



From mountain to sea

Appendix B

Longhaven School Options Appraisal

1. Introduction

Aberdeenshire Council strives to allocate its resources in a way that ensures the quality of all its services. It attaches particular importance to providing the best possible educational experience for all pupils within its schools.

The Strategic Approach to the Learning Estate was agreed by Education and Children's Services on 11 October 2018 and updated on 18 March 2021 in accordance with the Scotland Learning Estate Strategy. The Council's strategy sets out the council's aspirations for our schools using a holistic place-based approach, which will ensure that services can be delivered in an optimum way, making best use of available assets, whilst potentially identifying underperforming and surplus assets.

The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 requires that educational benefits should be at the heart of any proposal to make a significant change to schools, for current and future pupils in the area.

On 29 August 2019 the Education and Children's Services Committee approved the preparation of an Options Appraisal on the future of Longhaven School and supported community engagement as part of the Options Appraisal process to identify alternative options to consider.

2. Background / Discussion

In 2018 the Council experienced ongoing staffing and recruitment challenges trying to appoint for the Head Teacher and Teacher posts. The school roll dropped from 12 to five due to a number of families moving schools for several reasons. As the Council was no longer able to deliver viable education at the Longhaven School, upon consultations with affected families, in April 2018 the remaining five pupils were successfully placed at local schools, namely: Boddam, Burnhaven and Hatton (Cruden).

In October 2018 the Director of Education and Children's Services made a decision to mothball Longhaven School. Mothballing is a temporary closure of a school which does not in itself lead to statutory consultation. Reference is made to the report considered by Education and Children's Services on 12 October 2018.

From mountain to sea

Officers worked closely with all affected families to support their children settle at their new schools and the Council continued to readvertise the posts of the Head Teacher and teacher. As soon as a potential candidate for the Head Teacher post was identified, Longhaven School families were approached to discuss the position of the school; however, those families made a decision to remain in their new schools.

Education and Children's Services Committee were kept informed of the situation and meetings were also held with the parents and Elected Members.

The Primary 1 admission period for all Aberdeenshire Schools takes place in January each year. Press releases were issued to inform families that applications could be made for pupils to enroll at school. No applications to Longhaven School have been received since the school was mothballed.

The deadline for submitting out of zone placing requests is March each year. There have been no applications received for pupils wishing to attend Longhaven School through the placing requests over the last three years.

As there continues to be no pupils expected to enroll at Longhaven School, the school remains mothballed.

3. Community Engagement

The Learning Estates Team conducted the following engagements with the wider Longhaven community to keep them fully informed and to explore potential options for the future of Longhaven School.

- 9 October 2019 – Community engagement session at Longhaven Community Hall. A summary of all comments gathered during and following the meeting is appended to this report (Appendix B1).
- April/May 2021 – An online survey was made available from 12 April until 14 May 2021. The survey questions and a summary of submitted feedback have been provided (Appendix B2).
- 19 October 2021 – Meeting with Cruden Community Council to update on the situation. A summary of the discussion has been attached to this report (Appendix B3).

4. Options Appraisal

An options appraisal has been undertaken to consider the future of Longhaven School to ensure the best educational and wellbeing benefits for Longhaven children. The appraisal considered the current mothballing and the schools the families had chosen to attend.

