



# 21st Century Schools Consultation Document

## Proposal for a replacement school

Plasyfelin Primary School

20<sup>th</sup> October 2021 - 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021



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



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# INTRODUCTION

## **What is this booklet about?**

Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC) has embarked upon an exciting but challenging journey of improvement and change.

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.

We aspire to continue to raise school standards and improve the quality of the learning environment to create fit-for-purpose 21<sup>st</sup> century schools and give every child in Caerphilly the best possible start in life.

This booklet is for anyone who has an interest in education in Caerphilly and may be of particular interest to parents/guardians of children attending or expecting to attend Plasyfelin Primary School.

This booklet sets out the changes we are suggesting to this educational facility and the reasons for the proposed changes.

The consultation process represents an opportunity for people to learn about the proposal, ask questions and make comments that will be recorded and summarised in a consultation report. This report will be published on the Council's website and will be considered when Cabinet decides on the way forward.

## **What is the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Colleges Programme?**

The 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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" 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme with approximately £56.5 million invested in schools for both educational and community use.

Band A funding in Caerphilly was used to deliver :

 <p>Image of Islwyn High School</p>	Project Name	Band A Investment
	✓ 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

Caerphilly County Borough Council submitted a Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) and received Welsh government approval in principle for an identified investment of £78 million, subject to individual project consultation and approval. The SOP set the strategic vision for the Band B programme within the context of the priorities and wellbeing goals of the Council.

We identified a need to invest in improving our school buildings, meeting the demand for education in both Welsh and English, reducing surplus places and developing shared and co-located facilities. Our aspiration is to provide efficient and effective educational infrastructure that will meet current and future demand for places and for all facilities that receive investment committed to optimising the use of the infrastructure and resources, making assets available for community use.

## What are we proposing to do?

We are proposing to:

- **Creation of a new and enlarged replacement Plasyfelin 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 60 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 Plasyfelin 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.



## CONSULTATION PROCESS

### Who are we consulting with?

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.

Plasfelin 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 will be undertaken and 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 will be undertaken, mirroring the equivalent processes outlined in Section 3 of the School Organisation Code 2018 only.

We will therefore advise the following of our proposals by letter or email:

<b>Table 1: Consultee List</b>	
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*

**Please note:**

- All responses received during the consultation period will be recorded and summarised in a Community Engagement Report.
- Any negative responses made during the consultation period will not be counted as objections and there is no requirement to issue a Statutory Notice as part of this process, however, they will be recorded as adverse comments.
- The Community Engagement Report will be presented for initial review and endorsement at Education Scrutiny Committee, with final approval to proceed to the planning application and full business case stage sitting with Cabinet.

- 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.

## **How can you find out more?**

The planning and development of effective school organisation proposals is crucial to the Welsh Government's goal of transforming education in Wales and providing better educational outcomes with a commitment to increase school effectiveness, and narrow inequalities in achievement between advantaged and disadvantaged areas, groups and individuals.

When undertaking a consultation process in connection with a school proposal, the Council will publish information to enable transparent, balanced and open decision making.

As part of this proposal, the following documentation has been produced:

- A Consultation Document outlining the proposal (this document)
- A Children and Young People's Summary
- An Integrated Impact Assessment

Information is made available on the Council's website and all documentation is published in Welsh and English and available in other languages or formats on request.

Further details in relation to the processes and timelines can be found later in this document in the ['Next Steps'](#) Section.

A separate Planning Application Process will be carried out by the Authority's Property Services Department subject to the final determination being made and Cabinet approval to progress this proposal. Details of all applications can be found on the Council's Website when the process is live.

## **Views of children on the proposal**

The Council has acknowledged that the voice of young people is about involving them as active participants in the development, delivery, management and improvement of their educational and student experience and needs to be at the heart of planning, provision and evaluation.

Young people have a right to act to express their views in all matters affecting them and for their views to be heard and given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. The Council recognises the potential of young people to enrich the decision-making processes, to share perspectives and to participate as citizens and facilitators of change.

This is also been reflected by the Estyn report 'Pupil Participation: a best practice guide', which highlights how effective participation benefits pupils and helps schools to improve.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Team in Caerphilly will ensure that when bringing forward any proposal, suitable arrangements are made to consult and involve pupils throughout the process and post occupancy. A child friendly version of the Consultation Document will be produced and any feedback from pupils and the School Council will be included in the documentation forwarded to Cabinet for consideration once the consultation period has ended.



# WHY ARE WE PROPOSING THESE CHANGES?

## Background Information

Schools play a key role not only as places to inspire and educate our children but also as vibrant and dynamic learning environments in which all ages are able to learn and grow that are used not only by pupils but by families and the wider community. Our aim is to secure equality of access by promoting and supporting the development of inclusive education and giving a commitment to providing the best possible quality of education and services within available resources.

The Council is committed to providing all children and young people with high quality education, tailored to meet their needs, which will develop their potential, extend aspiration, promote social inclusion and contribute to the economic regeneration of the area. Progress has been made, however there is still work to be done to improve outcomes and wellbeing for all children and young people.

Plasfelin Primary school at present is located in close proximity to Caerphilly town centre and was originally designed as 2 separate schools, with the Infants and Junior accommodation located on the same site in 1969. The schools then amalgamated in September 2005 to form the current Primary school.

Only 29% of classrooms are size-compliant and when the school estate was surveyed in 2018, Plasfelin Primary School, was identified as a CLASP building. A 'Consortium of Local Authorities Special Programme' building is identified as being part of the scheme developed by local authorities in the 1950s through to the 1980s, to devise a method of designing and assembling prefabricated buildings. These buildings contain asbestos which is safely contained within the fabric of the building, however to such an extent that it can no longer be developed further from an educational perspective.

