment areas live either in the Denholm or Newcastleton or in close vicinity. 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 Hobkirk has been identified and there appears to be satisfaction with the current primary schools attended. Accordingly the option to amend/extend the Hobkirk catchment area is not considered a reasonable option as it is unlikely that the catchment area could be made more sustainable on this basis.

10 OPTION 3**CONTINUE MOTHBALLING HOBKIRK PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH THE PUPILS ZONED TO DENHOLM 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 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.
- 10.8 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.

11 OPTION 4 – THE PROPOSAL**CLOSE HOBKIRK PRIMARY SCHOOL ZONING ANY PUPILS TO DENHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL AND THE PERMANENT RE-DELINEATION OF THE CATCHMENT ZONE**

- 11.1 **Option 4** would formalise the status quo; resulting in the permanent closure of the school and the permanent re-delineation of the catchment zone. This would allow Children and Young People Services to declare the school building as surplus and alternative uses for the building could then be progressed.
- 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 HOBKIRK

- 11.3 Hobkirk Primary School was mothballed in November 2015 after a rapid decline in the school roll (80% reduction 2011 - 2015) and an increase in placement requests (17% in 2011 increasing to 74% at the start of 2015), with the majority of pupils attending Denholm Primary School (69%). There are currently 24 primary school aged children residing in the catchment area for Hobkirk Primary School attending other schools in the cluster (83% attend Denholm). 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 Denholm Primary School has a capacity for 125 pupils. The current roll is 105; including 21 pupils from Hobkirk Primary School catchment area (20% of total pupils). It is projected that Denholm Primary School will continue to have capacity to accommodate all pupils from the

Hobkirk area. The current occupancy rate for Denholm Primary School including current pupils from Hobkirk Primary School catchment area is 84%.

- 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 Hobkirk 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 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 The facilities at Denholm Primary School have been designed for modern learning and therefore offer a more accessible and inclusive environment for all children.
- 11.11.6 A 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.
- 11.11.7 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.
- 11.11.8 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.

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 these Proposals reflect the current temporary arrangements that were put in place 3 years ago. 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 Hobkirk 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 Denholm Primary School is in the heart of a vibrant village and provides a gathering place for families and communities. More children being located within Denholm Primary will bring a greater sense of community and bring support to parents and remove any feelings of isolation. The community will benefit from greater support.

LIKELY EFFECT ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

- 11.16 As Hobkirk Primary School is a rural school, special regard was paid to the rural 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 Hobkirk Primary School prior to mothballing for community events given that William Laidlaw Memorial Hall was available for community use within Bonchester Bridge. Views varied in the community regarding the long term use of the Hobkirk 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.
- 11.18 Denholm Primary School is in the heart of a vibrant village and provides a gathering place for families and communities. The facilities within the Denholm Primary School building are suitable for the promotion of community use outside school hours. There are distinct nearby Village halls, separate from the school buildings, available for community activities in respect of each of the areas served by Hobkirk, Denholm, and Newcastleton Primary schools. Given the continuing village hall provision in all these locations it is believed that there will be no significant impact for the community to access a range of activities which could be located at Denholm Primary School.

LIKELY EFFECT CAUSED BY DIFFERENT TRAVELLING ARRANGEMENTS

- 11.19 The rurality of the area considered fully in the Options Appraisal stage. The distance to Denholm Primary School is less for the provision of services from key Council departments and the school is generally considered more accessible. Changing the catchment of Hobkirk Primary School to Denholm Primary School during the mothballing has generally had a positive impact upon travelling time for children.

- 11.20 However it is recognised that adverse weather in the winter currently impacts on travel arrangements in this area. In terms of adverse weather, Hobkirk Primary School would generally be more affected than Denholm. However there are always likely to be issues in the area because of the location. Headteachers take into account the local circumstances and in particular the ability of pupils and teachers to travel safely when deciding to close the school and/or send pupils home early. All schools in the Scottish Borders have an emergency closure plan for severe weather and this is drawn up by the Headteacher following a risk assessment.

FINANCIALS

- 11.21 See Appendix 2 for detailed financial information of the costs that would be associated with the running of a school with 7 pupils (reflecting the positions before mothballing). The approximate cost to bring the property into an acceptable condition for reopening is £229,000. It should be noted that there may be potential further costs for further works if the building were to reopen permanently and be used for the long terms.
- 11.22 Based on the pupil numbers before mothballing, it is estimated that it would cost c£19,000 per pupil to operate the school. The average in the Borders is c£4,000 per annum. 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

- 11.24 Pupils in the Hobkirk catchment area currently travel times on average of between 20 and 25 minutes miles to Denholm Primary School. This is not considered an unreasonable distance to expect children to travel for primary school education in rural areas. Other catchment areas in Scottish Borders also have such a travel distance within them.
- 11.25 Following the decision to mothball Hobkirk Primary School in November 2015 the Council agreed to provide school transportation to all pupils who resided in the Hobkirk catchment area who were attending Denholm Primary School through placing requests. The impact for some children is that it has resulted in a longer school journey of 25 minutes, while for others it has shortened the journey.
- 11.26 From the community meetings concerns were not raised in terms of travel arrangements posing a problem or the additional distance being an issue.

