

21st Century Schools Community Engagement Report

PLASYFELIN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Consultation Summary

Proposal :

**Creation of a new and enlarged
replacement Plasyfelin Primary School
in the grounds of the existing school site**



This Community Engagement Report is published to support open and transparent decision making and provide a summary of the findings from the Consultation period: 20th October 2021 – 1st December 2021

Information can also be made available in other formats, languages and in hard copy on request. Please contact us on 01443 864817 to arrange this.



Ysgolion a Cholegau yr 21ain Ganrif
21st Century Schools and Colleges



caerphilly.gov.uk/21centuryschools



Richard Edmunds

Corporate Director for
Education and Corporate
Services

FOREWORD

“Working together to deliver the best outcomes for all our children”

Caerphilly County Borough Council has embarked upon an exciting but challenging journey of improvement and change. We have bold ambitions to provide every learner with the best life chances and we are committed to doing this through the provision of high quality teaching, learning and leadership across our school settings as part of our ‘Shared Ambitions’ Strategy.

We have focused on improving young people’s outcomes and this is still a priority area moving forward incorporating a holistic view of education. The Council has adopted ‘Improving education opportunities for all’ as the first of its Wellbeing Objectives and has committed to an ambitious 21st Century Schools investment programme.

In collaboration with Welsh Government, the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Band B Programme is supporting investment in education within the County Borough. Our aspiration is the improvement of the condition of school buildings and maximising community usage.

Our current proposals support our commitment to increase school effectiveness and to narrow inequalities in achievement across groups; to understand the needs of more vulnerable children; promote the Welsh Language, and support those unable to access traditional learning pathways to ensure that all will benefit from the richness of learning and cultural opportunities. These principles help steer our decision making and prioritise projects.

As part of this proposal a consultation exercise has been carried out.

This Community Engagement Report has been produced to summarise the emerging themes raised by consultees during the consultation period including Estyn’s feedback. It aims to provide a balanced, transparent document to support Cabinet in deciding whether to progress with the proposal, make changes or not to progress.

I hope you find this document informative as a reflection of the activities undertaken to date and an insight into the journey we are on, shaping delivery and placing learning provision at the heart of our communities.

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Community Engagement Report

The consultation period represented an opportunity for people to learn about the proposal, ask questions and make comments. Any negative responses made during the consultation period were not counted as objections to the proposal but as adverse comments.

This Community Engagement Report outlines the processes followed and comments received during the consultation period, ultimately, providing Cabinet with the necessary information to take one of the following decisions:

- Proceed with the proposal
- Make changes to the proposal
- Not to proceed with the proposal

This document is publicly available via the Council’s website with hardcopies made available on request

What is the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme?

The 21st Century Schools and Colleges programme is a major, long-term, strategic capital investment programme. It is jointly funded by the Welsh Government and local authorities and aims to create a generation of 21st century schools in Wales.

The first part of the programme (Band A) ran from 2014 to March 2019.

Caerphilly has benefited greatly from investments in the initial “Band A” 21st Century Schools programme with approximately £56.5 million invested in schools for both educational and community use.

Table 1: Band A funding in Caerphilly was used to deliver

	Project Name	Band A Investment
 <p data-bbox="121 1727 363 1753">Image of Islwyn High School</p>	✓ Islwyn High School	£22.6m
	✓ Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Rhymni, Y Gwyndy Campus	£19.2m
	✓ Idris Davies School 3-18	£8m
	✓ Newbridge School extension	£2.6m
	✓ Blackwood Comprehensive improvements	£2m
	✓ Blackwood Comprehensive 3G pitch	£865k
	✓ Trinity Fields School improvements	£1.3m

Educational transformation remains a vital outcome of our investment in Band B of the Programme. The second part of this funding (Band B) started in April 2019, with the priority areas being:

- Reduce the number of poor condition schools
- Ensure that we have the right size schools in the right location
- Provide enough places to deliver Welsh and English medium education
- Ensure the effective and efficient use of the educational estate

Further information is available on the [21st Century Schools webpages](#)



STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS

School Organisation Code 2018

The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 requires that the Welsh Ministers issue a School Organisation Code. The Code imposes requirements in accordance with which relevant bodies including local authorities must act when bringing forward proposals in respect of maintained schools as defined at Section 98 of the 2013 Act. That is a school in Wales, which is a community, foundation or voluntary school, a community special school or a maintained nursery school.

Plasyfelin Primary School is classified as a community school under the code, however the requirement to consult under the code does not apply to proposals where a main entrance of the school on its new site would be under 1 mile from the current site and the enlargement is less than 25% of the current capacity, both of which apply in this case.

For the purposes of progressing this proposal and to enable transparent, balanced and open decision making, a consultation process was undertaken to reflect the principles of the Council's Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025. Utilising the "Spectrum of Engagement" approach, an appropriate level of engagement in informing and consulting stakeholders was undertaken between the 20th October 2021 – 1st December 2021, mirroring the equivalent 42 day processes outlined in Section 3 of the School Organisation Code 2018.

As such, there is no requirement to produce a Consultation Report as prescribed by the Code. This Community Engagement Report is designed to be a summary document only.

Local and National Strategies



"Priorities for the coming year are to renew and reform, putting learners' progression and wellbeing at the heart of everything we do."