From mountain to sea

4.1 Longhaven School

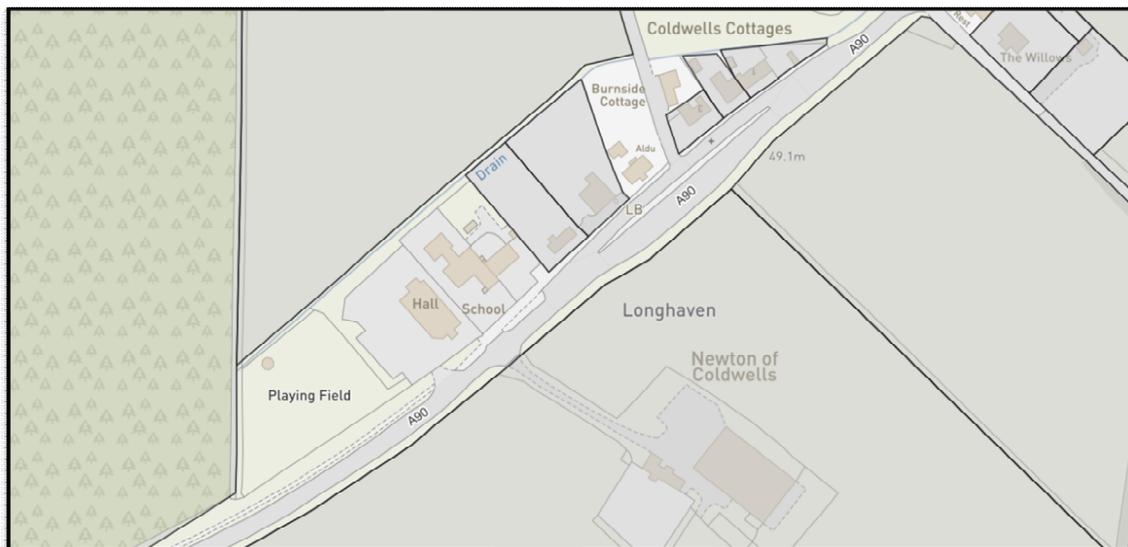
Longhaven School site and the school building are owned by Aberdeenshire Council. There are no title restrictions which would prevent the Council from selling the site. There is also no record of the building, or any part of the building being listed with Historic Scotland.

Longhaven School was built in mid 1920's. The school is non-denominational and serves the village of Longhaven and the surrounding rural area, and is located within the village of Longhaven, 5.2 miles from the town centre of Peterhead on the A90.

The school has a capacity of 50 pupils. It is a two-storey building with two classrooms, dining room, resources room, office and staffroom located on the ground floor, management offices are located on the first floor. Although the school has access to the public hall for PE and the playing field adjacent to the school, neither of these facilities are within the school grounds.

The school floorplan is attached as Appendix B4 and a map of the school ground and its surrounding amenities is shown in Map 1 below.

Map 1 – Longhaven School



The school has a servery which provides meals that are prepared daily at nearby Meethill School.

The outside areas are a concrete playground around the school with a grassed area and some trees to the rear of the building.

Longhaven School delivered primary education from P1 to P7. There is no nursery on site and local children often attended nursery at other nearby schools.

From mountain to sea

Condition is an assessment of the physical condition of the school building and its grounds. Longhaven School was assessed in April 2017 and the overall Condition Rating for the property was **B**, satisfactory – performing adequately but showing minor deterioration.

Suitability is an assessment of the school as a whole, the buildings, the grounds and the impact they have on teaching and learning, leisure and social activities, as well as the health and wellbeing of users. The Suitability assessment of Longhaven School was carried out in April 2017, the school was graded as **B**, satisfactory – performing well but with minor problems (school buildings and grounds generally support the delivery of services).

Both internal and external PE areas were graded as **D**, bad – do not support delivery of services to children (school buildings and grounds seriously impede the delivery of services), as they are not owned by the Council or within the school grounds.

Management offices were graded as **C**, poor - showing major problems and not operating optimally (the school buildings and grounds impede the delivery of activities that are needed for children and communities in the school).

