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CABINET REPORT

Date Written	17 th May 2021
Report Author	Anthony Lewis
Service Area	Learning Department
Committee Division	Strategic
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	26 th May 2021

To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

3-16 Voluntary Aided (VA) Catholic School – Site Consultation 2

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update regarding the outcomes of the 3-16 Voluntary Aided (VA) Catholic School site consultation undertaken in April/May and to seek approval to continue design development of the new school build on the recommended option.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S) that

- 2.1 The building location and site configuration as indicated by Option 2 be approved.
- 2.2 Further consideration of the Traffic Impact Assessment and related design solutions prior to any final decision to construct on the site be undertaken.
- 2.3 Further consideration of Gurnos FC access and use requirements to the proposed shared community pitch and development of appropriate solutions prior to any final decision to construct on the site be undertaken.
- 2.4 Design development with all relevant stakeholders, to address concerns identified through the consultation and mitigate risks as appropriate to continue.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 11th September 2019, following two stakeholder and public consultations, the local authority approved the proposal to close St Aloysius Roman Catholic (RC) Primary, St Illtyd's RC Primary and St Mary's RC Primary Schools and Bishop Hedley RC High School (BHHS) with effect from 1st September 2022, creating a 3-16 all through VA Catholic school.
- 3.2 Following a feasibility study undertaken by Atkins of the land south of the 'Greenie', west of Galon Uchaf Road and the current BHHS upper and lower sites as potential preferred sites, two viable site options were taken out to consultation in November 2020 for a three week period.
- 3.3 58 responses were received from stakeholders as part of this consultation including residents, parents, school staff, parishioners and community representatives.
- 3.4 On 6th January 2021, following a review of the consultation responses, the local authority approved the land south of the 'Greenie', west of Galon Uchaf Road as the site for the purpose of building the new 3-16 VA school.
- 3.5 Willmott Dixon Construction were also approved on 6th January 2021 for phase 1 design development and were requested to undertake further scoping to meet the Authority's aims to respond to the initial consultation feedback and consider the best solutions for the positioning of the school building, traffic management, drop-off/parking and sports facilities.

4.0 SITE OPTIONS CONSULTATION 2 APRIL / MAY 2021

- 4.1 As a result of the additional scoping works undertaken as part of design development by Willmott Dixon and the wider design team including Atkins, Cambria Consulting Limited, Aecom and local authority officers, alternative options for the proposed siting of the school were developed for further consultation with stakeholders.
- 4.2 These options are as follows
 - 4.2.1 Option 1 is a further development of the approved option A from the initial consultation in November 2020, now with all car parking and drop-off facilities on the same side of the road as the school building. There would still be proposed shared use of one of the community playing fields, enhanced to an all-weather facility, and with car parking provided for community access out of school hours.
 - 4.2.2 Option 2 is an alternative configuration of the whole site, the school building now being located on the current Greenie playing fields with both playing fields relocated to the southern end of the site. One of the playing fields would be a shared all-weather facility, and the other field would be accessible to the community at all times.
- 4.3 Following discussion and engagement with Cabinet members, ward councillors, the Archdiocese, the new 3-16 Governing Body, and Headteachers / Chairs of Governors of the current Catholic schools, Gurnos FC and concerned residents, the

local authority went live with a public and stakeholder consultation from Friday 23rd April to Friday 7th May 2021.

- 4.4 Please see Appendix 1 for the consultation pack including a consultation survey that was made available online via the Council's webpage and social media.
- 4.5 144 hard copies of the consultation pack were delivered to residential properties in the immediate vicinity of the proposed school sites and all school governors.
- 4.6 40 hard copies and display plans from the consultation pack were also made available across the four local catholic parish churches.
- 4.7 In addition to completing the survey targeted stakeholder and public consultation sessions were held on Microsoft Teams as follows.

Thursday 29 th April 2021	4–6 pm	3-16 Governing Body / Headteachers
Friday 30 th April 2021	4-6 pm	Gurnos FC / Merthyr Football League
Tuesday 4 th May 2021	5-7pm	Residents living in immediate vicinity of proposed sites
Wednesday 5 th May 2021	5-7 pm	Public

5.0 CONSULTATION SESSION OUTCOMES

5.1 Detailed minutes of each of the consultation sessions have been provided in Appendix 2.

5.2 The following summarises the main points raised by the different stakeholder groups

5.3 3-16 Governors / Headteachers

- Positive that all facilities are on the same side of the road
- Size of school footprint and costs/timescales of each option
- Ground Conditions and drainage
- Parking / Drop off – Sufficiency of places provided
- Travel plan
- Separate changing rooms for community use
- Impact of floodlights on residents
- Retention of some current Bishop Hedley sporting facilities