*Jeremy Miles MS
Minister for Education and Welsh Language*

There are a number of local and national strategies that drive Educational reform and underline the rationale for the proposals being considered as part of the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Band B programme in Caerphilly.

- [Welsh Language Act 1993 / Welsh Language \(Wales\) measure 2011](#)
- [Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal \(Wales\) Act 2017](#)
- [The Childcare Act 2006 \(Local Authority Assessment\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)
- [Welsh Government - Education in Wales: Our National Mission](#)
- [Welsh Government - Cymraeg 2050: Welsh Language Strategy Action Plan 2019- 2021](#)
- [Welsh Government - 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme](#)
- [Caerphilly - 'Shared Ambitions' Education Attainment Strategy 2019 - 2022](#)
- [Caerphilly - #Team Caerphilly: Better Together Transformation Strategy](#)
- [Caerphilly - Welsh Education Strategic Plan](#)
- [Caerphilly - Welsh Language Strategy 2017-2022](#)
- [Caerphilly - Corporate Plan \(including Wellbeing Objectives 2018-2023\)](#)
- [Caerphilly – Education Other Than At School \(EOTAS\) Strategy 2020](#)
- [Caerphilly - Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024](#)
- [Caerphilly - Communication and Engagement Strategy 2019-2022](#)

As Wales embarks on a renewed vision of success for all learners, we can reflect on our rich heritage and proud history for promoting access to education in Caerphilly. Our transformational reforms are taking place within a challenging environment. This includes the uncertainties associated with Brexit, the technological transformation and the divergence in the qualification systems across the home nations. These are all challenges and opportunities for the Council.



PROPOSAL

What are we proposing to do?

We are proposing to:

- **Create a new and enlarged replacement Plasfelin Primary School in the grounds of the existing school site, to accommodate future projected demand within the area. The new school will provide 420 pupil places plus nursery, with an anticipated completion date of September 2024.**
- It is proposed that the new building will provide a new fit for purpose, state of the art replacement Plasfelin primary school on the grounds of the existing site to include multi-functional, size compliant main classrooms, main assembly hall, food technology space, library and IT space as part of a market street style configuration.
- The new primary school site will have improved learning spaces and facilities that will provide a stimulating teaching and learning environment with 21st Century facilities centered on the learning, self-esteem and well-being of all pupils.
- The proposed project will take into account the desire to encourage and facilitate community use of the asset. The design will seek to include measures to enable safe 'zoning' which can be utilised by the wider community.

What is driving this proposal?

Schools in Wales need to be in good condition and suitable for the delivery of education. In some cases, schools can be modernised, repaired, refurbished, extended, or partially rebuilt to meet the standards needed for contemporary teaching and learning. However, some existing schools are no longer in the right place and in such cases, we might propose new schools or changes to existing schools.

Caerphilly County Borough Council aspires to continue to raise school standards and improve the quality of the learning environment to create fit-for-purpose 21st century schools and give every child in Caerphilly the best possible start in life.

Options Appraisal

There are common challenges faced by all Local Authorities when adopting new proposals. The vast majority of Council policies are delivered through projects and programmes of various forms. It is therefore vital that projects are delivered successfully in order to realise their intended benefits for citizens.

An options appraisal provides the opportunity to help councils make an informed and evidence based decision on how to deliver services. It does this by considering the relative advantages and disadvantages of a number of different delivery model options (including the current way in which the service is delivered).

The methodology helps decision makers to consider the:

- Desirability - the degree to which each option meets the strategic objectives and priorities of stakeholders
- Viability - the degree to which each option is financially viable and sustainable
- Feasibility - the degree to which each option can be implemented

As part of outlining the current proposal, an options appraisal was undertaken.

The options appraisal stage allowed for a number of different delivery model options to be explored and evaluated against a set of agreed criteria, leading to the selection of the preferred option.

The following options were considered and scored: -

Table 1: Options Appraisal Longlist	
Option 1*	Do Nothing : No change to existing school
Option 2	Do Minimum: Removal of 3 ageing demountables
Option 3	Do Intermediate: Removal of 3 ageing demountables and demolition of one of the existing main buildings to enable an extension onto the other main building, increasing overall capacity
Option 4	Do Major: New same size replacement primary school building on the existing Plasyfelin School site
Option 5	Do Maximum New enlarged replacement primary school building on the existing Plasyfelin School site to accommodate 420 pupils plus 60 nursery with community usage

***Please note**, Option 1 is considered the status quo option and is always included in the shortlist as a benchmark for value for money.

Each option was evaluated against the investment objectives outlined in the Consultation Document and the extent to which it met the Critical Success Factors. This stage was an important part of the process, to raise important questions at an early stage and assist in developing proposals.

This resulted in options either being discounted, carried forward for further consideration in the short list with an eventual option identified as a preferred way forward. It is the option identified as the preferred way forward upon which the consultation exercise was based as all other options have been discounted at this point.

The process utilised was outlined in detail in the Consultation Document and resulted in

Option 5 being identified as the preferred option, namely, a **new enlarged replacement primary school building on the existing Plasyfelin School site to accommodate 420 pupils plus 60 nursery with community usage**

Benefits and Disbenefits

There are common challenges faced by all Local Authorities when adopting new proposals. The vast majority of Council policies are delivered through projects and programmes of various forms. It is therefore vital that projects are delivered successfully in order to realise their intended benefits for citizens.