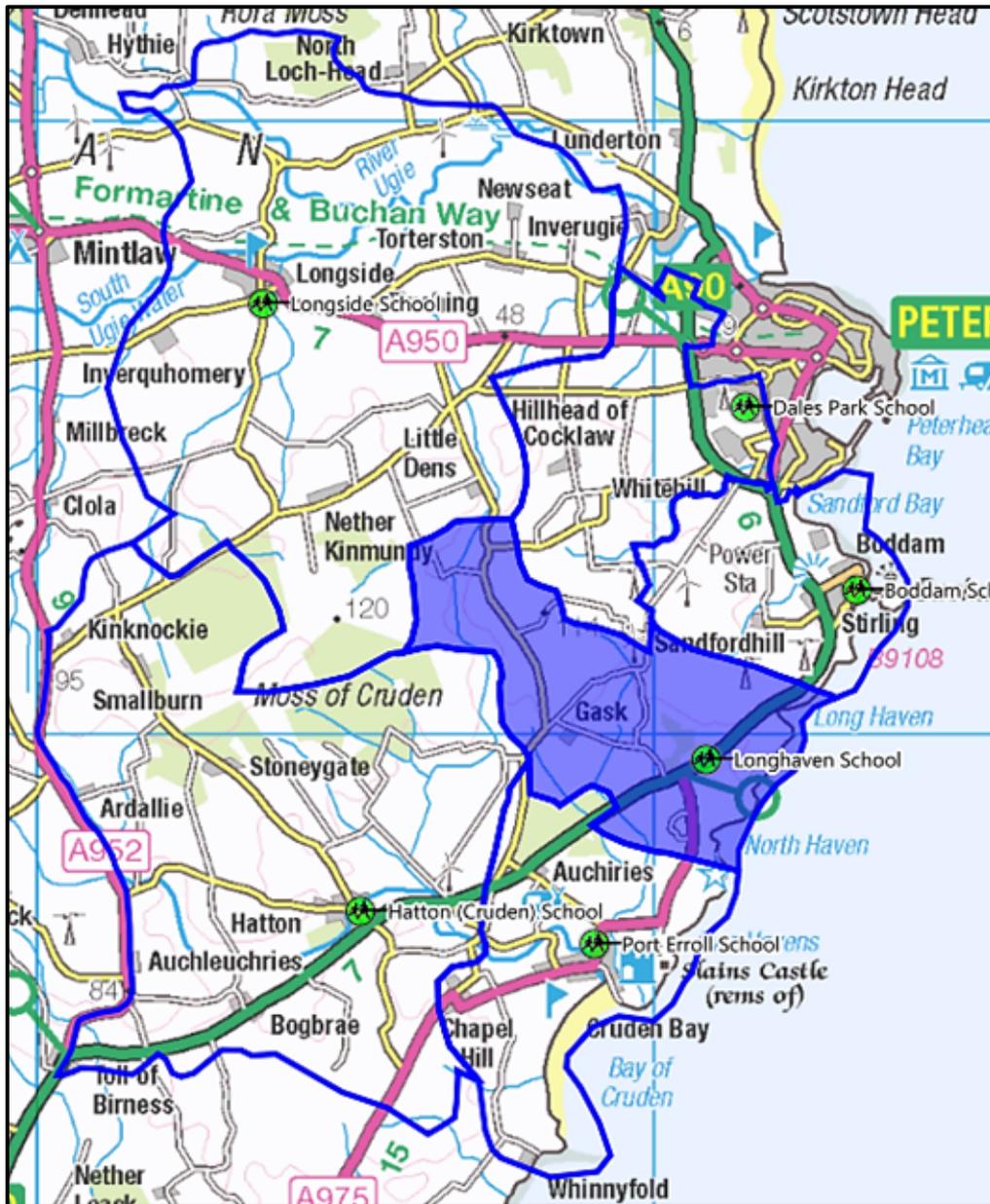
4.2 Longhaven and Local Area

The Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification defines Longhaven School as “accessible rural”, meaning it is located in a settlement with a population of less than 3,000 people and within a 30 minute drive time of a settlement of 10,000 people or more.

The catchment area for the school stretches from Bullers O’ Buchan on the east to Meikle Den on the west and from south of Longhaven House to north of Hillhead of Coldwells, is shown in the Map 2 below.

From mountain to sea

Map 2 – Catchment area for Longhaven School and surrounding schools



Longhaven School borders with Port Erroll, Hatton (Cruden), Longside, Dales Park and Boddam Schools. Hatton (Cruden) School is located within the Ellon Cluster and Longside School sits within the Mintlaw Cluster.

Distances between Longhaven School and surrounding schools sourced from Google Maps are listed below:



From mountain to sea

Boddam School	2.3 miles
Port Erroll School	3 miles
Dales Park School	4.6 miles
Hatton (Cruden) School	4.1 miles
Longside School	10 miles

In addition, the distance to the new Peterhead Community Campus will be approximately 5 miles.

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is a measure of deprivation across 6,976 data zones. SIMD ranks data zones from most deprived (ranked as 1) to least deprived (ranked as 6,976) and Longhaven data zone is ranked at 3699. This indicates that pupils living within the Longhaven School catchment are not considered living in socio-economical deprived households.

4.3 Rural Sustainability and Housing Development

Longhaven is a community located within the Energetica area that provides basic services for its surrounding rural area including a rural shop, post office and village hall. The settlement sits adjacent to a fast-flowing section of the main Peterhead to Aberdeen trunk road (A90) to the east and as a result, potential growth is restricted to the east side of this road for reasons of public safety. The area is popular with day visitors at Longhaven Cliffs Wildlife Reserve and walkers taking advantage of the coastal path.

Information received from The Council's Community Economic Development Team indicates that there are no significant new business activities in the Longhaven area.