5.4 Gurnos FC / Merthyr Football League

- Size of 3G pitch, Option 2 is smaller
- Minimum standards to allow league progression
- Parking for 3G pitch, distance significant for Option 2
- Assurance re community use of pitch
- Access to separate changing facilities
- Overreliance on school to access facilities
- Cost to hire facility
- Booking arrangements for pitch

- Access for other users

5.5 Residents

- Ground Conditions / Drainage / Landfill
- Extent of community use of playing fields and school site
- Anti-social behaviour
- Parking / Drop Off
- Site security
- Privacy
- Location of community playgrounds
- Traffic calming measures

5.6 Public

- Parking / Drop Off
- Noise pollution / Light pollution
- Traffic Impact Assessment
- Traffic Calming Measures
- Access / Egress
- Travel Plans
- Anti-social behaviour
- Ground Conditions / Drainage
- Floodlights
- Impact on wildlife
- Privacy

5.7 The main concerns, questions and suggestions raised across the four meetings have been grouped together and responded to below

5.8 Ground Conditions / Drainage / Landfill

Local Authority Response

Ground conditions, the presence of landfill and the need for sustainable drainage solutions have all been considered as part of the scoping work undertaken to date. Plateaus 2 and 3 were ruled out as being potential land that the school could be built upon following these investigations. Site and ground investigations are ongoing but building on both plateau 1 (Option 1) and plateau 4 (Option 2) are both considered viable.

A sustainable urban drainage scheme will be designed in accordance with current standards which will look at maximising the natural drainage, relying less on infrastructure to manage surface water. This will need approval from the Sustainable Drainage Approval Body (SAB) before construction can start. Further intrusive ground investigations are ongoing and will inform the specific design solutions required to address the site constraints.

5.9 Parking / Drop Off and Travel Plan

Local Authority Response

Sufficient parking and drop-off spaces including for school buses have been planned for within the indicative plans using CSS (County Surveyors' Society) Wales

Guidance to determine an appropriate figure. This factors in current staff numbers across the four schools, and assessed school transport needs based on the current pupil populations traveling to the proposed school site including out of county pupils. Travel surveys of pupils and staff are also being undertaken to inform the Traffic Impact Assessment.

A travel management plan will also be designed with the school and other stakeholders as part of the project to promote sustainable travel solutions to the school including active travel, safe routes to school etc. The design will consider specific solutions for the drop-off of younger pupils who need accompanying to the school building / classroom.

5.10 Traffic Impact Assessment / Traffic Calming Measures / Access & Egress

Local Authority Response

The Traffic Impact Assessment is ongoing and will be completed once the preferred option for development has been selected. This will consider appropriate sustainable solutions for managing the traffic and mitigating risks. The appointed consultants will discuss the detail of this with local authority officers in Highways and Engineering to agree findings and potential way forward.

Appropriate traffic calming measures for the road that best support safe access / egress to the site, and safe routes to school, including traffic lights and roundabouts where appropriate can then be designed.

5.11 Size of school footprint and project budget/timescales

Local Authority Response

The achievable Gross Internal Floor Area (GIFA) on both options is consistent with the requirements of Building Bulletin 98/99 regulations that school buildings are required to be designed in line with. The project budget is achievable but not without risk and both options have challenges with respect to site constraints and tight timescales that need further exploration once more detailed design proposals can be undertaken following the decision on the site option.

5.12 Site security, Anti-social behaviour and location of community playground

Local Authority Response

The whole school site will be secure and fenced off with restricted gated access. Access to the school site after hours will require booking arrangements to be agreed with the school. The times of access have not yet been agreed for this but responsible use will be required as part of any community use agreements with the school. The one community pitch that will be retained for exclusive community use will remain accessible to the community as per current arrangements. There will be gated access to the field with a fence line boundary as is currently the case.

The location of the community playground will be reconsidered to ensure this remains an open and visible facility that is directly accessible to the communities it currently serves. Options will be considered to relocate the playground adjacent to the community MUGA at the top of the site.

