

**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**  
**EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING**  
**OPTIONS APPRAISAL REPORT**



**EDDLESTON PRIMARY SCHOOL**

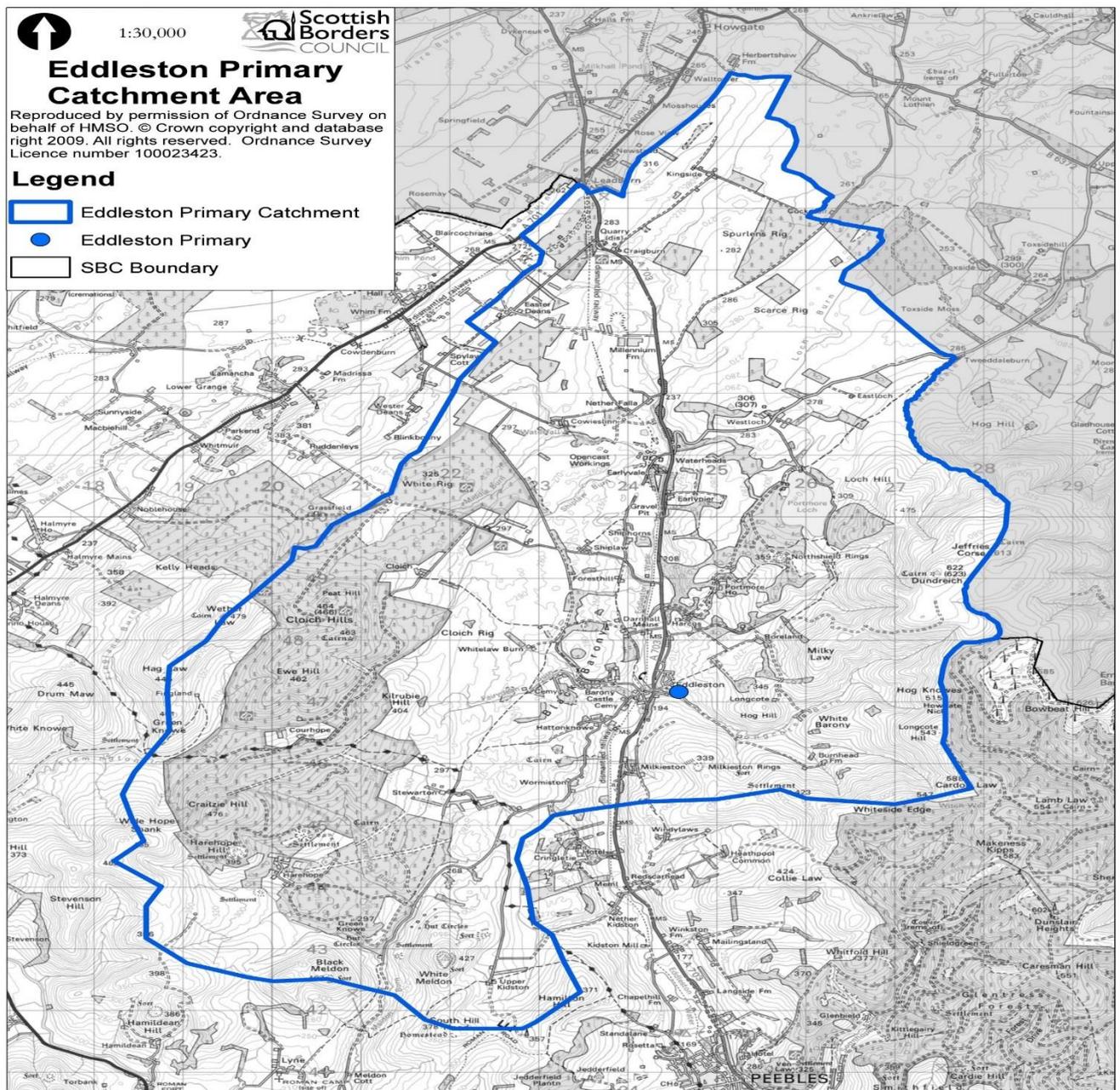
# 1. INTRODUCTION

This Options Appraisal Report is being prepared following a significant drop in the school roll at Eddleston Primary School (the **School**). The roll at the start of the 2021/22 school year was 24, which in accordance with Scottish Government Regulations equates to a single composite class. This drop to one class led to a number of parents submitting placement requests. There are currently 4 pupils at the School. In order to determine what the next steps should be, Council officers have carried out detailed option analyses, considering all reasonable options for the future of the School. This report contains details of the options considered.