Evidence shows that the best way to ensure successful delivery is by setting up projects correctly in the first place. The most common causes of failure, among others are a lack of clear objectives, insufficient resources and over-ambitious cost and schedule that impact on the level and amount of benefit that can be realised and can be avoided if tackled in a project's early stages.

As part of the development of the proposal, a number of benefits and disbenefits were identified as outlined in the Consultation Document. The consultation process was an opportunity to consult with relevant stakeholders to understand what they see as positive outcomes and what negative consequences may be delivered.

The Council recognises that people have different needs, requirements and goals and we will work actively against all forms of discrimination by promoting good relations and mutual respect within and between our communities. An Integrated Impact Assessment was carried out to initiate discussion and invite comments as to whether the principles for the proposal are supported.

All comments have been recorded and Cabinet members will be provided with copies of all the responses received within the consultation period and in their original format as part of the decision making process.

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

Consultation Process

The Council recognises that people have different needs, requirements and goals and we will work actively against all forms of discrimination by promoting good relations and mutual respect within and between our communities.

Through [TeamCaerphilly - Better Together](#), the Council is committed to ensuring high quality, citizen focused services for the communities that comprise our county borough. In future-proofing public services, we recognise the need to ensure effective engagement which is central to our decision making - [Read more about our approach to Consultation and Engagement here](#)

The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 requires that the Welsh Ministers issue a School Organisation Code. The Code imposes requirements in accordance with which relevant bodies including local authorities must act when bringing forward proposals in respect of maintained schools as defined at Section 98 of the 2013 Act. That is a school in Wales, which is a community, foundation or voluntary school, a community special school or a maintained nursery school.

Plasyfelin Primary School is classified as a community school under the code, however the requirement to consult under the code does not apply to proposals where a main entrance of the school on its new site would be under 1 mile from the current site and the enlargement is less than 25% of the current capacity, both of which apply in this case.

However, for the purposes of progressing this proposal and to enable transparent, balanced and open decision making, a consultation process was undertaken, reflecting the principles of the Council’s Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025. Utilising the “Spectrum of Engagement” approach, an appropriate level of engagement in informing and consulting stakeholders will be undertaken, mirroring the equivalent processes outlined in Section 3 of the School Organisation Code 2018 only.

Implications of COVID19

Due to the implications of COVID-19 place and after taking advice from Welsh Government, this consultation process refrained from undertaking any face-to-face consultation sessions to support social distancing and maintain safe working practices for all. However, a number of alternative methods were utilised for engagement including use of social media, face-time technology and the creation of a ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ Document.

Stakeholder Engagement

We advised the following of our proposals by letter or email:

Table 2: Consultee List	
Pupils and Pupil Councils*	Welsh Ministers
Parents, prospective parents, guardians and carers*	Assembly Members and Members of Parliament representing the area served *
Headteacher, Staff and Governing bodies*	Local CCBC Members
Directors of Education for Neighbouring Authorities	Local Town and Community Councils
Teaching and Support Staff Associations	Estyn
Parent Network	Welsh Education Forum
Diocesan Directors / Boards of Education	South East Wales Consortium (EAS)
Gwent and South Wales Police and Crime Commissioners	South East Wales Transport Alliance (SEWTA)
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership	Mudiad Meithrin, Menter Iaith and voluntary nursery providers

**of schools directly or likely to be affected by the proposal only*

In addition to notifying the consultees in writing of the proposal, distribution of information was supported via the school text messaging service direct to parents and staff.

The Council's Social media channels were also utilised. Messages relating to the consultation were released in phases throughout the consultation period to maintain public awareness and provide as far a 'social media reach' as possible.

Social media reach is a media analytics metric that refers to the number of users who have come across a particular content on a social platform such as Facebook, YouTube or Twitter

Consultation Information

As part of this proposal, the following documentation was produced:

- Consultation Notification Letter
- Consultation Document
- Consultation Response Form (Online)
- Consultation Response Form (Printable PDF)
- Integrated Impact Assessment

All documentation was published in Welsh and English, complying with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards. Information was also available in other languages and formats on request, however, no such requests were received as part of this process.

Hardcopies of the documentation were issued to the schools directly affected by the proposal including the child friendly summary for discussion with the pupils.

Response Methods

As outlined in the Consultation Document, anyone wishing to comment in relation to the proposal could do so in writing by:

- Completing the online response form on the Council's website
- Completing a response pro forma and posting it to the 21st Century School Team at Caerphilly
- Emailing comments to the 21st Century Schools Team at Caerphilly

Pupils of the school directly affected by the proposal were also give the opportunity to engage in the process through focused 'Pupil Voice' sessions.

This consultation was undertaken to capture the views of consultees in relation to the proposal. These views have been incorporated into this document, which will be published and considered by Cabinet when determining whether to proceed to the Planning Application stage.

A separate Planning Application Process will be undertaken in respect of this proposal. The separate statutory processes were outlined in the consultation document and any adverse comments received as part of this process have been recorded as such.



CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Consultation Responses

Overall a total of 15 responses were received during the consultation process.