Rural Factors - Community Impact

- 11.27 Council officers have considered the impact upon the community and have held meetings with the community and the Community Council to discuss the proposals for the school. The majority of comments from the community were 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 final solution was required.

- 11.28 The local Community Council has indicated that it is actively investigating options to acquire the building and the opportunities that will arise from the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. 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.

CONCLUSIONS

- 11.29 Denholm Primary School currently accommodates pupils from Hobkirk Primary and the pupil numbers are not projected to increase significantly. Denholm Primary has capacity to continue to accommodate the projected pupil numbers.
- 11.30 Hobkirk has been mothballed for 3 years. Pupil numbers are not projected to rise within the Hobkirk catchment and there is no significant planned housebuilding.
- 11.31 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.
- 11.32 The number of primary school aged children, in the catchment area, wishing to attend Hobkirk 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.
- 11.33 The distance between Hobkirk Primary School and Denholm Primary School is approximately 10 miles, which has had a resultant effect on pupil travel time. Pupils travelling from the east at Southdean/Chesters who were previously transported to Hobkirk have seen an increase in journey time of approximately 25 minutes whilst pupils now travelling from the village of Bonchester Bridge have a total journey time of 20 minutes.
- 11.34 The condition and suitability of Hobkirk is currently rated as C – Poor. It is estimated that it would cost c£229k to remedy the current defects at the school. Pupils attending Hobkirk would still be required to travel to Denholm for PE and ICT.
- 11.35 Re-opening the school may also have a negative impact on the learning experiences and outcomes for pupils at Denholm as this may reduce the number of pupils at their school. This may also impact on the staff at Denholm as this may reduce the number of staff available for both schools in a sometimes already challenging employment pool. The head teacher time may also reduce as they will have 2 schools to concentrate on rather than 1. While the potential loss of pupils is not likely to impact on the sustainability of Denholm; it will be likely to restrict the breadth of experiences and opportunities that can be enjoyed from a wider pupil population which may also impact on teacher numbers and parent involvement in the school community.
- 11.36 The Options Appraisal has demonstrated that the option for the permanent closure of Hobkirk Primary School with the pupils zoned to Denholm Primary School is both reasonable and the most appropriate option.

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 Hobkirk 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
- Hobkirk Primary School, Bonchester Bridge, TD9 8JU
- Denholm Primary School, Denholm, Hawick, TD9 8LZ
- Jedburgh Grammar School, Jedburgh, TD8 6DQ
- Hawick High School, Hawick, TD9 0EG
- Hawick Library, North Bridge Street, Hawick TD9 9QT

and published on the Scottish Borders Council website:

<https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/hobkirk>

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

Hobkirk 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 of Hobkirk, Denholm & District, Newcastleton, Jedburgh and Hawick;

- 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 11 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 7 March 2019 and will end on 2 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:

16 April 2019 at 7pm
at
William Laidlaw Memorial Hall
Bonchester Bridge

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 officers from 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 16 April 2019 at 7pm at William Laidlaw Memorial Hall in Bonchester Bridge- 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:
- Hobkirk 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/hobkirk>
- 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 <https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/hobkirk>.
- 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, **2 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 libraries in Hawick and Jedburgh, as well as Hobkirk Primary School and Denholm Primary 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

Hobkirk 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 Hobkirk 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 long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stuart Easingwood

Interim Service Director of Children & Young People

7 March 2019

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Options Appraisal Report

Appendix 2 Spreadsheet Showing Current Revenue Costs for School Proposed for Closure