The adopted Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2012 and 2017 included a potential housing site for 30 houses in the village of Longhaven. The site is adjacent to the rear of the school boundary and highlighted in Map 3 below.

From mountain to sea

Map 3 – Local Development Plan Site



As Longhaven School was projected to be under capacity, the settlement was identified for organic growth opportunities to further support the primary school roll.

The site remains constrained due to marketability and physical constraint. There is no public waste-water treatment available in Longhaven.

All residential development must contribute towards facilities that serve the community in Longhaven and towards the extension of Cruden Medical Group Facilities (Hatton Surgery and Cruden Bay Surgery).

The site is currently included in the draft Local Development Plan for 2022. As the site has been planned for a number of years without any development taking place, there is no guarantee that the site would be delivered in a timeframe that could generate pupils to reinstate the school.

4.4 Demographics and Pupil Numbers

Over the last decade the school roll at Longhaven School has been changing with parents submitting placing requests both in and out of the school.

The school roll has been low for a number of years. The P1 intake has ranged from zero to four pupils in each of these years. The position is shown in the table below:

From mountain to sea

Table 1.

Census data	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
P1-P7	16	16	13	16	15	18	12	0

There are currently 12 children of P1-P7 age residing within the catchment area of Longhaven School (SEEMIS extract 15 September 2021). These children all attend other schools in the area, some through placement when the school was mothballed and others through parental choice. The majority attend Boddam School and Port Erroll School.

School roll forecasts show a very small number of families living in the catchment area with children that are under school age. SEEMIS data indicates there are five children within the Longhaven catchment that could enroll for P1 in August 2022 or August 2023. Officers are unable to check if this numbers are accurate, as the NHS data is not available. These children are currently enrolled at a school nursery in a local primary school with Aberdeenshire Council or a Partner Provider.

4.5 Occupancy

In line with the Learning Estates Strategy an ideal school occupancy level would be approximately 85%, aspiring to the occupancy band of between 75% and 90%.

At its peak the school roll had 18 pupils in the 2016/17 session. With the capacity of 47 the occupancy level was 38%. Such a low occupancy level is unsustainable, unaffordable and does not offer best value.

4.6 Pupil Enrolments

Aberdeenshire Council wrote to every property within the Longhaven School catchment area to inform them that applications would be considered at the school for the 2019/20 session, this information was shared in press releases and on social media. Each year in January press releases were issued, to inform families that applications could be made for pupils to enroll at the school.

No families have approached Aberdeenshire Council to enroll their children at Longhaven School, either as a new P1 start or as a placing request. Additionally, no families have approached officers to indicate that if there were sufficient other families in a similar position that they would consider moving their children back to the school.

From the data held by the Service, all children known to be residing in the Longhaven School catchment have submitted placing requests to attend other schools.

4.7 Longhaven Community

While in operation, the school did not operate a breakfast or after school club and there were

From mountain to sea

no formal lets of the school other than Councilor's Surgeries.

Longhaven Community Hall is a large modern hall which is used by the local community for birthday parties, concerts, bingo teas, bowling and other events. The hall is located between the school and the play park used by the school.

5. Options for Consideration

Some comments proposed that the school reopen. However, this requires families wishing to send their children to the school. As no new pupil enrolments had been received for the 2021-22 session, reopening of the school was not possible. On this basis the school continues to be mothballed.

Alternative suggestions for the school building were received, some are educational / community based, whilst others would involve commitment from other agencies or private companies. These cannot be implemented or trialed without the formal closure of the school. Two suggestions could go ahead as additional uses of the building if the school were open (extra curricular activities and brownies); however, the neighbouring village hall could also be used for these activities.

A full list of suggestions and comments with an overview of the requirements for them to be implemented can be found in the below table.

Table 2.

No.	Comment/Suggestion	Requirement for implementation
1	Nursery	School closure process - involvement of private nursery provider
2	Forest school, to ensure the school remains in the community in some form and being used for educational purposes	School closure process - further engagement with other sectors within Aberdeenshire Council
3	Extra-curricular activities for children during term time and during the holidays for classes such as gymnastics, football, dance, martial arts, cycling etc, to bring local children together	School reopening - community or private sector commitment
4	Guides and brownies activities	School reopening - community or private sector commitment
5	Resource for children with special needs who could learn in a safe quiet environment	School closure process - possible NHS involvement and commitment or further engagement with other sectors within Aberdeenshire Council
6	Further education facility, special needs centre etc.	School closure process - further engagement with other sectors within Aberdeenshire Council or possible NHS involvement and commitment