Please note: The figure above and the data reported on for Questions 1 to 7 do not include the responses received by Estyn or captured as part of any pupil engagement sessions. These are outlined in more detail later in this document.

Of the prescribed methods for providing a response during the consultation period:

- 14 responses received via Online Survey
- 1 response received via email
- 0 responses received via post
- Pupil Voice Sessions the school open to entire pupil cohort (299 pupil excluding nursery)

0 responses (0%) were returned in the medium of Welsh.

The 21st Century Schools Team received no requests for the documentation to be provided in any other format or language.

QUESTION 1

The consultees were asked to identify a category that best described them in relation to the proposal for the school affected. The options provided were selected to identified key demographic groups for reporting purposes to Cabinet. These included, Pupil, Parent, Staff Member, School Governor, Elected Member, Local Resident, Group and Other.

Of those who responded, the following categories were selected:



40% Parents	20% Staff Members	33.33% Local Resident	6.67% Other
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For those selecting 'other', the opportunity was given to elaborate further as they felt appropriate however in this instance, no additional information was provided by the respondent identified in this category.

QUESTION 2

As part of the consultation process, consultees were asked to provide basic contact information, including their name, address and email. This psychographic data was collected in order to help paint a picture of the consultee and enable the 21st Century Schools team to understand trends in response data and response groupings that would assist in compiling this Community Engagement Report.

As information can be collected for many purposes, the Caerphilly County Borough Council's privacy notice for consultations/surveys was referenced, which outlined the purpose and legal basis for collecting the information, data usage and data retention periods.

Cabinet will be provided with a separate digest of all the consultation comments received.