# 2 BACKGROUND

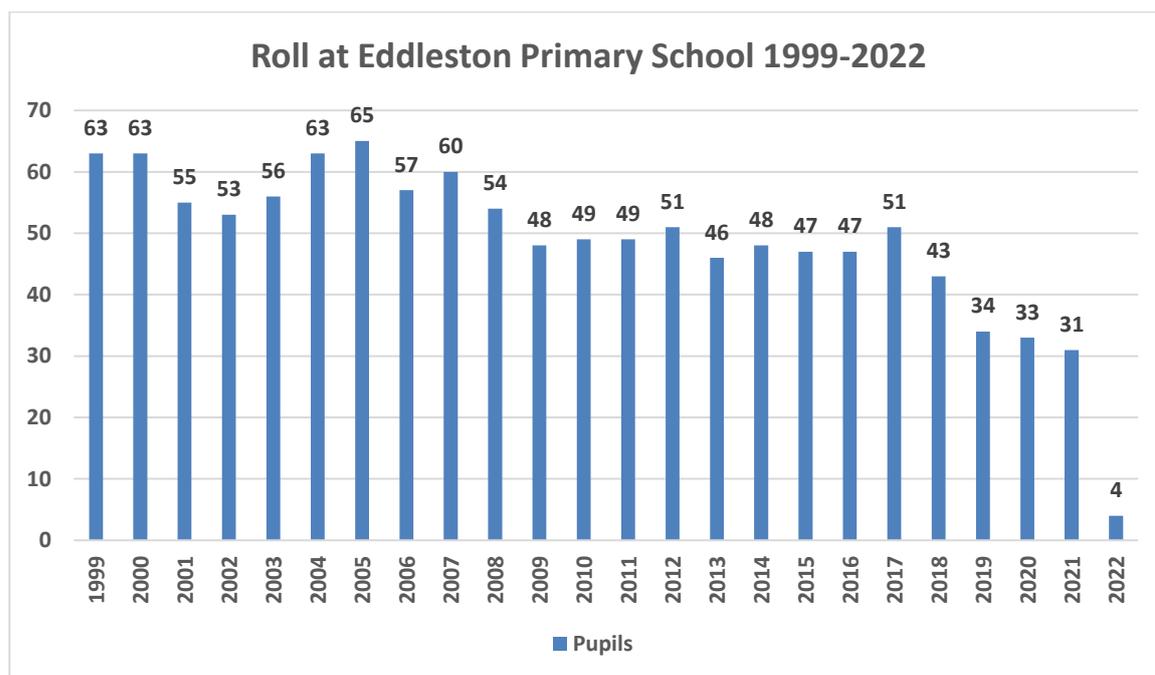
2.1 Eddleston Primary School is a non-denominational primary school, with capacity for 100 pupils, located in a village about 5 miles north of Peebles.

**Eddleston Primary School Catchment Area Map**



2.2 The roll at the School reduced from 31 to 24, between June 2021 and the commencement of the 2021/22 school year. In accordance with Scottish Government Regulations, this resulted in a drop of number of classes at the School from 2 to 1. Consequently several placement requests were

submitted by parents to a number of schools in the area. As at April 2022 there were 4 pupils at the School. The chart below illustrates the roll profile since 1999.



- 2.3 As at April 2022 there were 30 primary aged pupils residing within the Eddleston catchment area. 4 pupils are currently attending the School and the other children attend the following schools:-

Primary School Placement Request	
Halyrude Primary School	6
Kingsland Primary School	9
Newlands Primary School	5
Priorsford Primary School	3
West Linton Primary School	3

- 2.4 We have reviewed the number of children within the catchment area and considered the Council's current projections regarding housebuilding in the area and the current birth rates. Council records indicate that there are currently 5 children in the Eddleston catchment area that will be starting school in the school year 2022/23, with a further 2 children aged 3-4. Based on available information, the Council currently projects the number of primary aged children in the catchment zone will continue to be between 29 and 30 children for the next 6 years.

## AREA DEMOGRAPHICS

- 3.1 The demographics of the local population have changed slightly over recent years. The table below, derived from National Records of Scotland census data zones, shows the age group distribution for the datazone that includes Eddleston. This data zone covers a much wider area than catchment area for the School, but does indicate some changes in the make-up of the population over the last 2 decades and reflects a common trend in the Scottish Borders where the population of over 65s is growing, while the number of children decreases.