There is a clear link between new and improved school buildings and improved performance as highlighted by ESTYN. In the May 2016 Estyn inspection report, the school's current performance and prospects for improvement were both rated as good. Whilst it was acknowledged in the report that the school provides 'a suitably balanced curriculum that engages pupils' interest' it also indicated that improvements could be achieved if resources were balanced well and pupils would 'benefit from a learning environment of high quality'.

The Council believes that this proposal represents the best opportunity for significant investment in new permanent facilities to provide a stimulating teaching and learning environment with 21<sup>st</sup> Century facilities.

## Planning of school places

All Councils in Wales must make sure they provide enough school spaces for pupils of all ages in order to provide the best quality of education and ensure the funding provided by the Welsh government is used effectively. All Councils in Wales must also provide places that meet the needs of the pupils in Welsh, English or Faith medium and must be suitable for any additional learning needs.

The site currently has a capacity for 394 pupils split over the 5 buildings within the boundary of the school.

### Condition and Suitability of school buildings

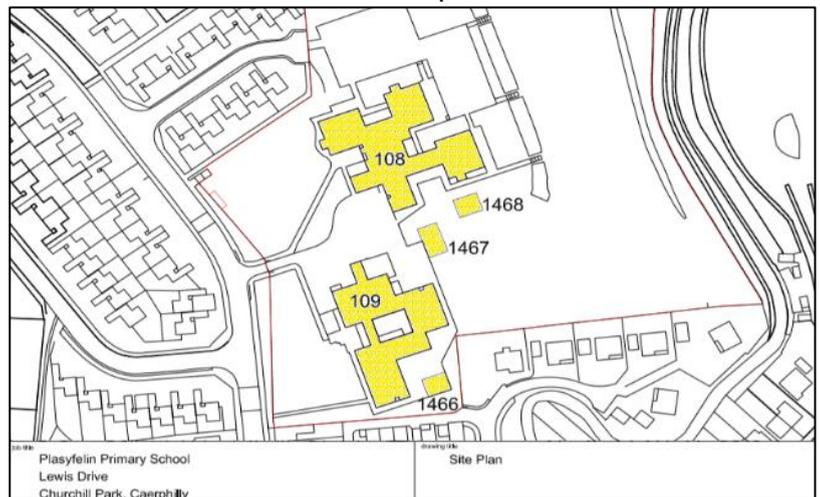
In April 2021, the existing Plasyfelin Primary school will have occupied its current site for 52 years. There are 271 pupils on role at time of writing.

The site the school occupies has a total area of approximately 2.64 Hectares which accommodates 5 structures. 2 main buildings forming the infants and junior blocks which are connected via a partially exposed/covered walkway. The site also hosts 3 demountable buildings currently utilised for STEM, music sessions and a staff room plus a number of containers used for storage and outdoor play areas.

Current Site



Site plan



The 2 main existing buildings were built in 1969 and operate over 1 floor. The Junior Building (Block 108 on the CAD plan), has a gross internal area of 1442.2sqm. This building houses 8 classrooms, 1 ICT classroom, pupil cloakrooms, 1 office and a reception area, staff room, assembly hall and the school kitchens.

There is also 1 demountable for use by the Juniors (Block 1468) .





The Infant Building (Block 109), has a gross internal area of 1185sqm. This building houses 5 classrooms, pupil cloakrooms, Nursery Classroom, Community Room, Assembly Hall, staff room and breakout room.

There are 2 demountables for use by the infants (Blocks 1466 & 1467)



Whilst the outside space consists of playground surfaces, and grassed area (the identified site for the new building), direct access to areas suitable for outside curriculum activities which are directly adjacent to the classrooms are limited and cordoned off with trellis work.



The Council's condition surveys, undertaken in 2018 have classified the school as category C+ for the condition of the educational estate and category C for suitability. Whilst the site is not identified as being on a flood plain, the location runs adjacent to the Nant y Aber River.

It is located along Lewis Drive with limited drop off facilities and bus parking zones which has raised safety concerns regarding egress to and from the site as it is located on the only access road into a busy estate. The school was originally designed as 2 separate buildings, later

amalgamating to create the primary school. As such the layout of buildings is disjointed, with an exposed access route linking the 2 main buildings.

The internal layout of both main buildings is based on a spoke model, both accommodating a central hall which then link via long corridors to a cluster of classrooms with small breakout areas. Lighting throughout operates with older style fluorescent lighting strips. The buildings have been identified as having asbestos throughout which has been made safe for the school to operate but limits any additional physical works on them.

## **Illustrative Master Plan**

'A Foundation for Success' provides a framework for the future regeneration of the County Borough up to 2023. The document sets out strategic priorities for regeneration under four key themes:

- Supporting People (reducing inequality, building capacity and resilience to create healthier, prosperous, cohesive communities)
- Supporting Business (creating employment opportunities, increasing entrepreneurial activities, encouraging innovation and improving access to employment)
- Supporting Quality of Life (providing the right physical environment for our communities that encourages them to prosper)
- Connecting People and Places (improving connectivity locally, regionally and globally)

The Regeneration Strategy is supported by a suite of targeted action plans and strategies aimed at capturing regeneration opportunities and developing key sites and premises throughout the County Borough.

The Masterplan identifies a number of projects in the area that could deliver substantial economic and community benefit, and it will provide a framework for the delivery of those projects.

In addition, the number of school aged children is expected to increase within the Masterplan Area as a result of new development and it is important that there are opportunities for schools to expand to accommodate additional pupils. The Council has recently agreed in principle the provision of additional school places within the wider area subject to funding being confirmed for individual projects, business cases being approved by Welsh Government and the outcome of individual consultations will be considered as part of the 21st Century Schools programme.

This proposal forms part of that Strategy moving forward.