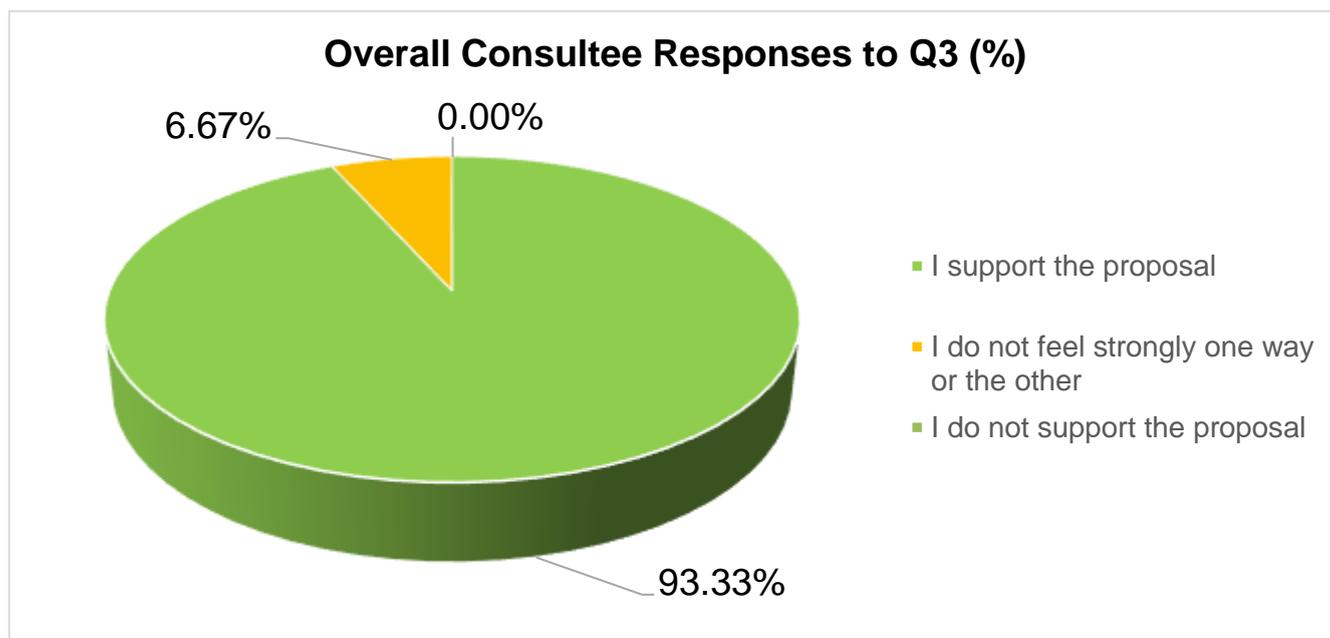
QUESTION 3

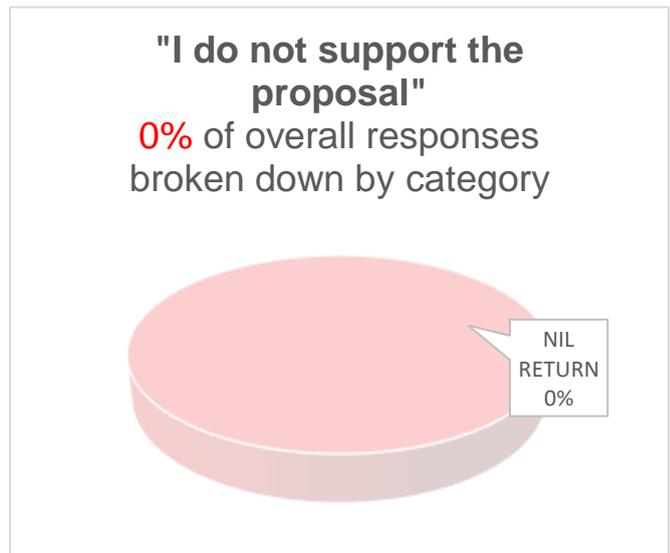
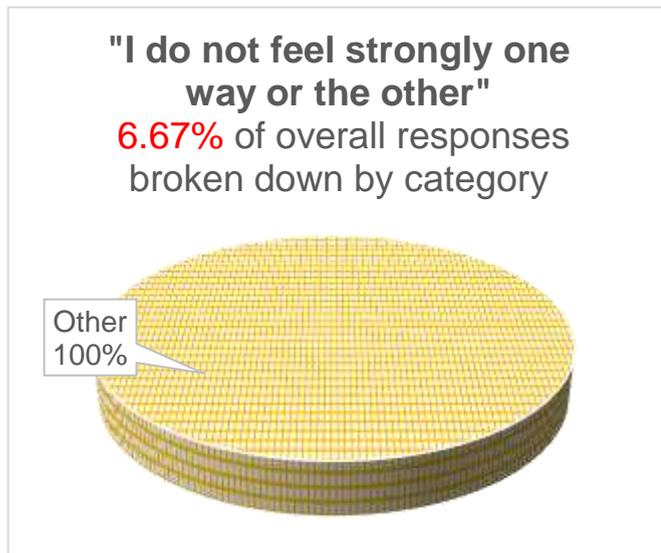
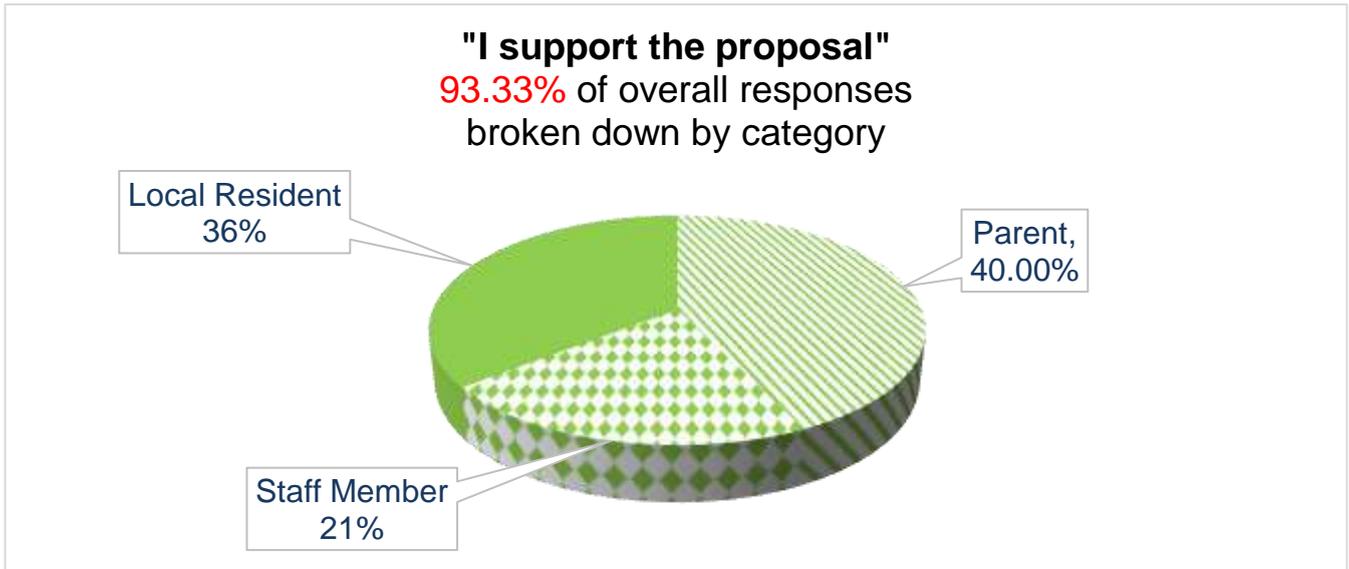
Consultees were asked to indicate which of the following statements most accurately reflected their views about the proposal. Consultees were reminded to read the consultation documentation prior to providing any responses during this consultation exercise and that unfavourable comments made during the consultation period will not be treated as objections at this stage.

The options available were:

- I do not feel strongly one way or the other
- I support the proposal
- I do not support the proposal

Of the responses returned, 14 support the proposal, 0 do not support it, 1 didn't feel strongly either way or failed to select an option. That equates to 93.33% in support, 0% opposed with the remaining 6.67% either providing a neutral response or no comment.





It is prudent to bring to the attention of readers that the commentary provided as part of Question 4 may offer additional insight into the views of the consultees and that the response provided to Question 3 should not be considered in isolation.

QUESTION 4

This was a free text box, enabling consultees to provide additional comments on the proposal. All comments received have been read and analysed.

General themes that emerged from the consultation:

- Advantages of a new and enlarged school building
- Community and Intergenerational facilities
- Traffic, parking and drop off arrangements
- Construction process and potential impact

These themes are outlined in more detail in the section on 'Consultation Clarification'.