5.13 Extent of community use of playing fields and school site

Local Authority Response

The community MUGA and one playing field will be retained for exclusive community use. The school site will include one shared 3G football pitch which will require user agreements to be in place for Gurnos FC as a current established user of the pitch facilities. Other community use of the school will be encouraged in line with the local authority's commitment to developing community focused schools and will build on the already good amount of community use of the current catholic schools within the County Borough. This use will be controlled and managed by the school in liaison with specific community group and user agreements will be required to ensure responsibilities and liabilities are managed. The extent of this use is not known at present but at a minimum this will seek to incorporate the current use of the Greenie pitches that is made by Gurnos FC.

5.14 Noise and Light pollution, privacy, impact on residents

Local Authority Response

Only the 3G pitch will have floodlight provision. This will be managed as part of the design work as floodlights have to meet certain specifications if there are houses close by. An acoustic engineer has been engaged to work as part of the project design team and discussions have commenced with South Wales Police to manage the risks with respect to site security and disturbance.

The design will consider measures to ensure the privacy of residents is maintained and this will depend on the site option chosen and will include provision of additional trees, shrubs, lowering of ground levels and other measures as appropriate.

5.15 Impact on wildlife

Local Authority Response

A preliminary Ecological Appraisal was undertaken as part of the feasibility study and its conclusions and recommendations have been considered as part of the site options proposed and will continue to be factored into ongoing design development.

An ecologist will be engaged to support the design development process.

5.16 Gurnos FC access to 3G pitch, changing rooms / parking and minimum stds

Local Authority Response

The local authority will work with the 3-16 school's governing body to ensure a user agreement is in place that secures the access required by the club at a fair rate in line with a charging policy and maintenance strategy that will enable the ongoing maintenance and replacement of the surface over its useful life.

As part of the project design access to the shared pitch and changing facilities will be scoped that minimises the dependency on the school caretaker / facilities manager to provide access. This will include provision of separate community changing rooms on the community pitch with direct lockable access to the car park and 3G.

Minimum standards for the pitch dimensions to enable access to the South Wales football pyramid of 100 Yards x 60 Yards are being reviewed to ensure this is achievable within Option 2.

Options to develop a community parking facility opposite plateau 1, near the current upper Bishop Hedley site can be reviewed as part of the project but will require separate funding.

Temporary solutions to access a suitable football pitch are required for when the current pitch is out of commission due to the new build. The impact of this will be approximately 4 months under Option 1 and 18 months under Option 2. Alternative solutions to provide a temporary pitch are currently being considered by local authority officers in discussion with Gurnos FC and other stakeholders.

5.17 Retention of BHHS sports facilities

Local Authority Response

The option to provide a facility equivalent to Bishop Hedley’s current 3G indoor pitch and gym/fitness suite on the new school site can be explored as part of the provision of sports facilities dependent upon the available budget and available space / site constraints. These options currently sit outside of the provisional schedule of accommodation for the new 3-16 school but could be considered subject to additional funds, available space and site constraints.

6.0 CONSULTATION SURVEY OUTCOMES

- 6.1 Over 200 hard copies of the consultation pack including the consultation survey were sent out to residents, parish churches and governors.
- 6.2 All attendees of the consultation sessions, as well as parents, staff, parishioners and other interested stakeholders were encouraged to complete the consultation survey that was also available online between Friday 23rd April and Friday 7th May.
- 6.3 Detailed consultation outcomes from the survey responses have been included in Appendix 3.
- 6.4 There were 81 responses to the consultation that can be summarised into the following categories

Table 1: Number and % Respondents by Category

Respondent Category	Number	Percentage
Resident	25	31%
Local Community Rep	2	3%
School Community	54	66%
All	81	100%

The preferred option selected overall was Option 2 and this is preferred to Option 1 by residents and the school community but not by local community reps.

Table 2: Preferred Options selected

Respondent Category	Option 1	Option 2	Neither*	Total
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Resident	36%	40%	24%	100%
Local Community Rep	100%	0%	0%	100%
School Community	33%	65%	2%	100%
All	35%	56%	9%	100%

*the survey only gave options 1 or 2, however some responses indicated that they did not support either option, 6 residents and 1 member of the school community.

6.5 Each option was also scored by respondents on a scale of 1 – 5, low to high.

Scores of 1, 3 and 5 were indicated as 'unfavourable', 'satisfactory' and 'favourable' respectively.

Option 1

Rating of each response out of 5

	1	2	3	4	5	None
Resident	44%	12%	16%	8%	12%	8%
Local community rep	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%	0%
School community	17%	20%	24%	24%	13%	2%
All	24%	17%	22%	18%	12%	7%*

*7% of respondents did not rate either option 1 or 2.