## **HOW WOULD OTHER SCHOOLS BE AFFECTED?**

Changes in one part of the Education sector in the County has a wider 'ripple' effect on other schools and their pupils. When considering any proposals, the sustainability and enhancement of the education network and wider area is considered. Due regard will be given to the impact of this proposal and consultation will be undertaken with any affected schools.

## Early Years Provision and Projected Demand

Caerphilly County Borough Council recognises the value and importance of childcare as a vital element of the anti-poverty agenda as well as providing an enriched, safe and nurturing environment in which the children and young people of the county borough can flourish and have fun. As such the Council has an Early Years' Service area that is dedicated to managing all aspects of the childcare market in a coordinated manner.

The proposal supports the Local Council and Welsh Government's Childcare Offer for Wales and Flying Start Programme. There is currently a childcare wrap provision catered for onsite and it is not anticipated that this will change as a result of this proposal and therefore existing provision will continue to operate as part of the site campus ensuring nurturing provision at a young age.

## Primary Years Provision, Growing school model and Admissions

Current pupils on roll equate to 271 children plus 35 nursery of which 73.31% are from within catchment.

<b>Table 2: Actual and Projected Numbers in attendance</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>Number on Roll</b>	<b>Excluding Nursery</b>
2020	306	271
2021	301	266
2022	282	245
2023	287	250
2024	299	263
2025	322	286
2026	346	310
2027	375	339
2028	404	368
2029	427	391
2030	441	405

\*Figures take into account projected pupils from new building developments identified within the catchment area

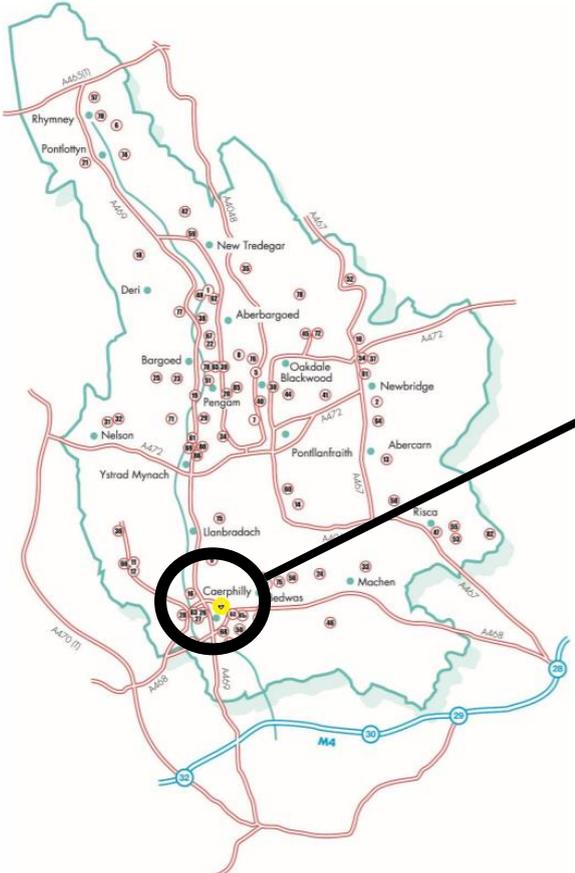
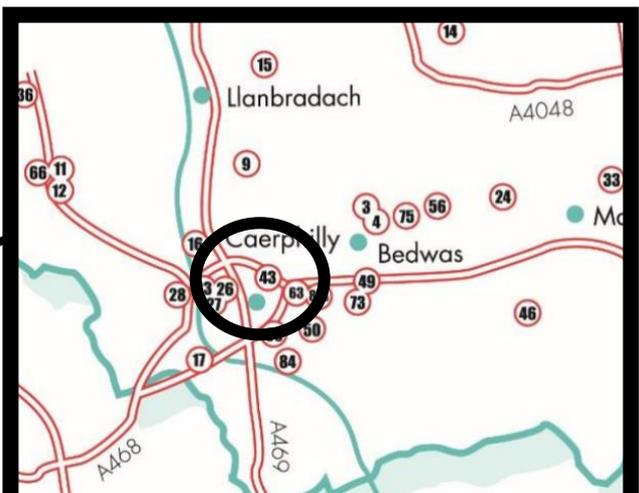
Through pupil projections and taking into account significant new housing planning applications received (circa 602 units agreed up until 2030 with a further 35 units proposed to be built after that period), Plasyfelin has been identified as a 'growing school'. It is anticipated that the admission number for the new school will be 60. However, consideration will be given when the school initially opens to a lower admission number that will be increased incrementally until it reaches its full capacity of 420 pupils plus nursery to cater for growing demand and minimise the impact on neighbouring schools.

## Catchment Area Arrangements

The Council believes that this proposal represents the best opportunity to safeguard and sustain educational standards for the future and provides a platform for improvement at Plasyfelin

Primary school by providing an integrated building which aspires to stimulate the teaching and learning environment with 21<sup>st</sup> Century facilities including improved ICT facilities, outdoor play, sporting pitch and extended access provision for community use, centred on the learning, self-esteem and the wellbeing of all.

**Table 3: Catchment Area for current schools**

 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Caerphilly County Borough Map</i></p>	<p>The existing Plasyfelin Primary school is located within the Caerphilly basin area and falls within the Morgan Jones ward.</p>  <p>The ward profile based on the 2011 census information indicates that 5.1% of the ward population is between 5-9 years</p> <p>It is proposed that the catchment area would remain unchanged as part of this development.</p>
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## Impact on other schools

Considering the current data available, 844 children are identified living within the catchment area that are eligible to attend Plasyfelin, 27.01% are in attendance, with 33.5% attending other English medium provision and the remaining 39.45% attending Faith and Welsh medium provision.