<b>Eddleston and Area (S01012247)</b>			
<b>Date of Census</b>	<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>2001</b>	0 to 4	49	6%
	5 to 11	82	11%
	12 to 17	55	7%
	18 to 64	453	59%
	65+	123	16%
	All people	762	
<b>2010</b>	0 to 4	42	5%
	5 to 11	59	8%
	12 to 17	59	8%
	18 to 64	456	60%
	65+	149	19%
	All people	765	
<b>2020 Estimate NRS</b>	0 to 4	32	4%
	5 to 11	72	9%
	12 to 17	60	7%
	18 to 64	457	55%
	65+	211	25%
	All people	832	

3.2 The current Local Development Plan 2016 currently identifies 2 sites with an indicative capacity of 65 units. The Council's Housing Land Audit (HLA) 2020 programmes these site along with 2 additional smaller sites comprising a potential further 21 units. The HLA forecasts construction commencing in 2024 with c10-15 units being constructed each year. This has been informed using past completion rates and the level of developer interest to date within the area. Building at this rate would only provide between 1-2 potential pupils per annum. These have been included in our projections. If the build rate is quicker than forecast, the projections will be adjusted accordingly.

#### **4 OPTIONS ANALYSIS**

4.1 In order to determine what the most reasonable option is regarding the future of the school, Council officers have identified several potential options. This reports contains the analysis of the options to assist officers identify the most reasonable option for the School to then make a proposal to Councillors.

4.2 A number of possible options were identified for the future of the School namely:

<b>Option 1</b>	<b>Keep Eddleston Primary School open with its current catchment area</b>
<b>Option 2</b>	<b>Expand Eddleston Primary School's catchment area</b>
<b>Option 3</b>	<b>Increase the roll at Eddleston Primary School</b>
<b>Option 4</b>	<b>Mothball Eddleston Primary School, with the catchment area being temporarily re-zoned</b>
<b>Option 5</b>	<b>Permanently close the School with a permanently re-zoned catchment area</b>

#### 4.3 **OPTION 1 - KEEP EDDLESTON PRIMARY SCHOOL OPEN WITH ITS CURRENT CATCHMENT AREA**

- 4.3.1 There are currently 30 primary aged children residing in the catchment area. Not all the children in the catchment have attended the School, as over the last few years we have seen a small number of requests submitted each year by parents. In terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, the Council has a duty to accept placement requests to facilitate parental choice as far as possible. The only grounds for refusal are specified in this Act and are more concerned with the impact on the School that the application is being made to than the catchment school.
- 4.3.2 The number of pupils within the catchment are projected to remain around the current level for the next 6 years. These projections comprise the housing developments included in the Local Development Plan, developed at the rate currently projected in the Council's Housing Land Audit 2020. The rate and number of developments may change; and the projections will be revisited twice yearly.
- 4.3.3 It is considered unlikely that the children who are attending other schools would wish to return to the School and the parents of the children attending the School have intimated that they wish the School to be mothballed. Accordingly this Option is not currently considered reasonable as parents have indicated that they would currently prefer a school with a roll of a minimum of 30-40 pupils. However it is recognised that there are strong feelings in the Community and amongst parents that they wish the School to re-open in the future, if more children can be attracted to the School.

#### 4.4 **OPTION 2 – EXPAND EDDLESTON'S CATCHMENT AREA**

- 4.4.1 Given that there are currently 30 primary aged children in the catchment and this level is projected to remain consistent over the next 6 years, to assist with growing the roll it is reasonable to consider whether expanding the catchment area could be an option to allow the School to become viable once again.
- 4.4.2 The School is a rural primary with a catchment area covering the area north of Peebles towards the boundary between the Scottish Borders and Midlothian. To the East, West and South, the catchment area neighbours 3 other SBC catchment areas:-
- Newlands Primary School;
  - Kingsland Primary School; and
  - St Ronan's Primary School.
- 4.4.3 We have considered the geography of the area and considering each of these catchment areas in turn officers have identified:-
- Newlands Primary School – Both catchments are rural and each catchment predominantly covers land on either side of the A roads passing through their communities. Given the geography of the area and the location of the dwellings, Officers have been unable to identify any obvious areas that could be transferred to the Eddleston catchment that would both boost the roll or reduce travel times to school. The communities of Lamancha and Romanno Bridge are linked and the route to Newlands for these children is direct. In any event any proposal to change a catchment would require a statutory consultation, which requires the proposal to be made on the basis of Education Benefits. It is not considered likely that this proposal would be acceptable to the parents. It is also noted that there has not been any placement requests made from the Newlands catchment to the School as far as can be seen in current records.
  - Kingsland Primary School - given the School's proximity to the boundary with Kingsland's catchment is considered unlikely that there would be much support for

the catchment areas to be altered as it would be easier for children to travel to Kingsland. Similarly with the Newlands catchment any change would require a formal proposal to be made for a statutory consultation on the basis of Educational Benefits and it is considered that it would be unlikely that parents would support this proposal as children in the area near the boundary between the School and Kingsland's catchment are more likely to consider themselves part of the Peebles' community. It should also be noted that over the last 7 school years there has only been one placement request from Kingsland to the School.