52% of total respondents consider Option 1 to be at least satisfactory, with 30% considering this option to be either more than satisfactory or favourable. Only 36% of residents consider this option to be satisfactory or better.

6.6 Option 2

Rating of each response out of 5

	1	2	3	4	5	None
Resident	40%	12%	4%	12%	24%	8%
Local Community Rep	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
School community	6%	13%	24%	28%	28%	2%
All	16%	13%	17%	22%	25%	7%

*7% of respondents did not rate either option 1 or 2.

64% of total respondents consider Option 1 to be at least satisfactory, with 47% considering this option to be either more than satisfactory or favourable.

In both cases, the majority of residents responding to the survey think the options provided are less than satisfactory, with 40% of residents considering this option to be satisfactory or better, only slightly higher than Option 1. However, 36% of residents consider this option to be more than satisfactory, compared to 20% of residents in Option 1.

6.7 There were many comments that were made in the consultation surveys that applied to both options as they relate to the general proposal to build the school on the overall site that has been selected and consulted on.

6.8 The vast majority of these comments were also raised as part of the online consultation sessions held and have been addressed above, however, the following additional comments were made as part of the online surveys.

- Loss of green open space from community
- Sustainable building design and low carbon footprint
- Future plans for the current Bishop Hedley High School sites
- Concern site has been chosen without proper consultation with residents

6.9 **Loss of Green Open space from community**

LA response

Both options involve a loss of green open space. The development of the school building on green space can be compensated through the enhanced usage of the one community pitch, to be upgraded to a 3G pitch and shared with the school.

6.10 **Sustainable building design and low carbon footprint**

LA response

The local authority are in discussions with Welsh Government regarding taking this project forward as a pilot zero carbon new build scheme. There will be additional costs to the capital project to achieve this which would be funded at the project intervention rate with 85% grant. The design options to achieve this and potential costs and funding require further exploration as part of the project design development.

6.11 **Future plans for current Bishop Hedley High School site**

LA response

The existing Bishop Hedley site is not part of the current Local Development Plan for housing and there are no specific plans at the moment with regards to its future use.

6.12 **Concerns regarding site decisions**

LA response

Following a feasibility study between July and September 2020 and a three-week period of consultation in November 2020 which targeted residents and other stakeholders, a decision was taken in January 2021 to carry out design development works with the aim to build the 3-16 school on the land south of the Greenie.

A subsequent decision to firm up this selection or to amend the exact location of the school building and playing fields will be requested as part of this report following another period of consultation with residents and other stakeholders between April and May 2021.

No planning decision has been made regarding this site and further detailed work and statutory planning consultation processes are required prior to any formal approvals being given to construct on the site.

6.13 Detailed views provided by consultees regarding Options 1 and 2, in support of their overall views regarding the scoring of the options and their overall preference have been provided within the consultation analysis included in Appendix 3.

6.14 A brief summary of the main concerns, questions and suggestions raised, specifically in relation to each option and not already covered above are

6.15 **Option 1**

- Large distance of parking / drop-off to the main school building – impact on staff and pupils
- Less than ideal location of site access/egress in close proximity to Gwaunfarren Road junction by the dangerous hill
- Potentially dangerous pedestrian access into site near the Gwaunfarren Road junction
- Poor surveillance views across site from school building on lower plateau
- Proximity of school building and access road too close to residential properties.
- Ongoing noise, traffic, security and light pollution due to school building and access road location

6.16 **Option 2**

- Some concern that the parking solution could cause more congestion
- Access/egress to site further up road near a difficult bend/blind spot
- School building too close to main road and exposed to disturbance
- Greater impact regards loss of open space
- Additional security measures required as relocated community field will back onto properties
- Additional risks of noise pollution / anti-social behaviour from location of community pitch behind houses
- Community grass pitch will be further away from the community that uses it currently, and only accessible down a busy main road

LA Response

There are various pros and cons with each option as detailed in the consultation packs including surveillance across the site and the relocation of grass community pitches etc.

Access/egress and the traffic impact assessment and ongoing site investigations will be key to designing a solution that best mitigates these risks on both options. A one-way flow system is expected to support access/egress and carefully designed with well managed use will ease congestion. Overall, the access/egress solution for Option 2 is expected to provide better visibility at the access/egress junctions. Traffic calming measures will be included to ensure safe routes to school are managed appropriately.

The school building will be designed with an acoustic engineer to be sound proofed and set back from the road to accommodate pathways to the building and outside adjacencies and areas. The impact to residents will be mitigated as far as possible during the design and this will look different depending upon the site option chosen.