6 community English medium primary schools and 2 community Welsh medium schools are within close proximity to the existing site which include, Cwrt Rawlin Primary, Hendredenny Primary, Hendre Infants School, Hendre Junior School, St. James Primary, The Twyn Primary, YGG Caerffili and YGG Y Castell.

**Table 4a: Actual and Projected Numbers in attendance (Neighbouring Schools)**

	<b>Cwrt Primary</b>	<b>Rawlin</b>	<b>Hendredenny Primary</b>	<b>Hendre School</b>	<b>Infants</b>	<b>Hendre Junior School</b>
<b>Capacity</b>	325		236	186		240
<b>Admissions</b>	46		33	47		52
<b>Year</b>	<b>No. on Roll (excluding Nursery)</b>		<b>No. on Roll (excluding Nursery)</b>	<b>No. on Roll (excluding Nursery)</b>		<b>No. on Roll (excluding Nursery)</b>
2020	314		218	112		184
2021	317		219	96		160
2022	316		220	83		159
2023	317		228	84		145
2024	317		234	95		130
2025	320		231	91		129
2026	321		231	89		116

**Table 4b: Actual and Projected Numbers in attendance (Neighbouring Schools)**

	<b>St. James Primary</b>	<b>The Twyn Primary</b>	<b>YGG Caerffili</b>	<b>YGG Y Castell</b>
<b>Capacity</b>	330	442	389	486
<b>Admissions</b>	47	56	55	70
<b>Year</b>	<b>No. on Roll (excluding Nursery)</b>			
2020	263	419	382	410
2021	259	411	382	419
2022	256	409	389	437
2023	257	405	390	452
2024	258	400	392	456
2025	266	399	388	469
2026	258	405	385	461

Increasing the admission number by a manageable amount will allow for the growth of Plasyfelin while not over developing the provision to destabilise other already established educational provisions within the area.

## Disruption to pupils

The proposal seeks to build a new Primary School on the lower plateau of the existing Plasyfelin School facility. The site is in ownership of the Council and is already designated for Educational use as part of the deed package and within the designation for the purposes of the adopted Local Development Plan.

Through utilising an existing site, during the build phase, the council will work with the contractor to ensure there would be minimal disruption to the daily operations of the existing school cohort, on the Plasyfelin School site until the site is ready to be accommodated at which time learners would be supported through the transplantation process.

## Secondary Provision

Plasyfelin Primary school is a feeder school for Bedwas High School which has a published capacity of 929. Whilst secondary education is being reviewed within the authority at present,

until such time that a determination has been made, it is the assumption of this proposal that the current feeder configuration would remain the same. Based on September 2020 actuals, the school has 24.52% surplus places and 86.82% of its current pupil roll is from within catchment. Future pupil plotting indicates that Bedwas High School has sufficient capacity to accommodate any influx of Plasyfelin pupils as a result of the projected building developments in the area moving forward.

## WHAT WILL BE THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL?

### Education Standards, Quality and Leadership

Quality and standards in schools in Caerphilly are monitored by Estyn and the Local Authority (LA). Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales. It is a Crown body, established under the Education Act 1992. Estyn is independent of the National Assembly for Wales but receives its funding from the Welsh Government under Section 104 of the Government of Wales Act 1998. Estyn inspects quality and standards in education and training providers in Wales.

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Table 5: Estyn Judgement Scale	
Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The most recent inspection results for the current school is outlined below. Copies of the full report is available from the [Estyn website](#)

### Plasyfelin Primary School Estyn Summary

1. Standards: **good**
2. Wellbeing: **good**
3. Learning experiences: **good**
4. Teaching: **good**
5. Care, support and guidance: **good**
6. Learning environment: **excellent**
7. Leadership: **good**
8. Improving quality: **good**
9. Partnership working: **good**
10. Resource management: **good**

Estyn provided the following qualitative judgements about the school:

- Most pupils make strong progress in relation to their starting points
- Most pupils' speaking and listening skills develop well
- Nearly all pupils are very well behaved and strongly motivated to learn
- Most pupils have a high awareness of how to stay healthy
- Most pupils with additional learning needs make good progress in meeting their targets
- The quality of care, support and guidance enhances pupils' learning well
- The quality of teaching is effective in most classes
- There is a suitably balanced curriculum that engages pupils' interest.

The school's prospects for improvement were also identified as good because:

- The headteacher provides clear, strong leadership there is effective teamwork in the school at all levels
- The governing body supports and challenges the school well
- The school's self-evaluation processes are rigorous and well established
- Leaders and managers put improvement plans into action successfully
- Staff manage resources well and pupils benefit from a learning environment of high quality
- There are effective links with partner schools, which have supported improvements in teaching and learning well.

### **Covid-19 pandemic**

The school has continued to provide good support for learners during the Covid-19 pandemic, demonstrating commitment, perseverance and resilience. Wellbeing has continued to be a priority during this period, with particular support for vulnerable families living in the community.

The schools has also provided a programme of training for staff. This has enabled teachers to successfully utilise emerging technologies to deliver remote lessons and blended learning strategies.

### **Governance Arrangements**

There are no proposed changes to the existing governance arrangements in order to minimise any negative impact on educational outcomes.

During (and after) the proposal, the school will continue to receive ongoing advice and support from the local authority, school improvement service and any relevant stakeholders to help ensure that the school maintains effective leadership and provides high quality teaching and learning experiences.

### **Staff Matters**

School staff play an important role in ensuring pupils are learning in a safe and supportive learning environment. They can foster positive, trusting relationships with pupils and improve the school climate by encouraging parent and family involvement in education.

By forging strong relationships, staff can affect virtually every aspect of their pupils' lives, teaching them the important life lessons that will help them succeed beyond just academia. It is not always easy to change a pupil's life, which is why it takes a great teacher to do so.