QUESTION 5

Consultees were given the option to request notification as to the publication of this Community Engagement Report. Contact information has been collected to this end and the preferred method for communication will be notification via email if this information has been made available by the respondent.



13 out of the 15 respondents have requested notification (12 via email, 1 via post). These individuals have been added to the notification list and will be contacted concurrently with stakeholders when this document is made publicly available through the Council's website. Hardcopies of the documentation will be made available on request.

QUESTION 6

In line with the Caerphilly County Borough Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020 and the Consultation and Monitoring Guidance 2016 document, a reduced version of the Equalities and Monitoring questionnaire was included as part of the consultation response to support effective planning and to ensure that a representative sample was achieved to identify any equality issues.

The option to include information relating to the consultees Gender, Age, Disability Status, Welsh Language Skills and any influencing factors relating to their response were included but not mandatory.

From the responses received, of those that completed the Equalities monitoring section:

Are you ...			
Male	5	Other	0
Female	10	Prefer not to say	0

Age			
Under 16	0	40-65	8
16-25	0	Over 65	2
26-39	4	Prefer not to say	1

Disability			
I am not Disabled	11	Learning Difficulties	0
Physical / Mobility Impaired	2	Visually Impaired	0
Hearing Impaired	0	Speech Impaired	0
Prefer not to say	2		
Other	0		

Welsh Language Skills				
	A Little	Moderately	Quite Well	Fluently
Speak	6	1	1	2
Understand	4	1	0	3
Read	4	2	1	2
Write	3	1	2	2
No Welsh Language Skills	3		Prefer not to say	2

QUESTION 7

In relation to equalities implications that respondents highlighted, responses indicated that their decision was influenced as per the list outlined in the consultation response form. 0 responses were provided for this question.

Education Scrutiny Response

The Council's Education Scrutiny Committee is a consultee for any policy or service developments in relation to Education within the Borough.

A digital meeting via Microsoft teams took place on Tuesday 2nd November 2021 at 5.30pm.

As part of this meeting, the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Band B Programme and consultation in respect of the proposal to create a new and enlarged replacement Plasyfelin Primary School in the grounds of the existing school site was discussed. All consultation documentation was made available to members as part of the agenda reports pack and officers linked to the proposal were available to take questions.

It was agreed that a vote in respect of the proposal would be taken and be officially recorded for inclusion in this Community Engagement Report. The Committee members voted 12 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions in relation to the proposal.



A recording of the session is available on YouTube:

[Education Scrutiny Committee Meeting](#)

The agenda item linked to this proposal starts 53 minutes and 45 seconds in to the recording.

The [Notice of the Decisions](#) document is also available to view on the Council's website.

Estyn's Response

Whilst the proposal for Plasyfelin Primary School was exempt from the requirement to consult under the School Organisation Code 2018, as a matter of professional courtesy Estyn were advised of the publication of the proposal and invited to comment.

Estyn is the education and training inspectorate for Wales and their vision is to improve the quality of education and training and outcomes for all learners in Wales. As a body being

consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal. The full response from Estyn is included at Annex 2 at the end of this document. However, in summary:

“Estyn considers that the proposal is likely to maintain the standard of education provision in the area. However, there is too little information on the current standard of education in Plasyfelin Primary School or how surplus places in neighbouring schools could be affected.”

The Council acknowledges Estyn’s response and would like to provide the following clarification in relation to a number of their observations.

Through the effective management and monitoring of school places and future projections, the Council remains confident that the option that has been carried forward as part of this consultation exercise remains the best option moving forward, something which Welsh Government has also ratified at their Business Case Scrutiny Group and Programme Investment Panel.

Whilst we recognise that Estyn are concerned about the school not reaching its capacity until 2030, the Council acknowledges and addresses this within the proposal and the Integrated Impact Assessment produced to support the proposal.

To fulfil the requirements of the Welsh Government’s 21st Century Schools Band B Programme there is a need to demonstrate the longevity of any investment for a period of up to 60 years. The Future Generations Act also sets out five ways of working needed for Public Bodies to achieve the seven well-being goals which need to be achieved by any proposal brought forward.

- **Long-term**- The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs
- **Integration** - Considering how the Council’s well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals
- **Involvement** - The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area
- **Collaboration** - Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the Council) to meet its well-being objectives
- **Prevention** - How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse help the Council meet its objectives

The Council is experienced in delivery 21st Century Schools programmes and works closely with affected schools to ensure minimal impact across the area and in addition, any detriment to pupil education and as such has proposed to introduce a lower admission number at initial opening (to be determined), which will be increased incrementally until the school reaches full capacity. This will not only minimise the impact upon the surplus places in the school and protect neighbouring schools within the area but will also account for the growing demand through housing developments.



Images from Consultation Sessions undertaken with pupils at Plasyfelin Primary School. Schools provided images on the understanding that parental permission was obtained.

NEXT STEPS

Consultation Clarification

When analysing the consultation response comments received as part of the consultation period, a number of emerging themes became evident.

The following table provides a summary of the response themes received during the consultation period.