Appropriate fencing and gated access will be required to help mitigate the risks to properties neighbouring the pitch in terms of anti-social behaviour and disturbance.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Both options provide viable solutions for a 3-16 new school build but are not without their challenges that will require appropriate design solutions and on-going mitigation of risk through management of the site and facilities.
- 7.2 Option 2 is the preferred option overall and for each group of respondents, except for the local community representatives including Gurnos FC who prefer Option 1, and have specific concerns and requirements if Option 2 is implemented.
- 7.3 Residents are split on the options depending on their view regarding which configuration is likely to impact on them the most. Overall, residents slightly prefer Option 2 to Option 1 (40% to 36%) but for both options, the majority of residents view the proposals as less than satisfactory and 24% indicated that neither option is preferable. However, 36% of residents who responded do consider Option 2 as more than satisfactory and this options scores more favourably than Option 1.
- 7.4 The school community prefer Option 2 to Option 1 by a ratio of 2 / 1.

8.0 NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 Subject to the approval of the option indicated in the Recommendations above, phase 1 design development work will continue with Wilmott Dixon, the school and other stakeholders to design the school building, site and appropriate adjacencies.
- 8.2 The Traffic Impact Assessment will be completed and discussions between the local authority and the contractors on the appropriate highway solutions to mitigate and manage the risks identified.
- 8.3 Ongoing discussion with Gurnos FC and other stakeholders to support temporary solutions for access to football pitches during the construction phase and to address the requirement for appropriate user agreements that secures the use of facilities to an appropriate standard.
- 8.4 A cost plan be prepared for the relocation of the community pitch, provision of separate changing rooms and required boundary fencing etc. so that appropriate funding can be sourced to finance these works that sit outside of the 21st Century Schools project.
- 8.5 Additional design work to develop a zero-carbon scheme will be undertaken which will require approvals from Welsh Government and the local authority to secure the required intervention rate of 85% grant / 15% match.
- 8.6 Business cases will be developed and submitted to WG using the 5 stage model to secure requisite approvals including the Full Business Case (FBC) due to be submitted in November 2021.
- 8.7 Planning permission for the scheme that is designed will be sought before the end of the calendar year and if approved the project will progress to construction phase in January 2022.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The required 15% local authority match funding for the 3-16 VA school project is secured within the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and WG approvals have been provided within the Band B programme envelope for the project.
- 9.2 Project budget reviews are required as part of the business case development and additional funds will be requested as part of the aspiration to develop a zero-carbon school. A subsequent report will be required to seek approvals once this detail is known.
- 9.3 A subsequent report will be brought back to consider additional funds required to enable the relocation of community facilities as required by Option 2.

10.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Neutral/Not Applicable
1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives	2 of 4	0 of 4	2 of 4
2. Sustainable Development Principles - How have you considered the five ways of working? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term • Prevention • Integration • Collaboration • Involvement 	5 of 5	0 of 5	0 of 5
3. Protected Characteristics (including Welsh Language)	3 of 10	0 of 10	7 of 10
4. Socio-economic Disadvantage	6 of 6	0 of 6	6 of 6
5. Consultation and Engagement	Undertaken	Due to be Undertaken	Not Required
	1 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1
6. Data and Evidence to inform the proposal	Yes		No
	1 of 1		0 of 1
7. Biodiversity and the resilience of Ecosystems	Maintained	Enhanced	Reduced
	0 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1
			Neutral/Not Applicable
			1 of 1

Summary	
The main positive impacts are:	The main positive impacts are that the proposal to choose a 3-16 school site with a shared and enhanced community facility makes a positive contribution to the 'Best Start to Life' and 'Living Well' wellbeing objectives.
The main negative impacts are:	The temporary lack of access to the community facilities that need to be relocated during the construction phase is the main negative impact. The loss of green open space will be compensated with the provision of enhanced facilities that remain accessible to the community.

SUE WALKER
CHIEF OFFICER LEARNING

COUNCILLOR LISA MYTTON
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
CABINET MEMBER FOR LEARNING

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
3-16 VA School Site Consultation report	6 th January 2021	Intranet
School Reorganisation 3-16 VA School Cabinet Report	11 th September 2019	Intranet
21 st Century Schools Programme Cabinet Report	17 th April 2019	Intranet
21 st Century Schools Band B Strategic Outline Programme (SOP)	August 2017	Learning Department
21 st Century Schools Band B SOP Revision Annex 1	February 2019	Learning Department
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		N

Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.