- St Ronan's Primary School – the 2 catchments meet in a very rural area north of Glentress. Given the rurality of the area it is not considered that there would be the number of children in the area nor support for the catchment areas to be changed.

4.4.4 Officers have been unable to identify any changes to the catchment area that would have an impact on the number of school aged children in the area or that would be likely to succeed as part of a statutory consultation. The way to grow the number of children in the catchment therefore requires consideration of other ways to attract children and families to the School and/or the Community.

#### **4.5 OPTION 3 - BOOST EDDLESTON PRIMARY SCHOOL'S ROLL**

4.5.1 Officers have considered options to increase the roll. These options include suggestions from the parent council and the Community;-

- Create an Early Learning and Childcare Setting at the School;
- Attract more housing development to the area;
- Create a forest school at the School; and
- Create a Gaelic school at the School

4.5.2 **Early Learning and Childcare Setting** - in the past there has been an Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) setting operating in Eddleston, however following a reduction in numbers it was no longer a viable operation and therefore closed. Officers have reviewed the provision of an ELC setting within the village and have identified that the numbers at present would not be sufficient, however this will be monitored on an ongoing basis.

4.5.3 **Attraction of Housing Development** – There are currently sites identified in the Local Development Plans which, if developed would amount to an additional 86 homes in the Community which would lead to an increased number of children within the village. Planning officers have indicated that they currently consider that the build out of these sites may take a number of years, although this may change as developers seek development sites to meet the demand for housing with the Tweeddale area. The demand in the area will be monitored by officers.

4.5.4 **Creation of a Forest School** – this has been suggested as an option by the parents and the Community. While at this stage there are not numbers in the catchment for this, officers will give this more consideration to establish what would be required for a forest school and if this could be viable.

4.5.5 **Creation of a Gaelic School** – this has also been a suggestion from a parent. SBC is currently finalising its Gaelic Language Plan. This option can be reviewed on an ongoing basis but currently officers have been unable to identify the level of demand for such a provision in the region

4.5.6 Unfortunately as the numbers have dropped so rapidly as the School there has been limited time for any of the above options to be investigated or pursued to any degree. However consideration of these options will be integral in the considerations of the future of the School. It is recognised that the School has a very important place in the Community and it is clear that people do not want this to drift on for a number of months. Therefore there will be regular reviews and discussions between Officers and the Community regarding the School's future.

#### 4.6 **OPTION 4 - MOTHBALL EDDLESTON PRIMARY SCHOOL AND TEMPORARILY REZONE THE CATCHMENT ZONE**

4.6.1 The parents of the pupils at the School have approached SBC asking that the School is mothballed. Mothballing is only appropriate in very restricted circumstances i.e. when a school roll is either zero or very low and the Council and/or the community consider that while the school is not presently viable, there is a reasonable prospect that the number of pupils in the area will increase, to allow the school to re-open in the future. There is no statutory maximum period stipulated for mothballing a school but Government guidance suggests that 3 years.

4.6.2 We have considered whether the School currently meets this criteria. It is clear that with a current roll of 4 that it does meet the criteria of having a very low roll. We also have to consider whether it is reasonable to expect the numbers of pupils in the catchment to grow. We have reviewed the roll and current projections where we have considered:

- Current number of pupils in the catchment
- The projected house building in the catchment
- The birth data available for the area.

It is projected that the number of primary aged children in the catchment would be:-

<b>School Year</b>	<b>Projected Catchment Size</b>
2022/23	31
2023/24	28
2024/25	28
2025/26	30
2026/27	29
2027/28	30

While this shows the catchment remaining fairly static, any acceleration of the development of houses in the area could lead to an increase in numbers in the area which could lead to a more sustainable school roll. Officers will therefore continue to work with the planning team to track housing developments within the area over the coming months. Officers will also consider the options identified by parents and the community to boost the roll. It is therefore considered reasonable that the numbers could grow, and that parents of younger children may wish their children to attend the School if the numbers were to increase. Given that there is a willingness to consider options to grow the roll in the Community it is considered reasonable to review the position over coming months and as part of a formal review process. Accordingly mothballing is considered the most reasonable option based on current facts. If the School is to be mothballed the catchment area must be re-zoned on a temporary basis.