From mountain to sea

7	Facility for vulnerable children	School closure process - possible NHS involvement and commitment or further engagement with other sectors within Aberdeenshire Council
8	Gym space for adults	School closure process - community or private sector commitment
9	Adult educational classes like computer classes, languages etc	School closure process - community or private sector commitment
10	Adult learning or night classes, youth centre or activity centre for primary age	School closure process - community or private sector commitment
11	Business centre with small businesses and a coffee shop, like the old mart centre at Maud	School closure process - private sector commitment
12	Sell the school as a family home or for a commercial use	School closure process

The following options were considered for the future of Longhaven School as part of the options appraisal:

- 1 Reopen the school – No pupils have enrolled at the school and no families have indicated that they would wish to attend the school. This option has been discounted.
- 2 Continue Status Quo – School remains mothballed for a further session and potentially beyond. The school has been mothballed since October 2018, such prolonged time has already caused uncertainty for families and the community. Therefore, this option has been discounted.
- 3 Consider closing Longhaven School and rezoning pupils to attend another school in the Peterhead Cluster.

6 Conclusion

One of the options identified as part of the appraisal is to close Longhaven School. This is currently considered to be the only viable option for the school; therefore, Aberdeenshire Council must undertake a statutory consultation under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. As a rural school there is a presumption against closure and Aberdeenshire Council must ensure all other alternatives have been identified and robustly considered prior to undertaking any statutory consultation on this matter.

From mountain to sea

Appendix B1

Community Engagement Event Summary

On 9 October 2019, an engagement session was held at Longhaven Community Hall.

During the session attendees were provided with key information regarding the school and had opportunity to ask questions which were answered by officers.

The session was attended by 15 community members, including five parents. Most of the attendees were local residents.

Attendees also had the opportunity to leave comments and suggestions regarding the future of Longhaven School. In total seven comments were received by attendees with some leaving more than one comment. Names were redacted for the purpose of this report to prevent identification of any individuals. All comments have been categorised by the Interest Group and are listed below:

Parents of children one to five years old:

- would consider enrolling their child(ren) at the school but would be concerned about how viable the school was,
- would be concerned that the school would end up closing in the future after their child(ren) have settled,
- would be concerned about their child(ren) being in a very small class/school, especially a P1/7 class,
- don't feel strongly about the school reopening or being permanently closed,
- a decision should be taken so that parents can make plans for the future.

Community members:

- it is not financially viable to keep the school open,
- children will benefit more from being in a large learning environment, where their educational and social needs can be met,
- use the school as a nursery,
- use the school as a setting for children with special needs who could learn in a safe and quiet environment,
- use the school as a further education facility, special needs centre etc,
- would be concerned about what would happen to the school archives, old photographs, books etc; it is important to preserve the history of the school as it has been the centre of the community life for a long time.

From mountain to sea

Ward Member:

- a suggestion was made that a proper debate meeting would be better, rather than a comment on what the community want the school to become.

Following the engagement session one email was received by the Learning Estates Team outlining the concerns and views on the future of the school which are listed below:

- would like the school to be used for educational purposes such as a 'Forest School', which would preserve the school in the community,
- in the case of a permanent closure, all documents and photographs should be archived, donated to the community or preserved elsewhere,
- in the case of a permanent closure, the school play equipment should be moved to Longhaven Playpark so that it can be used by all visitors.

In summary, although, the attendees were disappointed with the existing position of the school, there was a sense of understanding and awareness that the Council explored all available options to keep the school open. One local resident, who has no school aged children, was concerned about the school being mothballed.

Parents attending the meeting were not opposed to a possible closure of the school, they were concerned about the viability of the school should it reopen with small numbers and an uncertain future. They recognised that effective learning requires interaction between pupils.

From mountain to sea

Appendix B2

Online Survey Summary

An online survey was available between 12 April and 14 May 2021. A total of seven people took part in the survey, some participants left more than one comment. All comments have been analysed and redacted to prevent identification of any individuals and are summarised below:

Question 1 - The participants were asked if they are a Parent/Carer, Former Teacher/Staff member at Longhaven School, Member of the Community or Other.

The survey was completed by two parents/carers, three community members, one former Longhaven School staff member and one member of Cruden Community Council.

Question 2 - The participants were asked if they live in the Longhaven School catchment area.