The Council recognises that retaining the experience and support of the existing staff cohort at the school will support pupils through a period of transition although this will be at the discretion of the governing body. This proposal supports the potential to expand provision, breadth of knowledge accessible to the pupils and encourage workforce development through the sharing of best practice.

## **Financial Matters**

Funding has already been set aside for the Council's share of the capital costs of the project. The recurrent (revenue) costs will be considered as part of budget planning moving forward. Any additional costs or savings will be factored into the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Caerphilly CBC Members have already agreed to set aside an earmarked reserve for the Council's contribution to capital costs associated with the Authority's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Band B proposals. The value of this reserve is currently £6.975m.

The Authority's contribution to Phase 1 of the programme is currently estimated at £6.413m. This figure includes a contribution of £647k from a Social Services Capital earmarked reserve to support additional spend on the Trinity Fields Project, subject to full planning application approval. Consequently the balance remaining as uncommitted from the £6.975m is currently £1.209m.

The Authority's contribution towards phase 2 of the programme is estimated at £5,925,000, as detailed above. This cost will be met from the remaining funding of £1.209m already earmarked for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools, plus a figure of £4.716m from the Authority's Place-Shaping Reserve.

The proposal to build a new school for Plasyfelin Primary is 1 of the 3 projects identified in Phase 2 of the programme.

## **Impact on Welsh Language Provision**

The First Minister's programme for Government 2016-2021 Taking Wales Forward, is working towards one million people speaking the Welsh language by 2050.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the Legislation (Wales) Act 2019, provides a series of standards and places a statutory duty on the Council to assess the demand for Welsh medium education in the area. One of the key standards is a requirement to develop a 5 year Welsh language strategy, with the aim of increasing the number of Welsh speakers and which will enable us to facilitate the use of the Welsh Language within the county borough.

As set out in its Welsh in Education Strategic Plan where Caerphilly County Borough Council's commitment to the promotion of Welsh language and the provision of quality, attractive educational facilities is evident. The Council is committed to developing opportunities for provision to be delivered through the medium of Welsh where possible.

33.41% of children within the Plasyfelin Primary School catchment attend Welsh Medium provision and demand is continuously monitored. This has been catered for through growth in Welsh Medium provision as identified in the WESP.

Plasfelin Primary School provides English medium provision but through its curriculum, encourages pupils to develop basic Welsh language skills which is demonstrated through the work they produce and colourful displays throughout the existing school. This proposal would seek to further support and promote the development of Welsh language by the pupils and ensure that signage is dual language as well as ensuring that as part of the recruitment process the ability to speak Welsh would be desirable.

## Learner Travel Arrangements

The proposal seeks to create a new and enhanced facility through a new building located on the existing Plasfelin site. Therefore the likely effect of different travelling arrangements as a result of the proposal is negligible.

The table below details the nearest available alternatives:

<b>Table 6: Geographically Nearest Alternative schools</b>			
<b>School Name, Postcode</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Distance / Travel</b>
YGG Caerffili, CF83 3AH	Welsh	A	0.3 miles
Ysgol Y Castel, CF83 1WH	Welsh	B	0.6 miles
The Twyn, CF83 1UT	English	C+	0.9 miles
Hendre Infants, CF83 2RP	English	C+	1.2 miles
Hendre Juniors, CF83 2RP	English	B	1.2 miles
Hendredenny Primary, CF83 2BL	English	C+	1.4 miles
Cwrt Rawlin, CF83 1SN	English	C+	1.6 miles
St James Primary, CF83 3GT	English	C+	1.7 miles

It is always the intention of the Council to provide a system of transport that seeks to ensure pupils can safely and comfortably access their education. As the proposed location for the new building is within the curtilage of the existing Plasfelin Primary School site, a number of 'Safe Travel' routes, as far as reasonably practicable, are already established such as lighting and designated footpaths. During an initial site visit by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools team, it has been identified that the access road and designated bus/taxi turning points could potentially be improved as part of the site design process to alleviate any local traffic concerns and this will be taken into consideration at the relevant stages as the proposal progresses.

## Equalities

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.

Impact assessments help us to show that the council has due regard in the exercise of its equality duty under the Equality Act 2010. They are a tool we use to ensure the policies, practices, projects and activities which shape our work are ensuring equal access to all our services.

Impact assessments look at whether changes to how we do things (like working practices or ways we deliver services) are likely to have a positive or negative impact on the people we serve and on those who deliver our services. They help us to plan to reduce or remove negative impact – for example by making reasonable changes to how a group receives a service (perhaps providing information in a different format or providing ramped access into a building etc.).

A new socio-economic duty set out in section 1 of the Equality Act 2010, came into force on 31st March 2021. The Caerphilly Council's Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) template will be utilised to undertake an initial Equality Impact and Welsh Language Impact Assessment which will be further reviewed in the light of any additional elements highlighted through the statutory consultation processes as the proposal progresses.

The utilisation of the new IIA design will shape the Council's work in ensuring equal access to all services and further help support the Council in making informed and effective decisions whilst ensuring compliance with a range of relevant legislation, including:

- Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
- Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011
- Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Statutory Consultation v Doctrine of Legitimate Expectation and Gunning Principles

A full Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken. This document is available to view a part of the consultation pack on the website.

## **Specialist Facilities / Additional Learning Needs**

A key responsibility of the Council is to ensure that there are sufficient pupil places in the most appropriate locations and maintain an awareness of demographic changes (i.e increases and decreases in the pupil population). The Council is also required to identify an authority-wide strategy for community provision in schools, as well as specialist provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or disabilities.

The Authority recognises the impact of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018) and the need to future proof provision. Through the Band B programme, consideration of the correct types, quantity and quality of provision to meet the future needs of the population has been considered.