Appendix 1 – Options Appraisal Report



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



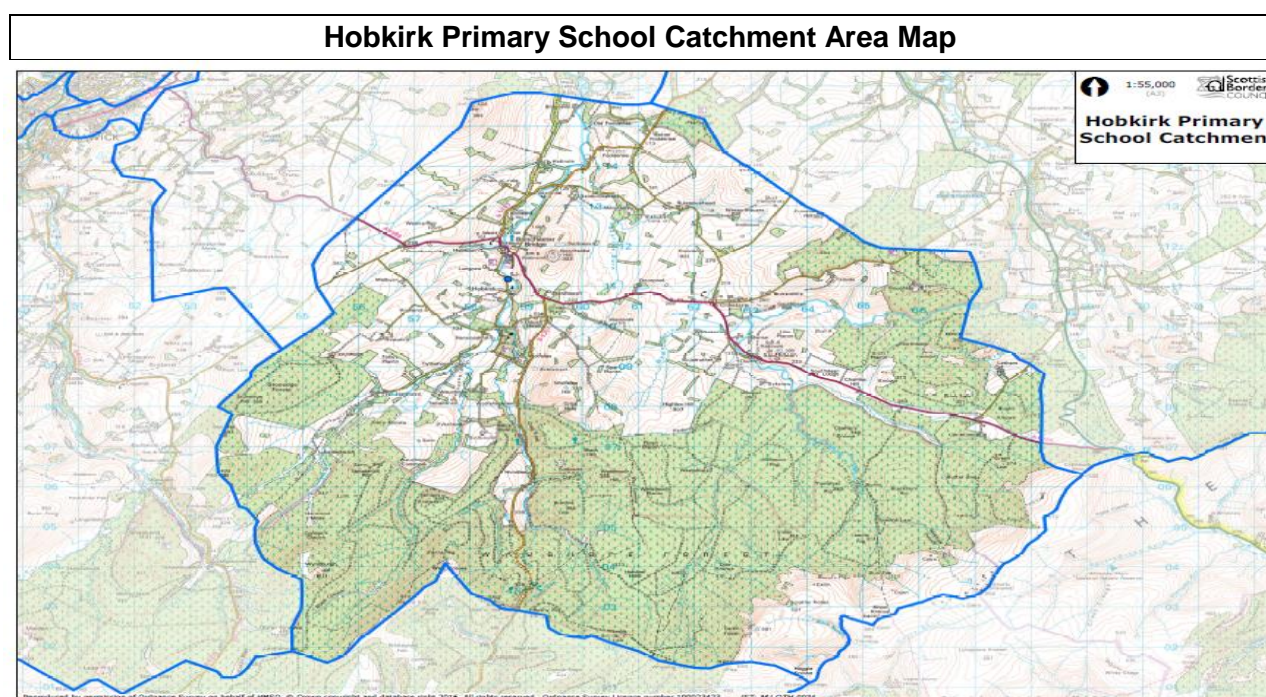
HOBKIRK PRIMARY SCHOOL

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 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 considers 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 Hobkirk Primary School, which was mothballed in November 2015.