All but one participant resided in the Longhaven area.

Question 3 - The participants were asked if they have school aged children and which school or nursery they attend.

Two participants had school age children.

Question 4 - The participants were asked what year group their children are in.

Parents responded that they have a nursery, primary and secondary age children.

Question 5 - The participants were asked what in their opinion should happen with the school: reopen, continue mothballing or permanently close.

Two participants thought that the school should reopen and another two that it should permanently close. One participant supported mothballing, another didn't know and one left no response.

None of the parents with nursery and/or primary school aged children wanted the school to be reopened.

There was one comment left supporting the school closure which questioned viability of the reopening with only five potential pupils on the roll.

Question 6 - The participants were asked if they would wish their children to attend the school if it reopens.

Parents of nursery and primary age children who participated in the survey disagreed, stating that their children are well settled in a local school and would like to prevent disruptions during school years.

Question 7 - The participants were asked if there is anything that they thought Aberdeenshire Council could do to encourage families to register at Longhaven School and help the school to reopen.

The comments were as follows:

- for the school to be a viable there would need to be significantly more children attending,

From mountain to sea

- make it more of a priority to staff it and get more involved with the community,
- rezone to extend the Longhaven School catchment area,
- it is too late to reopen a school that has been closed for years,
- go and write to parents and suggest what a good idea the local school would be, use it or lose it,
- advertise the fact that it is still possible to enroll at Longhaven School despite the school being temporarily closed.

Question 8 - The participants were asked which school catchment area should Longhaven School be realigned to, if a decision is made in the future to close it: Boddam School, Dales Park School or Port Errol School.

Three participants voted for Port Erroll School, one voted for Boddam School and three didn't leave any response.

The participants left the following comments to the question:

- do not rezone the school catchment area so that families whose children already attend a local school do not have to apply for their younger children to go to the same school through an out of zone placing request,
- the next nearest school available,
- Burnhaven School as many former Longhaven School pupils went there,
- allow parents to choose rather than aligning to one particular school.

Question 9 - The participants were asked for suggestions on the future of Longhaven School, including alternative uses for the building.

The participants provided a number of ideas on how the space could be used as:

- extra-curricular activities for children during term time and during the holidays for classes such as gymnastics, football, dance, martial arts, cycling etc, to bring local children together,
- guides and brownies activities,
- a facility for vulnerable children,
- a gym space for adults would be beneficial and well used by the communities from Longhaven, Cruden Bay and Hatton as can be seen in the existing park facilities at Longhaven which are used by all of these communities,
- adult educational classes like computer classes, languages etc,
- adult learning or night classes, youth centre or activity centre for primary age,
- a business centre with small businesses and a coffee shop, like the old mart centre at Maud,
- sell the school as a family home or for a commercial use.

Parents/carers of children that could possibly attend Longhaven School did not support the school reopening, and in line with comments received at the public session had concerns about viability of the school with small numbers. Two participants did wish to see the school reopen, however do not have children of school age who could attend.

From mountain to sea

Appendix B3

Cruden Community Council Meeting Note

On 19 October 2021 officers attended an online meeting with Cruden Community Council to update the community members on the position of Longhaven School.

Introduction

Officers gave a brief overview of the reasons Longhaven School is mothballed, details of the options appraisal process and the engagement carried out with the community.

They advised that school should not be mothballed for more than three years unless there are exceptional circumstances. Officers also explained that the options appraisal showed that the school cannot provide viable education if there are not enough children enrolled at the school.

Next Steps

A statutory consultation is proposed for the permanent closure of Longhaven School. The proposal paper will be presented at Education and Children's Services Committee in December 2021. If approved the consultation will run until the end of February 2022. Face to face and online meetings will be organised for the consultees. Education Scotland will be involved in the process and will be meeting with relevant consultees, parents, staff, community members. On completion of the consultation, officers will prepare a final consultation report, which will be presented to Buchan Area Committee, Education and Children's Services Committee and Full Council for a decision.

If the decision is made to permanently close the school, there will be a call in period which is an opportunity for consultees to appeal the decision to Scottish Ministers. The consultation process from start to finish would take until late 2022.