Table 3: Summary of Response Themes		
Theme	Overview	Number of Mentions
Advantages of a new and enlarged school building	Better learning environment and facilities	5
	Importance of Outdoor Space and play Areas for the pupils	3
	Positive impact on the Decarbonisation agenda i.e. Forest/Eco Schools, energy generation, heat pumps, recycling of existing equipment for use in this scheme or alternatives	4
Community and Intergenerational facilities	Use of wider facilities for community groups	1

Traffic Management	Access concerns at Plasyfelin and calls for better drop off and parking	4
	Increased traffic flow at proposed site and impact on surrounding area	4
Construction process and potential impact	Timelines linked to construction phase	1
	Construction disruption to neighbouring properties and impact this may bring	2
	Impact of building works and location of new build on the local views	1
	Potential links to existing access routes to lower end of site	1
	Any alternative uses identified for remaining land within the existing school boundary	1

To assist Cabinet in the decision making process, the following information is provided by means of response for clarification with supporting reasons.

Table 4: Council Response - Theme Clarification
Theme: Advantages of a new and enlarged school building
Council's Response
<p>The Council appreciates the level of support shown from consultees in relation to this proposal. As outlined in the Consultation document, the indoor and outdoor facilities will be tailored to the needs of the pupils and curriculum whilst protecting the biodiversity in the area (trees, wildlife), which is a specification of the planning application process.</p> <p>With reference to the Decarbonisation Agenda, the proposal for the new build will work towards becoming a net zero carbon school. Whilst all new developments are built to BREEAM excellence, the Council intends to work closely with the school and their eco-council to investigate additional technologies and systems that could be installed to the benefit of the school and wider community, subject to the proposal being approved to progress.</p>
Theme: Community and Intergenerational facilities
Council's Response
<p>It is a pre-requisite of Welsh Government funding that Council's optimise the use of infrastructure and resources to enable flexibility for space and facilities to be made available as community assets. Whilst the internal design of the proposed extension is yet to be finalised, subject to Cabinet approval to progress, the Council will work closely with School Staff and local residents to understand need and how this may be accommodated on a booking basis.</p>
Theme: Traffic Management
Council's Response
<p>This proposal will be subject to a full planning application process and a wide range of consultees will be invited to comment, including the Highways Department.</p>

As part of any development, the Council is committed to providing safe, efficient and effective traffic management. As a highway authority, we have a duty to manage the road network to ensure, as far as possible, the safe and convenient movement of traffic, which includes pedestrians and other vulnerable road users. The planning and design of the facility will establish safer routes with designated pick up and drop off points, including car parking which should alleviate congestion.

Theme: Construction process and potential impact

Council's Response

The Council can confirm that the curtilage of the school will remain unchanged and that all land within will remain in Educational use.

The development on site will be designed and orientated in such a way as to minimise impact to any neighbouring residential properties and maximise any natural access routes.

The proposal will be subject to a full planning application process led by our experienced Building Consultancy Team and subject to building regulation requirements relating to a number of factors such as dust, noise etc.

As outlined in the consultation document, the occupation date for the new building is scheduled for September 2024.

Reasonable Alternatives Identified

Following the consultation period, and through consideration of the responses received as part of this process, a further assessment for the proposal has been undertaken prior to making a recommendation to take account of any further information that has come forward through the consultation or otherwise.

No reasonable alternatives have been highlighted as a result of the Consultation Process.

Recommendation

In reviewing the proposal to take account of further information that has come forward through the consultation and in consideration of the likely impact on quality and standards in education, the community and travelling arrangements, it is the recommendation of this report that the proposal is progressed as outlined in the Consultation Document, namely:

- **Create a new and enlarged replacement Plasyfelin Primary School in the grounds of the existing school site, to accommodate future projected demand within the area.**

Cabinet Members are asked to:

- a) Consider the information contained in the Community Engagement Report.
- b) Approve the recommendation to proceed to Planning Application Stage
- c) Approve the recommendation to proceed to Full Business Case in relation to the proposal

Decision Making

Should Cabinet decide to proceed with the proposal, this will be logged as the final determination in the educational process prior to the proposal progressing through a full planning application process.

Approval to proceed will trigger the start of the Planning Application Process and provide permission to submit a Full Business Case to Welsh Government.

It should be reiterated that as the School Organisation Code 2018 does not apply to this proposal, there is no requirement to undertake a 28 day Statutory Notice/Objection Period as outlined in Section 4.1 of the Code in this instance.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Annex 1 :

[Consultation Notification Letter](#)

[Consultation Document](#)

[Consultation Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Original Integrated Impact Assessment](#)

Annex 2: Consultation Responses

Estyn's response to the proposal by Caerphilly local authority to replace Plasyfelin Primary School with a new and enlarged school in the grounds of the existing school site

Introduction

This report has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training in Wales.

Under the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and its associated Code, proposers are required to send consultation documents to Estyn. However, Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and has produced the following response to the information provided by the proposer.

Summary/ Conclusion

Estyn considers that the proposal is likely to maintain the standard of education provision in the area. However, there is too little information on the current standard of education in Plasyfelin Primary School or how surplus places in neighbouring schools could be affected.

Description and benefits

The proposer has provided a reasonable rationale for this proposal. It follows the local authority's plan to invest in improving its school buildings and developing shared and co-located facilities for community use. The proposal would see the creation of a new and enlarged replacement school in the grounds of the existing school site, with an increase from the existing capacity of 394 pupils to 420 pupil places, plus 60 nursery places. The proposer has not identified whether the existing capacity of 394 pupils includes nursery places.