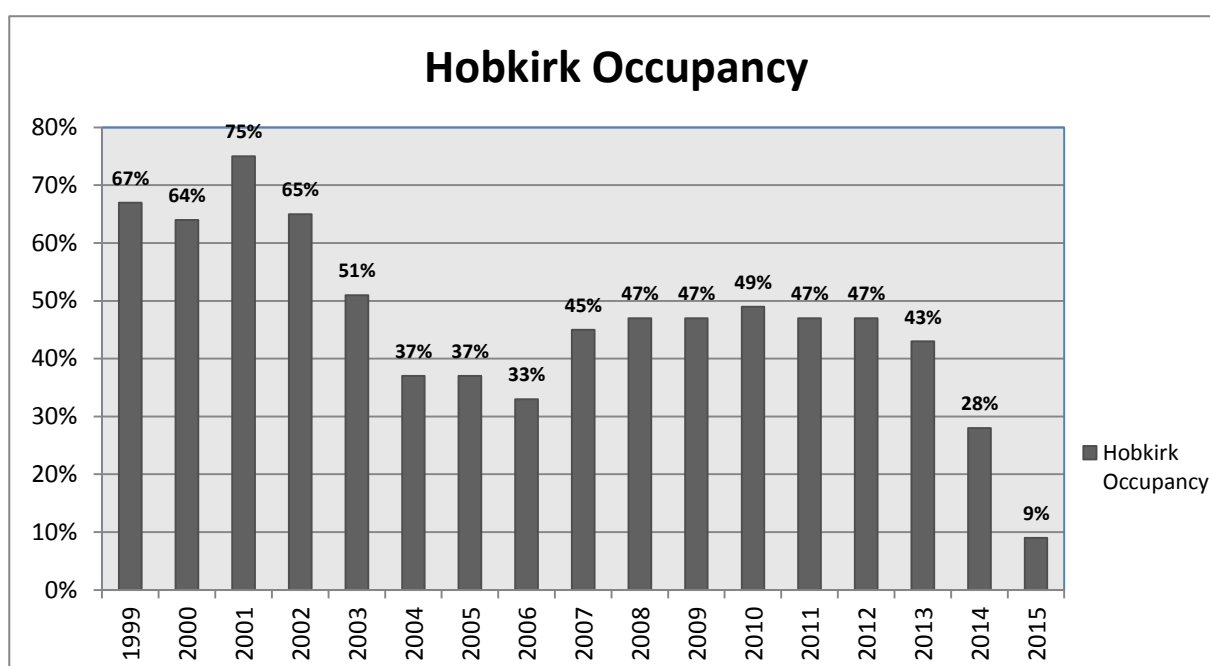
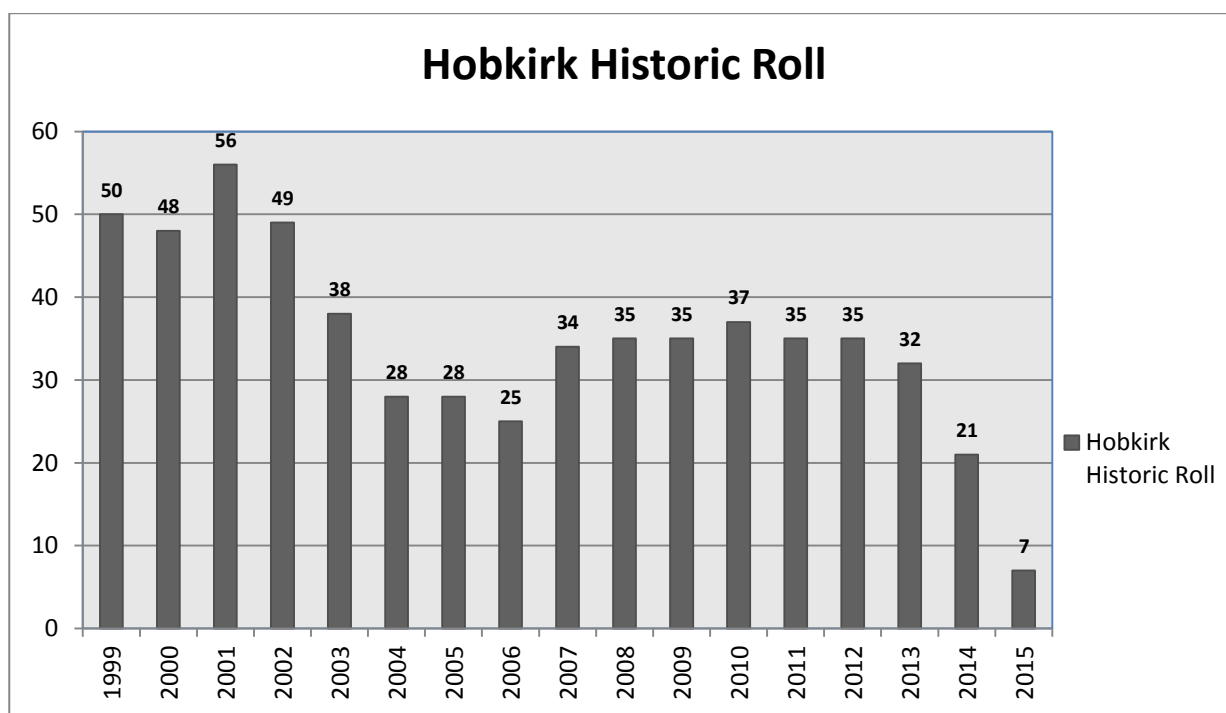
2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Hobkirk Primary School is a non-denominational primary school located between Hobkirk and Bonchester Bridge. The school opened in 1936, with capacity for 75 pupils. The school's catchment area is indicated below:



- 2.2 The pupil roll at the school reduced dramatically in the years preceding mothballing - from 56 pupils in 2000/01 to 7 in 2014/15. In January 2010 the roll at Hobkirk Primary comprised 35 pupils (2 composite classes) and a nursery with 4 pupils. However the number of children in

the nursery reduced and by August 2012 the nursery was accommodated within the Primary 1-4 class; by August 2013 all pupils were taught in one composite P1-P7 and the nursery ceased to operate as there were no nursery aged children. The profile of the roll since 2000 is detailed below:-



- 2.3 In 2014/15 there were 24 primary aged pupils residing within the Hobkirk catchment area; however 71% of those pupils were enrolled at other schools after submitting placement requests.
- 2.4 No P1 children had enrolled at Hobkirk Primary School since 2013. Consultation in 2015, with the parents of pre-school children within the area, indicated that they intended to submit

placement requests for their children to commence P1 at other primary schools in the Hawick schools cluster, at the start of the new school year.