This proposal will support Plasyfelin Primary School in accommodating and supporting children with additional learning needs. The design and layout of the new building will enable improved accessibility, flexibility and multi-functional areas that can be adapted subject to demand.

## **Community Impact and Community Benefit**

The proposed project will take into account the desire to encourage and facilitate community use of the asset. Our aspiration and a pre-requisite for Welsh Government investment, is to commit to making assets available to support educational need, community use, promote community resilience and contribute to meeting several Local Authority Strategies. To optimise the use of

the new infrastructure and resources, as part of the proposal, flexibility will be built into the school suited to local demand.

### **Community Provision and Community Use**

Plasyfelin Primary school currently accommodates a number of groups. Groups range in age and usage, for example Family groups, Amateur Dramatics, Adult education courses to support upskilling, an outreach programme with Ystrad Mynach College, a summer school and usage of their outdoor space by the local football team as well as the aforementioned community childcare facility. These extra-curricular activities will continue to be supported moving forward and will not be interrupted as part of any build process.

The proposed project will take into account the desire to encourage and facilitate community use of the asset. To this end the design process will seek to include measures to enable safe 'zoning' of parts of the new school building, including the hall and a multi-functional classroom compliant space which could be adapted for use as well as access to outdoor recreational facilities accessible outside of school hours.

### **Digital Inclusion**

Caerphilly Council has clear aspirations for all schools to become community learning centres as part of their Hwb Programme. As such, community use and the appropriate infrastructure required to achieve this is now one of the key elements of the project and planning process moving forward and representatives from the Local Council's Digital Services and Building Consultancy departments advise as part of the project team.

Over the next 5 year period, resources have been allocated to ensure that all schools within the borough will meet the Education Digital Standard and any new developments will have the required infrastructure built into the specifications in advance to ensure compliance which will include community wifi.

In addition to providing the physical infrastructure, the Adult Education team within the Council has developed robust operational plans to deliver the Digital 2030 Strategic Framework and widen access to learning activities at a time and place flexible to the needs of the community, implemented in accordance with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the five principles of working.

### **Sport and Outdoor Play Facilities**

The Curriculum for Wales identifies 6 areas of learning and places a great emphasis on Health and Wellbeing above all others.

The Council recognises that children's physical development, enthusiasm and energy for movement should continually be promoted through helping them to use their bodies effectively, by encouraging spatial awareness, balance, control and coordination, and developing motor and manipulative skills across all Areas of Learning, indoors and outdoors.

Children should be encouraged to enjoy physical activity. The provision of physical education through sporting and outdoor facilities plays a vital role in encouraging pupils to explore and develop the physical and mental skills essential to taking part in a variety of different activities.

*'Our vision for sport and active recreation is to encourage healthy lifestyles and support our pupils and residents to be more active, more often'* as reflected in Caerphilly's Sports and Active

Recreation Strategy 2019-2029 and the health and wellbeing priorities set in the Corporate Plan 2018-2023.

As part of the design process, this proposal will enhance the outdoor play facilities with soft/hard play areas, suitable equipment and provision for a multi-use games area with 3G surface and adaptable hall which will be accessible to the pupils and the wider community.

### **Community Benefit**

Projects include Community Benefits as a Core Requirement and will therefore be scored as part of the Quality evaluation. It sets out a number of targets around local targeted recruitment & training, supply chains, community & education initiatives and environmental matters such as minimising waste and reducing energy consumption. Protecting habitats, biodiversity and reducing pollution is a matter of course throughout the contract period and relevant surveys will be undertaken and included within the procurement documentation.



## **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSAL?**

### **Benefits**

The principal benefits of the scheme are as follows:

- Provides an 'all-new' primary school for 420 pupils plus an additional 60 nursery places
- A new school to replace an existing 52 year old premises with substantive restraints
- Provision of energy efficient facility
- Modern state of the art classrooms
- New catering facility and flexible hall
- New outdoor activity facility
- Modern flagship primary facility in Caerphilly basin
- Space maximisation through reconfiguration of site
- A stimulating environment to deliver high quality learner outcomes
- Community Use

### **Disbenefits**

The principal disbenefits of the scheme are as follows:

- The site will be cordoned into zones during the build phase, however the Council will work with contractors to minimise any disruption on the site and to the daily operation of the school
- There will be a period of transition for the pupils and appropriate support for 'Settling in' will require consideration
- 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 anticipated there will be minimal impact on other schools through a managed and phased capacity increase

## Risks

Risks will be managed pro-actively in accordance with our risk management procedures. The programme makes an allowance for a risk contingency to cover unforeseen events, having regard to the results of the optimism bias assessments.

The Council also recognises the risks associated with construction procurement especially in light of current Covid implications on the industry.

The principal risks of the delivery of the scheme are identified as follows:

<b>Table 7: Risks and Mitigation</b>	
<b>Principal Risks</b>	<b>Mitigating Factors</b>
Planning process (this is separate to this consultation document)	The planning process will be managed by Property Services in line with legislative requirements
Impact of any planning conditions on cost	Full Tender process will be undertaken
Sufficiency of funding to deliver scope including abnormals	Contingency planning will form part of the tender process
Availability of resources/ contractors	The South East & Mid Wales Collaborative Construction Framework (SEWSCAP) framework will be accessed
Rising costs due to regional supply/demand dynamic	Will be managed through contingency planning
Design development	In house architect service will be accessed
Adverse weather conditions	Factored into project management timelines
Sufficiency of Utilities services	Factored into project management timelines
Project Governance and decision making	Full Project Board will be established
Benefits realisation (meeting end user requirements)	<p>The consultation process prescribed by the School Organisation Code 2018 does not apply in this instance 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.</p> <p>The Council's Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025 and "Spectrum of Engagement" will be utilised to ensure the appropriate level of engagement in informing and consulting stakeholders and will mirror the processes outlined in Section 3 of the School Organisation Code 2018.</p>

## Options framework

The Welsh Government's Business Case Guidance in relation to utilisation of the Options Framework approach has been followed to identify the widest possible number of feasible options, focusing on the following key dimensions: scope, service solution, service delivery, implementation and funding.