#### 4.6.4 **Potential Catchment Zone**

When considering which catchment zone the Eddleston catchment should be temporarily rezoned to, officers have identified the 2 most obvious choices as:-

- Kingsland Primary School; or
- Newlands Primary School.

#### **Kingsland Primary School**

Kingsland is located 5.2 miles from Eddleston Primary School (approx. 13 minute drive). The school opened in 2010 and has capacity for 434 children, with a current roll of 349 pupils. There is an Early Learning and Childcare setting at the school. The School provides a modern learning environment for the children and has excellent facilities.

The Kingsland environment would be very different for Eddleston pupils as they would be moving from a much smaller school in their community to a significantly larger school environment. There are currently 9 children from the Eddleston catchment area attending Kingsland. Just under half of all the placement requests made from the Eddleston catchment area over the last 7 school years have been to Kingsland. There is more than sufficient capacity at Kingsland for all the children currently in the Eddleston catchment,

The Educational Benefits of rezoning the catchment area to Kingsland are:

- Pupils would be attending a school with a larger peer group which offers more opportunities to experience a variety of learning and teaching experiences offered through flexibility of grouping.
- A larger school roll provides more opportunities for social interaction. The forging of close friendships and the development of self-esteem can be enhanced by being able 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.
- There 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.
- There 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.
- 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.
- The transition to High School may be easier as pupils will move as part of a larger cohort.

### **Newlands Primary School**

Newlands Primary School is located 12 miles from Eddleston Primary School which is approximately a 17 minute journey. The school has capacity for 100 pupils with a current roll of 61. There are currently 5 children from the Eddleston catchment attending Newlands and the parents of the children currently attending the School have indicated that Newlands would be their preferred option. There is sufficient room at Newlands for all the children the primary aged children in the Eddleston catchment area.

The potential Educational Benefits of making the Newlands the catchment school are:--

- Eddleston is in a learning community with Newlands and they currently share a head teacher, along with Broughton Primary School;
- The pupils from Eddleston have been attending Newlands every Thursday and have established friendship groups, know the teachers and the school and are all very positive and enthusiastic about it;
- As Newlands is also a rural school there are similarities to the School and its role in the community. However as a larger rural school Newlands can offer more opportunities for team work, sports, play and collaboration etc.;
- A rural school can play an important role in its 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.
- Pupils may have greater exposure to friends across a wider age range at smaller schools, which can assist with social skills and development.
- 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
- The school has great facilities and there are plentiful opportunities for outdoor learning, forest lessons etc.;

After assessing the 2 options for the re-zoning of the catchment officers are recommending that the catchment zone for Eddleston is temporarily re-zoned to Newlands. While there are strong Education Benefits in respect of re-zoning to either of these schools, it is considered that the current arrangements between the School and Newlands provides greater continuity for the existing pupils at the School. The schools currently share a Head Teacher and the schools are partnered along with Broughton Primary School. The pupils at the School have already developed friendship groups and strong ties to staff and Newlands through their weekly visits. Families of the pupils currently attending the School have also expressed a strong preference for Newlands as they are keen for the children to have the experience of a smaller, rural school. The Council is keen to continue to support its rural schools and consider that the pupils and staff at Newlands will also benefit from this proposal.

#### **4.7 OPTION 5 - PERMANENTLY CLOSE EDDLESTON PRIMARY SCHOOL AND PERMANENTLY REZONE ITS CATCHMENT AREA**

Any permanent change to a school requires a full statutory consultation process and adherence to the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. A proposal to close the school and change the catchment zone permanently would require such consultation. As Eddleston is a rural school the legislation also includes a presumption against closure and there are additional considerations and requirements. The legislation is also clear that a closure should be only considered when all other reasonable options have been considered. A proposal for permanent closure is therefore not being considered at this time as it is clear that there are other options to be considered, pursued and worked upon with the Eddleston community.

## **5 CONCLUSION**

After considering all the options it is apparent that given the speed of the fall in numbers at the School, that there has not been an opportunity to consider different options to boost the School roll. The parents of the pupils at the School have indicated that they wish the School to be mothballed and for their children to attend other schools. Mothballing appears to be the most reasonable option to allow time to ascertain whether there is potential for:-

- for a viable Early Learning and Childcare setting at the School (which is not currently viable); and/or
- the school to provide an alternative educational offer and/or
- the number of children in the catchment to increase as a result of housing development within the area.

A formal review process will be put in place regarding Eddleston to ensure that a review of the mothballing and the options regarding the School are reviewed at least annually.

**June 2022**