The School Organisation Code (Welsh Government, 2018, p.19) does not require the proposer to consult under the code, as the main entrance of the replacement school would be within 1.609344 kilometres (one mile) of the main entrance of the existing school. Nevertheless, the local authority sets out its aim to engage in transparent, balanced and open decision-making, through informing and consulting stakeholders, which reflects the principles of its Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025.

The proposer presents a detailed description of the options framework it used to support its decision-making about the relative desirability, viability and feasibility of this proposal. It sets out clearly and fairly the expected benefits and disadvantages of making changes to the existing school. The proposer outlines clearly the difficulties of undertaking additional physical work to the existing school, due to asbestos identified throughout the buildings. Clear and valid reasons are provided as to why three of the alternatives have been discounted. The proposal identifies how a number of community groups, such as amateur dramatics and a local football team, already use the existing school buildings and its outdoor environment. It is therefore unclear why an option of replacing the primary school building on the existing Plasyfelin site with the same admission number and with facilities for use by the community, has not been considered.

The proposer has considered the impact of the changes on learner travel arrangements, but as there is no change to the catchment area and the proposed location for the new building is within the existing school site, it is reasonable to assume that there will be minimal implications for learner travel arrangements. A number of 'safe travel' routes are already established. The local authority has identified that the proposal provides an opportunity to improve the access road to the school and the designated bus or taxi turning points. In the case of accessibility, the proposer has not outlined how it might achieve these improvements, while minimising disruption to local residents, pupils and staff.

In its rationale, the proposer identifies new housing developments in the Plasyfelin Primary School catchment area, as the main reason for increasing the school's admission number to a capacity of 420 pupils, plus 60 nursery pupils. The projected numbers, however, indicate that the school would not reach capacity by 2030 (six years after the projected completion date of the new build). The projected number of nursery pupils on roll by 2030 suggests there could be 24 surplus nursery places in the school. The proposer does not give sufficient explanation for increasing the number of nursery places, when modelling suggests numbers on roll would be very similar to those currently.

The proposal details admission numbers for Plasyfelin Primary School and for neighbouring primary, infant and junior schools. At present, 73.31% of pupils attending the school are from within the catchment area. Around a third of pupils eligible to attend Plasyfelin attend other English medium provision and almost 40% of pupils within the Plasyfelin Primary School catchment area attend faith and Welsh medium schools. It is unclear whether the proposer has taken a similar analysis of the patterns of attendance across the neighbouring schools into account in the projected numbers.

The local authority has identified possible risks associated with the proposal, one of which is destabilising other already established educational provision in the area. The proposer feels confident that the risk can be mitigated by increasing the admission number to Plasyfelin Primary School over time 'by a manageable amount'. However, it does not show how the projected surplus places in other schools up to 2026, such as Hendre Infants School, Hendre Junior School and St James' Primary will be impacted. The proposal refers to the current provision for the Welsh language within Plasyfelin and nearby Welsh-medium schools. Given that a third of pupils within Plasyfelin Primary School's catchment attend Welsh-medium provision, the proposer is not specific enough about how this proposal supports, or might affect, the targets in the local authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

Overall, the rationale for taking forward option 5, which increases the school's admission number, over option 4, replacing the primary school with no change to the current pupil admission number, is not sufficiently robust.

The proposer explains how it will fund the building of a new school for Plasyfelin Primary School but does not provide indicative costs for the project or the scale of any projected net savings.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The local authority has considered suitably the impact of the proposals on the quality of the pupils' learning experiences and their wellbeing, for example in relation to their physical development through improvements to indoor and outdoor facilities. The proposer considers the information from the most recent Estyn inspection report for the school, published in 2016. However, the local authority provides a misleading interpretation of one of the report's judgements which it uses to support its rationale for the proposal.

In the summary of the school's current performance and commentary on its prospects for improvement being 'good', the inspection report identifies that 'Staff manage resources well and pupils benefit from a learning environment of high quality' (Estyn, 2016, p.2). The inspection report does not identify that improvements '*could be achieved if resources were balanced well*' or that '*pupils would benefit from a learning environment of high quality*', as stated in the proposal. Furthermore, the proposal does not provide an up-to-date view of the local authority or regional consortium on current standards, the quality of teaching or curriculum; care, support and guidance, or the quality of leadership and management.

The proposal takes appropriate account of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018) in describing the proposed design and layout of the new building and has carried out a detailed integrated equality impact assessment. It concludes that the proposal would likely have a positive or neutral impact in relation to the Equality Act 2010, socio-economic factors and the achievement of the local authority's wellbeing objectives.

The local authority is confident that there would be minimal disruption to the daily operation of the existing school, while the proposed building works are carried out, and that community groups who also use the school's facilities will be able to continue their activities. However, there is insufficient information about how disruption to the site would be monitored and how learners and staff would be supported in the move to the new school. In addition, the proposer has outlined that the current buildings will need to be decommissioned, demolished and disposed of in line with appropriate guidelines when the new facility is complete. It is not clear how this might affect staff, pupils and local residents, or how the local authority would mitigate any issues associated with this work.