As such, in development of this proposal, an options appraisal has been undertaken to consider the relative desirability, viability and feasibility of a proposal.

A cross-departmental working group consisting of representatives from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Team, Education Directorate, Sport and Leisure, Inclusion Services, Property Services, Finance and Health and Safety was established to:

- Prepare and appraise a longlist of options
- Evaluate and score each option as to the extent to which each option meets the investment objectives and critical success factors identified and weighted as priority areas by the Council.
- Discount or carry forward options for further consideration in the shortlist based on the preliminary analysis and scoring to identify viable options.
- Recommend a preferred way forward which will form the basis for the consultation exercise

## Options Longlist

The following options were considered and scored: -

<b>Table 8: Options Appraisal Longlist</b>	
<b>Option</b>	<b>Longlist Options: Description</b>
<b>Option 1 *</b>	<b>Do Nothing :</b> No change to existing school
<b>Option 2</b>	<b>Do Minimum:</b> Removal of 3 ageing demountables
<b>Option 3</b>	<b>Do Intermediate:</b> 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
<b>Option 4</b>	<b>Do Major:</b> New same size replacement primary school building on the existing Plasyfelin School site
<b>Option 5</b>	<b>Do Maximum</b> 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 initially discussed between a selection of Council Officers from across multiple-department. Each option was evaluated against the investment objectives and the extent to which it met the Critical Success Factors. This results in options either being discounted, carried forward for further consideration in the short list or identified as a preferred way forward.

### Critical Success Factors:

- Building Bulletin compliant school
- Low carbon, low energy eco-friendly environment
- Building suited to local environment and acceptable to planning Authority
- Education facility that is acceptable to stakeholders
- Delivered within budget and within required timescales
- Agreement of the proposal by Welsh Government

As well as considering the Critical Success Factors, the Officers also considered the Strategic Fit, Educational Fit, Accessibility, Financial Fit and Environmental Impact as key Investment Objectives.

### Investment Objectives:

The Investment Objectives were weighted based on the current priority areas for the Council. Priority Investment areas were given a 5 (High) to 1 (Low).

Each option was then scored against the criteria outlined above

**5** exceeds the criteria

**4** meets the criteria

**3** neither meets/does not meet the criteria

**2** partially meets the criteria, and,

**1** does not meet the criteria

The score was then multiplied by the weighting for each section and an overall total for each option.

**Table 9: Weighted Decision Matrix**

Investment Objectives			Options									
			1		2		3		4		5	
		Weight	Score	Total	Score	Total	Score	Total	Score	Total	Score	Total
1	Strategic Fit	5	0	0	1	5	4	20	3	15	5	25
2	Educational	5	0	0	0	0	3	15	3	15	5	25
3	Accessibility	4	0	0	1	4	4	16	5	20	5	20
4	Financial	4	0	0	0	0	4	16	4	16	5	20
5	Environmental	4	0	0	2	8	2	8	4	16	5	20
			<b>0</b>		<b>17</b>		<b>75</b>		<b>82</b>		<b>110</b>	

Decision Matrix Key:

Weight: 5 is a high priority investment objective – 0 is low

(Weighting reflects current Council Priorities)

Score: 5 fully meet the investment objective criteria - 0 does not meet the needs

Total: Score x Weighting

<b>Table 10: Options Appraisal - Longlist scoring and ranking</b>			
<b>Option</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Appraisal Score</b>	<b>Appraisal Ranking</b>
<b>Option 1</b>	<b>Do Nothing :</b> No change to existing school	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Option 2</b>	<b>Do Minimum:</b> Removal of 3 ageing demountables	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Option 3</b>	<b>Do Intermediate:</b> 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	<b>75</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Option 4</b>	<b>Do Major:</b> New same size replacement primary school building on the existing Plasyfelin School site	<b>82</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Option 5</b>	<b>Do Maximum</b> New enlarged replacement primary school building on the existing Plasyfelin School site to accommodate 420 pupils plus 60 nursery with community usage	<b>110</b>	<b>1</b>

### Options Shortlist

The outcome of the options analysis resulted in the highest 2 scoring options being taken forward to a shortlist, where the benefits if the options were considered.

For this proposal, Options 4 and 5 are outlined in more detail below:

<b>Table 11: Options Appraisal Shortlist</b>	
<b>Option</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Option 4</b>	<b>Do Major:</b> New same size replacement primary school building on the existing Plasyfelin School site
<b>Option 5</b>	<b>Do Maximum</b> New enlarged replacement primary school building on the existing Plasyfelin School site to accommodate 420 pupils plus 60 nursery with community usage

The tables below illustrate this based on comparative analysis:

**Table 12 : Option 4 Overview - Critical Issues, Benefits and Disbenefits**

**Option Overview:**

New same size replacement primary school building on the existing Plasyfelin School site

**Critical issues:**

- A new school offering high quality, modern educational facilities fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- Meeting the recommendations of BB 99
- Potential to achieve better educational outcomes for pupils currently at the school through enhancing their learning environment.
- Improved access to outdoor learning facilities
- Improved school building and facilities. The project will deliver a school building that will be more energy efficient, reduce the backlog maintenance and ensure compliance with Equality Act 2010