- 2.5 Given the considerable drop in the school roll, Council officers recognised that Hobkirk Primary School was at risk. Discussions were held with the community to consider all the options available regarding the school. Parents expressed that their children had benefitted from and enjoyed their links with Denholm Primary School for ICT and PE. Many children had indicated that they wanted to spend more time at Denholm. Parents identified a number of concerns relating to the size of Hobkirk Primary School and the potential effects 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.
- 2.6 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 Hobkirk Primary in the 2015/16 session.
- 2.7 In November 2015, Scottish Borders Council Executive agreed that Hobkirk 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.
- 2.8 As the majority of placement requests from the area (65%) were to Denholm Primary School, indicating a parental preference, the catchment for Hobkirk was temporarily rezoned to Denholm. The two schools were already partner schools, sharing a Headteacher, with Hobkirk pupils accessing facilities and activities in Denholm on a regular basis. As the schools are in the same secondary catchment area and worked across the same learning area, transition was straightforward given the alignment in curricular programmes and teaching plans.
- 2.9 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 The demographics of the local population have changed over recent years. The table below, derived from National Records of Scotland census data, shows the age group distribution for the datazone that includes Hobkirk Primary School catchment area and how it has changed between 2001 and 2017. In 2001 there were 157 children (aged 0 to 15) living in this area, which was 20% of the population. However by 2017 there were estimated to be 96 children (aged 0 to 15) living in this area, which is 12% of the population and equates to a 39% reduction in young people over this period.

| Bonchester Bridge and Chesters Area (S01012358) | | | |
|--|------------------|-------------------|----------|
| Date of Census | Age Group | Population | % |
| 2001 | 0 to 15 | 157 | 20% |
| | 16 to 64 | 466 | 61% |
| | 65+ | 144 | 19% |
| | All people | 767 | 100% |
| 2011 | 0 to 15 | 93 | 12% |
| | 16 to 64 | 498 | 65% |
| | 65+ | 176 | 23% |
| | All people | 767 | 100% |
| 2017 – Estimate NRS | 0 to 15 | 96 | 12% |
| | 16 to 64 | 437 | 57% |
| | 65+ | 235 | 31% |
| | All people | 768 | 100% |

- 3.2 Council records (based on Early Learning and Primary enrolment forms) indicate that there are currently 8 pre-school aged children (aged 3+) in the Hobkirk catchment area; along with 24 primary aged pupils.
- 3.3 The current Local Development Plan 2016 does not anticipate much development in the area; one housing site within Bonchester Bridge is allocated for development. This site is located opposite the Memorial Hall and has an indicative site capacity of 8 units. No houses have been completed to date. The Housing Land Audit (HLA) 2018 programmes the site as being effective from 2021; with 2 units a year being built over a 4 year period. This has been informed using past completion rates and the level of developer interest to date within the area. It is not anticipated that this development would significantly impact on pupil numbers.

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 Hobkirk Primary School namely:

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Option 1 | Reopen Hobkirk Primary School with its original catchment area |
| Option 2 | Reopen Hobkirk Primary School with an expanded catchment area |
| Option 3 | Continue mothballing Hobkirk Primary School, with the catchment continuing to be zoned to Denholm Primary School |
| Option 4 | Permanently close Hobkirk Primary School, rezoning the catchment area to Denholm Primary School |

5 **OPTION 1**

REOPEN HOBKIRK 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 24 primary pupils in the catchment area. 88% of these pupils currently attend Denholm Primary School with the remaining children attending primary schools in Hawick (8%) and Jedburgh (4%).
- 5.2 Pupil numbers had fallen dramatically before Hobkirk Primary school was mothballed – a fall of 81% in the 5 year period preceding mothballing. It was also evident that immediately prior to mothballing 71% 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 consultation process in 2016 it there was 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 Hobkirk Primary School catchment area would chose return to the school if it were it to reopen.

Condition and Suitability

- 5.4 A condition survey was carried out on the building in 2015 and the overall site is rated as Condition C Poor (Showing major defects and/or not operating adequately). Condition is an assessment of physical condition of the school and its grounds.
- 5.5 The suitability of Hobkirk 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 impacts these have on the learning and teaching, leisure and social activities and health and wellbeing of all users.
- 5.6 The backlog maintenance costs are currently estimated to be £229,000. This would remedy the current issues; other costs may be incurred to re-open the building. The facilities at the school would be adequate but there would most likely still require to share facilities with Denholm Primary School for ICT and PE.

Educational Benefits

- 5.7 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 roll may not be able to experience a variety of learning and teaching experience 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.
- 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 Hobkirk catchment currently all attend larger schools ranging from c100- 300 pupils 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. This can also reduce the likelihood of pupils benefitting from a wide range of solo and group musical and artistic opportunities. As was seen, prior to mothballing, the partnership between Hobkirk and Denholm primaries did not boost the roll number at Hobkirk but in fact increased the number of placement requests to Denholm as children wished more access to the facilities at the school.
- A smaller roll and a smaller peer group may result in pupils requiring more support in the transition to secondary school as it may appear more daunting.
- A partner provider currently provides ELC at Denholm primary school. The entitlement of funded provision for 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds within the Denholm school catchment is due to increase from 600 to 1140 hours in 2019. Officers have been unable to identify a demand for to support a viable ELC provision at Hobkirk.