Comments from Community Council

- Would like the school to be reopened.
- Who has responsibility for grounds maintenance during this time

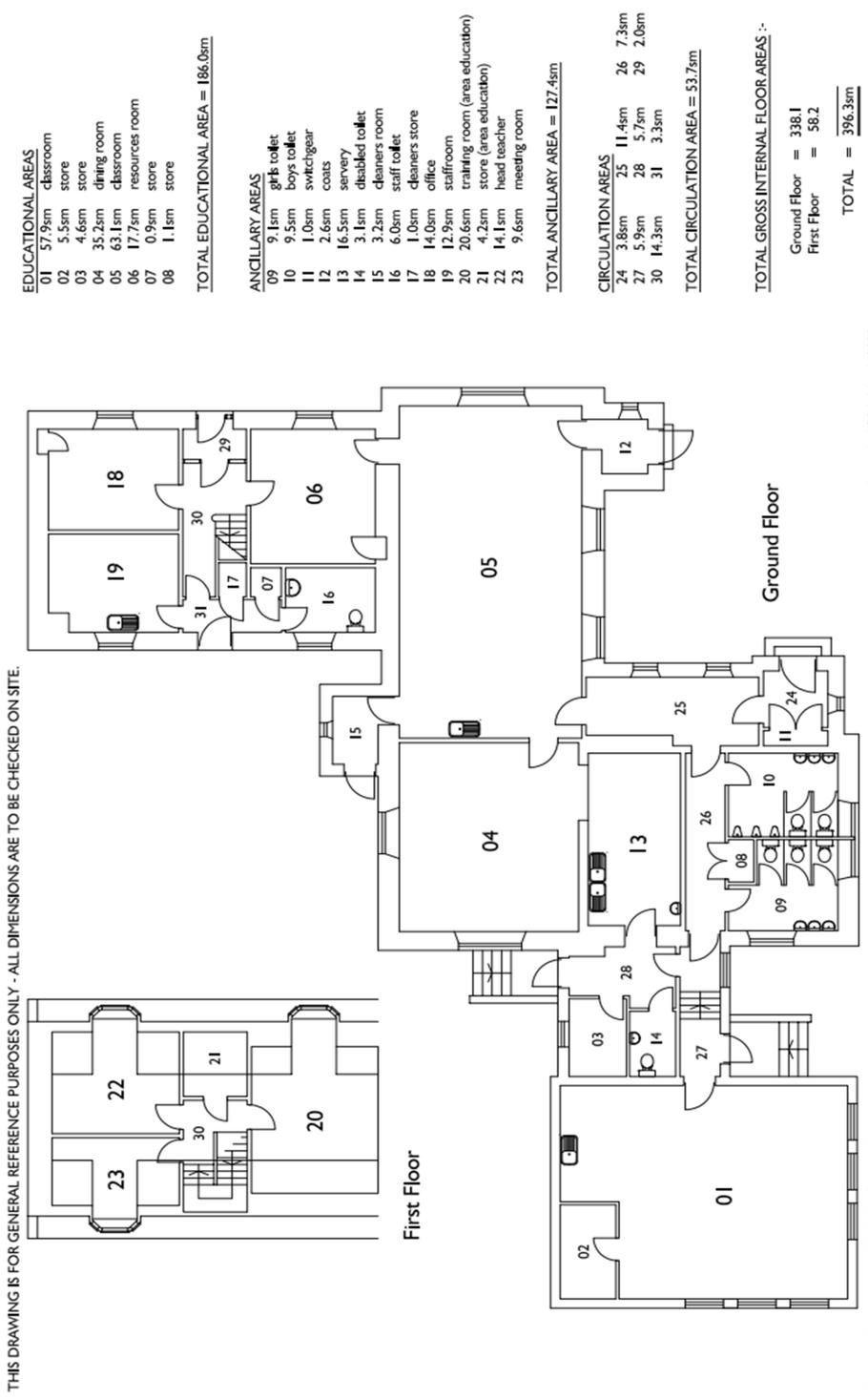
There is a janitor responsible for the school, however, officers will follow up with Property to make sure that the site is kept safe and is not looking unkept.



From mountain to sea

Appendix B4

Longhaven School Floorplan



Amended 19th March 2003

Floor Plan - NOT TO SCALE sheet 1 of 1

REFERENCE DRAWING No. **B0985RF1**
 Date Surveyed 16DEC98 Date Drawn 15/JAN99
LONGHAVEN PRIMARY SCHOOL
 Longhaven, Peterhead

Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL

A Property

Woodhill House Westburn Road Aberdeen AB16 5GB Tel. (01467) 620981
 Property is a part of the Transportation, Roads and Property Service.