**BENEFITS**

- Addresses long term issues of pupils being taught in modular accommodation that are graded C/D for suitability and providing a long term solution
- Removal of 2 CLASP buildings
- Reduction in maintenance and on-going running costs
- Provides adequate and equitable teaching and childcare environment to meet Building Bulletin requirements.
- Improved accessibility
- Improves the outside learning space
- Improve the learning outcomes for pupils
- Provides a stimulating teaching and learning environment with 21<sup>st</sup> Century facilities including improved ICT facilities, centred on the learning, self-esteem and well-being of all pupils and improve lifelong learning opportunities for members of the community

**DISBENEFITS**

- Unable to accommodate future demand for pupil numbers
- Need to minimise any disruption to site whilst existing build is still in operation
- Compromising access routes into the existing site would also need to be monitored and minimised
- Additional demolition costs associated with removal of CLASP buildings

**Table 13 : Option 5 Overview - Critical Issues, Benefits and Disbenefits**

**Option Overview:**

New enlarged replacement primary school building on the existing Plasyfelin School site to accommodate 420 pupils plus 60 nursery with community usage

**Critical Issues**

- A new school offering high quality, modern educational facilities fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Meeting the recommendations of BB 99

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Potential to achieve better educational outcomes for pupils currently at the school through enhancing their learning environment</li> <li>➤ Improved access to outdoor learning facilities</li> <li>➤ A school building that will be more energy efficient, reduce the backlog maintenance and ensure compliance with Equality Act 2010</li> <li>➤ Facility with an ability to meet projected demand and community need</li> </ul>	
BENEFITS	DISBENEFITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand new fit for purpose building</li> <li>• Provides an adequate and equitable teaching environment to meet Building Bulletin requirements</li> <li>• Complies with all National and Local policies</li> <li>• Improved accessibility</li> <li>• Improves the outside learning space</li> <li>• Improve the learning outcomes for pupils</li> <li>• Caters for the Educational needs and preferences of the Local Community and provide and provide sufficient, permanent, fit for purpose and sustainable accommodation</li> <li>• Meets projected future demand</li> <li>• Minimal impact or disruption to daily school operations</li> <li>• New build to be located on the existing school site</li> <li>• No additional costs linked to land purchase</li> <li>• Removal of 2 CLASP buildings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to minimise any disruption to site whilst existing build is still in operation</li> <li>• Compromising access routes into the existing site would also need to be monitored and minimised</li> <li>• Additional demolition costs associated with removal of CLASP buildings</li> </ul>

### Preferred Option and Alternative options that have been discounted

On the basis of the above analysis, the preferred way forward is the Do Maximum Option, as this meets all the investment objectives and Critical Success Factors, strongly in most cases.

Taking the appraisals together delivers the conclusion that a new build scheme provides the best balance of costs, benefits and risks, with the limited rebuild options offering poor value for money and high risk. Option 5 is confirmed as the preferred option following the full economic appraisal.

Table 14: Recommended Preferred Option	
Option	Description
Option 5	<b>Do Maximum</b> New enlarged replacement primary school building on the existing Plasyfelin School site to accommodate 420 pupils plus 60 nursery with community usage

The remaining options do not fully meet the spending objectives and are therefore discounted.



## NEXT STEPS

### Consultation Period and key dates

#### **The formal consultation process begins on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

This consultation document and response form are available electronically on the Council website.

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

A Children and Young People's Everyday Summary Version of this consultation has also been produced. Both this and the full version are available via the Caerphilly County Borough Council website and printed copies are also available on request.

If you would like this information in any other format, for example large print, or help with interpretation in a different language, please contact us on 01443 864817 so that the necessary arrangements can be made to provide this service.

In keeping in line with mirroring the processes for maintained school proposals, a 42 day consultation period will be undertaken to give sufficient time for feedback to be gained.

#### **The closing date for responses to this consultation is midnight on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021**

Unfortunately, we will not be able to consider any responses received after this date.

### Reporting and Decision Making

Following consultation, Caerphilly's Cabinet will receive a Community Engagement Report which will outline the proposal and all the comments received from the public during the consultation period. At this stage, the members can decide whether to proceed with the proposal, make changes to the proposal or not to proceed with the proposal.

Should Cabinet decide to proceed with the proposal, there is no requirement to publish a Statutory Notice as this proposal is not subject to the requirements under the School Organisation Code 2018. Subject to approval, the proposal would progress to Full Business Case submission to Welsh Government and a full planning application process.

### Have your say

Your views matter and we want you to tell us what you think about the changes we have proposed in this document. We would like you to consider the information contained within the document and to hear your views as to whether or not you support the proposal. All views are welcomed in support of or opposed to the proposal. This is your chance to ask questions and make comments that will be considered when the Council decides how to proceed.

For this proposal, we will be undertaking a paper consultation exercise. Due to the current implications of COVID-19 we will refrain from undertaking any face-to-face consultation sessions to support social distancing and maintain safe working practices for all.

If you would like to comment on the proposal, you can do this by:

- Completing the online response form on the Council's website
- Complete a response pro forma attached to this document and return it to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Team at Caerphilly
- Email your comments to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Team at Caerphilly

## Your views matter

Please complete the questionnaire and return via post or email to:

### Consultation Response 'Plasyfelin'

c/o 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Team  
Directorate of Education and Corporate Services  
Caerphilly County Borough Council  
Penallta House  
Tredomen Park  
Ystrad Mynach  
CF82 7PG  
[21stCenturySchools@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:21stCenturySchools@caerphilly.gov.uk)



Please note that we are only able to receive comments in writing, either via the online form, pro forma or via email. You must include your full name and postal address as part of the information provided.

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### Frequently Asked Questions

The Council and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Team have a history of delivering innovative and transformational projects as part of the Band A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme and beyond.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Team will be collating a list of potential queries based on experience from leading on prior proposals in the form of an 'Frequently Asked Questions' document that will be posted on the website along with this consultation documentation.