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 may 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 Hobkirk Primary School in November 2015, the Council agreed to provide school transportation to all pupils who resided in the Hobkirk catchment area attending Denholm Primary School. These travel arrangements have been in place for over 3 years. There are currently 21 children from the Hobkirk catchment attending Denholm Primary School. The impact for some children is that it has resulted in a longer home to school journey

of 25 minutes, 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 Hobkirk Primary School this provision may require to be altered however as has been stated above this may result in longer journeys for some children versus the status quo of currently attending Denholm Primary School. If the decision was taken to re-open the school future pupils in the Hobkirk catchment would no longer be provided funded transport to Denholm but would only be provided transportation to their catchment school, if appropriate.

- 5.10 The distance to Denholm Primary School is generally less for staff and the provision of services from key Council departments is more accessible at Denholm Primary than it was to provide services at Hobkirk Primary School. . If this proposal was to go ahead it would result in an increase in travel times.
- 5.11 It is recognised that adverse weather in the winter currently impacts on travel arrangements in this area. In terms of adverse weather, Hobkirk Primary School would generally be more affected than Denholm Primary School. However there are always likely to be issues in the area because of the rural 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

- 5.12 At the time of mothballing, the Community in general viewed the mothballing as appropriate. Subsequent interaction with the Community has indicated that they 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 the size of Hobkirk 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.
- 5.13 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.
- 5.14 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 hall at Bonchester Bridge serves 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. The Community view the freeing up of the building through closure of the school as a potential opportunity and the Council has already received approaches in this regard.

Financial Impact

- 5.15 The approximate cost to bring the property into an acceptable condition for reopening is £229,000. It should be noted that there may be potential further costs for further works if the building were to reopen permanently and be used for the long terms. Based on the pupil numbers before mothballing, it is estimated that it would cost c£19,000 per pupil to operate the school. The average in the Borders is c£4,000 per annum.

Environmental Impact

- 5.16 The reduced travel for some of the children to Hobkirk Primary would be cancelled out by the impact of reinstating services and staff having to travel further to access Hobkirk Primary School.

- 5.17 The school building at Hobkirk is dated and would be not only expensive to reinstate but would also be more costly to run. The school at Denholm is modern and more environmentally sustainable than the older Hobkirk building.

CONCLUSION:

- 5.18 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.
- 5.19 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. Prior to Hobkirk mothballing Denholm Primary School also saw a decline in roll where capacity dropped by 22% in the 10 years to 2008 however since the new school was built and (with the additional numbers attending from Hobkirk) the numbers have now increased to 84% occupancy.
- 5.20 Denholm is a modern school with good facilities and with strong educational outcomes and experiences. The facilities offered at Hobkirk, after investment to improve the school to a functional standard, would not be of a similar standard to those at Denholm Primary School. It is considered that while Hobkirk reopening would be likely to allow for greater involvement with the Hobkirk community, the pupils within the Hobkirk catchment are currently benefitting from the facilities and schools in nearby larger towns which have strong links with the wider community. It could be considered that there would be educational disadvantages in reopening Hobkirk Primary School with a small school roll versus the combined provision that is currently provided. The majority of the catchment pupils attend Denholm, which still provides the opportunity for smaller class sizes as the school comprises 5 composite classes which cannot exceed 25 pupils. Many of the educational benefits considered to arise from attending a smaller rural school also apply to Denholm, 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 Hobkirk.
- 5.21 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.
- 5.22 In conclusion it is not considered a reasonable or sustainable option to re-open Hobkirk Primary School with its original catchment zone.

6 OPTION 2

REOPEN HOBKIRK 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 Hobkirk could be made more sustainable by extending it into one or more of the neighbouring catchment areas of Denholm, Newcastleton and Howdenburn Primary Schools. Denholm and Newcastleton catchment areas are rural areas and because of the geography,

options in relation to safe travel are limited. Whereas Howdenburn's catchment area covers part of Jedburgh and adjacent rural areas. The summary of the findings is as follows:

- Denholm Primary School currently has 105 pupils which equates to 84% occupancy of the school. Many of the pupils attending the school live relatively close to the village (c40%). 20% of the pupils attending Denholm reside in the former Hobkirk catchment zone. This mapping exercise has confirmed that the pupils living close to the boundary of Hobkirk and Denholm's catchment areas live closer to Denholm Primary School. It is considered that it would be unlikely that a choice would be made to attend Hobkirk which is further away and with lesser facilities.
- Newcastleton Primary School currently has 68 pupils which equates to 68% of capacity within the school. 87% of pupils attending the school live in Newcastleton or close by. Given the rural nature of Newcastleton's catchment and the terrain it is not considered that there are any pupils living closer to Hobkirk than Newcastleton so it is considered that there would not be support for a catchment change.
- Howdenburn Primary School Community currently has 145 pupils which equates to 53% of capacity. 73% of the pupils live in Jedburgh and of those that live in more rural locations; it is not considered that any of the pupils would have a shorter or quicker journey to Hobkirk Primary School and that it would be unlikely for them to choose to attend Hobkirk in preference to Howdenburn or the new intergenerational learning campus currently under construction. Howdenburn Primary School is to be replaced in March 2020 when all primary and secondary education within the town of Jedburgh will be relocated to the Jedburgh Intergenerational Learning Campus (still to be named).

- 6.3 From our analysis of the postcodes of the school aged children it is not considered likely that there would be demand for spaces at a re-opened Hobkirk Primary School. All the pupils that reside near the Hobkirk catchment boundary currently have shorter and quicker journeys to their 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 Hobkirk's catchment area.

Educational Benefits

- 6.4 In order to change an catchment area a statutory consultation would be required in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. 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 considered that a proposal to amend the catchment zones of Denholm and/or Newcastleton Primary School is unlikely to receive support from those communities.
- 6.5 As was identified in **Option 1** that the re-opening of Hobkirk would be likely to allow for greater involvement with the Hobkirk community the children there are few other compelling educational reasons to change the current catchment zones.

Educational Benefits and Impacts on Staff

- 6.6 These will be the same as **Option 1**, with potential for increased pupil transport costs depending on the number of children affected.

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 Hobkirk/Bonchester Bridge. 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 Hobkirk Primary School.

Financial Impact

- 6.9 As in **Option 1**.

Environmental Impact

- 6.10 The reduced travel for some of the children to Hobkirk Primary would be cancelled out by the impact:-
- 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 Hobkirk 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 either in the Denholm or Newcastleton or in a close vicinity. 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 Hobkirk has been identified and there appears to be satisfaction with the current primary schools attended. Accordingly the option to amend/extend the Hobkirk catchment area is not considered a reasonable option.

7 OPTION 3

CONTINUE MOTHBALLING HOBKIRK PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH THE PUPILS ZONED TO DENHOLM 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, Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, 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 only 8 new homes projected to be built in the area and their impact is not considerable significant to projected figures.

Community Impact

- 7.3 There was a significant view at the community meetings 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 bought over by 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

Summary

- 7.6 The school has been mothballed for 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

CLOSE HOBKIRK PRIMARY SCHOOL ZONING ANY PUPILS TO DENHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL AND THE PERMANENT RE-DELINEATION OF THE CATCHMENT ZONE

- 8.1 Option 4 would formalise the status quo; resulting in the permanent closure of the school and the permanent re-delineation of the catchment zone. This would allow Children and Young People to declare the school building as surplus and alternative uses for the building could then be progressed.
- 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

Case for Closure

- 8.3 Hobkirk Primary School was mothballed in November 2015 after a rapid decline in the school roll (80% reduction 2011 - 2015) and an increase in placement requests (17% in 2011 increasing to 74% at the start of 2015) with the majority of pupils attending Denholm Primary School (69%). In 2018/19 there 24 primary school aged children residing in the catchment area for Hobkirk Primary School with 83% attending Denholm. Council officers have identified no demand for the school to be re-opened and has been advised that the community already considers the school is closed.
- 8.4 Denholm Primary School has a capacity for 125 pupils. The current roll is 105; including 21 pupils from Hobkirk Primary School catchment area (20% of total pupils). It is projected that Denholm Primary School will continue to have capacity to accommodate all pupils from the Hobkirk area. The current occupancy rate for Denholm Primary School including current pupils from Hobkirk Primary School catchment area is 84%.
- 8.5 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 Hobkirk Primary school catchment area that would be likely to generate demand for the school to re-open.

Educational Benefits - Impact on Pupils

- 8.6 The Educational Benefits of retaining the current catchment area are:
- 8.6.1 Pupils are and will 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.
- 8.6.2 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.
- 8.6.3 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.
- 8.6.4 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.
- 8.6.5 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.
- 8.6.6 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.

8.6.7 There is a partner provider providing Early Learning and Childcare setting at the school. From August 2019 all 3-4 year olds and eligible 2 year old, within the Denholm catchment will be entitled to up to 1140 hours funded childcare. This will allow the children to be integrated into the school and will ease the transition to primary school.

Educational Benefits - Impact on staff

- 8.7 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. Hobkirk as a one teacher school would present challenges in attracting and supporting staff. In Denholm staff will be able to receive support in providing an inclusive curriculum and work together to

Educational Benefits-Impact upon the community

- 8.8 The closure of Hobkirk 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.
- 8.9 Denholm Primary School is in the heart of a vibrant village and provides a gathering place for families and communities. More children being located within Denholm Primary will bring a greater sense of community to the area and bring support to parents and remove feelings of isolation and vulnerability. The community will benefit from greater support.

Rural Factors – Impact from Travel Arrangements

- 8.10 Pupils in the Hobkirk catchment area currently travel times on average of between 20 and 25 minutes miles to Denholm Primary School (location centre). This is not an unreasonable distance to expect children to travel for primary school education in rural areas. Other catchment areas in Scottish Borders also have such a travel distance within them.
- 8.11 Following the decision to mothball Hobkirk Primary School in November 2015 the Council agreed to provide school transportation to all pupils who resided in the Hobkirk catchment area who were attending Denholm Primary School through placing requests. school transportation. These travel arrangements have been in place for over 3 years. For some children is that it has resulted in a longer home to school journey of 25 minutes, while for others it has shortened the journey.
- 8.12 Services from key Council departments are more accessible at Denholm Primary School than Hobkirk.

Rural Factors - Community Impact

- 8.13 The Council has considered the impact upon the community and has held meetings with the community and the Community Council to discuss the 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.

- 8.14 The local Community Council has indicated that it is actively investigating options to acquire the building and the opportunities that will arise from the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. 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

- 8.15 The savings for closing the school would be minimal as the school is currently mothballed. 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.

Environmental Impact

- 8.16 The additional travel of children to Denholm Primary is cancelled out by the reduction of services and visiting staff travelling to Hobkirk Primary School. Denholm Primary School has been designed to a high standard to be a modern more sustainable building and will be cheaper and easier to maintain and run.

Summary/Conclusions

- 8.17 It is considered that closing Hobkirk 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 Denholm Primary School are particularly persuasive as the school can offer a fuller curriculum and the modern facilities required to support the pupils' learning journey. Denholm Primary has capacity to continue to accommodate the projected pupil numbers in a school building that offers modern facilities to support the curriculum for excellence but is also more sustainable in terms of capacity and environmental impact. The closure of Hobkirk 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 to the Community Council and Scottish Borders Council. Accordingly this option is considered to be the most appropriate.

APPENDIX 2- SPREADSHEET SHOWING COSTS FOR SCHOOL PROPOSED FOR CLOSURE

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 [enter name of school (Hobkirk)] | 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 | 102,054 | | 45,830 |
| Row 6 | support staff | 25,011 | | 25,011 |
| Row 7 | teaching staff training (CPD etc) | | | |
| Row 8 | support staff training | | | |
| Row 9 | Supply costs - note 2 | 928 | | 0 |
| Row 10 | | | | |
| Row 11 | Building costs: | | | |
| Row 12 | property insurance | | | |
| Row 13 | non domestic rates | | | |
| Row 14 | water & sewerage charges | | | |
| Row 15 | utilities costs | 9,177 | | 9,177 |
| Row 16 | cleaning (contract or inhouse) | 5,777 | | 5,777 |
| 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 | | | |
| Row 25 | catering (contract or inhouse) | 7,543 | | 7,543 |
| Row 26 | SQA costs | | | |

| Table 2 | | | | | Column 6 | Column 7 |
|--|--|--|--|--|-----------------------------|------------------|
| 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 | |

APPENDIX 2- SPREADSHEET SHOWING COSTS FOR SCHOOL PROPOSED FOR CLOSURE

| | | | | |
|--------|---|---------|--|--------|
| Row 27 | other school operational costs (e.g. licences) | | | |
| Row 28 | | | | |
| Row 29 | Transport costs: note 3 | | | |
| Row 30 | home to school | | | |
| Row 31 | other pupil transport costs | | | |
| Row 32 | staff travel | | | |
| Row 33 | SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL | 150,491 | | 93,338 |
| Row 34 | | | | |
| Row 35 | Income: | | | |
| Row 36 | Sale of meals | -6,089 | | -6,089 |
| Row 37 | Lets | | | |
| Row 38 | External care provider | | | |
| Row 39 | Other | | | |
| Row 40 | SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL | -6,089 | | -6,089 |
| Row 41 | | | | |
| Row 42 | TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL | 144,402 | | 87,250 |
| Row 43 | | | | |
| Row 44 | UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR (based on 7 pupils at closure) | 18,677 | | |

Table 4

| Non-recurring revenue costs | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| | |
| TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS | |

Table 5

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