



## ***FULL COUNCIL REPORT***

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Report Author	Sophie Nicholls/Anthony Lewis
Service Area	Learning Department
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	16 <sup>th</sup> March 2022

*To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen*

### **3-16 Voluntary Aided Catholic School – Site Consultation 2022**

#### **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 for a six-week period between January 6<sup>th</sup> and February 17<sup>th</sup> 2022.

#### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION that**

- 2.1 The location of the new 3-16 VA School on the current BHHS site, with school sports pitch provided on Plateau 2 of the Buttercup Fields, be approved.

#### **3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 On 11<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 'Greenie', west of Galon Uchaf Road and the current BHHS upper and lower sites as potential preferred sites, two site options were taken out to consultation in November 2020.
- 3.3 On 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021, following a review of the consultation responses, the land south of the 'Greenie', west of Galon Uchaf Road was approved as the preferred site for the new 3-16 VA school and Willmott Dixon were engaged for phase 1 design development works to further scope the best solutions for the siting of the school building, traffic management, drop-off/parking and sports facilities.

3.4 As a result of the additional scoping works undertaken, alternative options for the siting of the school were developed for further consultation with stakeholders as follows:-

- Option 1 – Buttercup Fields

This was a further development of the preferred Option A from the consultation in November 2020, but now with all car parking and drop-off facilities on the same side of the road as the school building. There would 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.

- Option 2 – Greenie

This was 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.

3.5 Following discussion and engagement with a wide variety of stakeholders including 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 23<sup>rd</sup> April to Friday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

In addition to completing the survey, targeted stakeholder and public consultation sessions were held on Microsoft Teams as follows:-

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

3.6 On 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021, following a consideration of the consultation outcomes, Cabinet approved that design development for proposals to build the new 3-16 VA School on the Greenie be progressed to the next stages.

3.7 However, on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2021 in recognition of the public response expressed on social media that a large number of residents were not aware of the public consultation, Cabinet approved that an extended consultation be undertaken from Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> July to Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2021, to allow further opportunity for all stakeholders including all households in the Penydarren, Galon Uchaf and Gurnos Wards to participate in the consultation.

3.8 On the 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021, Council were presented with the extended consultation results, where 68.5% of respondents selected that they would not like the 3-16 school to be built on either of the two options (Option 1, Buttercup Fields/ Option 2, Greenie). Many alternative sites were suggested as part of the consultation feedback. The report to Council explained that it was not feasible to build the 3-16 school on any of the suggested alternative sites, except for the current Bishop Hedley High School site (BHHS).

- 3.9 To ensure Council could make an informed decision on the result of the consultation, a feasibility study was conducted on the current BHHS site to determine the costs, programme, risks and buildability of constructing a 3-16 school on the site. It was determined that building a 3-16 school on the existing BHHS was feasible with the creation of a school rugby field on the Buttercup Fields to create sufficient sporting facilities to deliver the curriculum.
- 3.10 The report to Council compared the site options (Option 1, Buttercup Fields/ Option 2, Greenie) from the consultation with the BHHS feasibility to determine which options should be taken forward. Following further detailed ground and site investigations, updated risk appraisals and scoring of options against project critical success factors, Option 1 – Buttercup Fields was indicated as sub-optimal with significant risks to its viability. This option, which was also the least popular of the two options consulted upon, was therefore discounted from further consideration for the 3-16 school.
- 3.11 In view of the strength of feeling from the local community about the risks arising from the loss of the green open space known as ‘the Greenie’ further mitigation was proposed in order to provide an option to develop the Greenie to meet the community’s needs and seek public support if possible.
- 3.12 A revised scheme for Option 2 – Greenie was therefore proposed as follows:
- Community playground relocated but retained at the Galon Uchaf end of the Greenie, near the community MUGA, so current play facilities are nearest those who use them
  - Appropriate and accessible community changing facilities provided for community when using either the 3G surface or new grass pitch
  - Development of new community open space within the current BHHS Phase 2 site to mitigate the loss of green open space
  - Further enhancement to proposed S278 highways improvements to ensure safe pedestrian access is provided from Galon Uchaf to the proposed relocated community pitches and open space on the Buttercup Fields and current BHHS phase 2.
- 3.13 It was determined that the revised Option 2 – Greenie and the new BHHS site option were viable options for building the 3-16 school and that an additional public consultation should be conducted to address the possible disposal of the Greenie playing fields and understand the preferences of residents, school staff, parents, pupils and parishioners.

#### **4.0 SITE CONSULTATION 6<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY – 17<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2022**

- 4.1 The site consultation provided opportunity for members of the public to offer opinions on the two remaining viable site options:

Option A – Greenie: 3-16 school on the current Greenie site with a community playing field located on plateau 1 of the Buttercup Fields, with additional community open space provided on the current BHHS phase 2 site (the form of which to be decided following consultation feedback). This would involve the disposal of the Greenie playing fields.

Option B – BHHS: 3-16 school on the current BHHS site, with the main building on phase 2 of the site, with sports facilities split between phase 1 of the site and the addition of a grass rugby pitch on plateau 2 of the Buttercup Fields site to create sufficient external sporting facilities.

- 4.2 As the outcome of the consultation could result in the disposal of the Greenie playing fields, the consultation was conducted in line with the Playing Fields (Community Involvement in Disposal Decisions) (Wales) Measure 2010, and Regulations 2015.
- 4.3 In line with the Playing Fields (Community Involvement in Disposal Decisions) (Wales) Measure 2010, and Regulations 2015 public consultation notices (See Appendix 1) were placed on site entrances and fencing around the Greenie/Buttercup Fields, and this notice was published for two consecutive weeks in the Merthyr Express on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> January.
- 4.4 Please see Appendix 2 for the consultation pack including a consultation survey that was made available online via the Council's webpage and social media.
- 4.5 A hard copy letter was sent to all 4,730 residential properties in the local areas directly affected by the proposal, including Penydarren, Galon Uchaf and the Gurnos Estate. The letters contained the Consultation Notice as required by the Measure and advised how to access the consultation survey both online and via a hard copy.
- 4.6 In order to ensure that the consultation packs and displays of the information provided online were accessible to everyone, hard copies (including the consultation survey) were distributed to local churches, schools, shops and community buildings. Posters were displayed at the locations and posts were published on social media to ensure residents were informed of the location of the displays and consultation packs.
- 4.7 Hard copy consultation packs and display packs were distributed to the four local Catholic parish churches.
- 4.8 Hard copy display packs were distributed to the affected schools – Bishop Hedley High School, St Aloysius RC Primary School, St Illtyd's RC Primary School and St Mary's RC Primary School. Letters were also sent to all parents to inform them of the consultation.
- 4.9 Hard copies of consultation packs and display boards were also distributed to local shops and community buildings in the Gurnos, Galon Uchaf and Penydarren areas as shown below:
  - Neighbourhood Learning Centre – Gurnos
  - Premier – Gurnos Shops
  - One Stop – Gurnos Shops
  - Calon Las – Gurnos
  - The Trading Post – Galon Uchaf
  - Londis – Penydarren
- 4.10 Hard copies of the consultation packs could also be requested via Customer Services, as well as through emailing the 3-16 mailbox, or by leaving an answerphone message that was directed to the 3-16 mailbox. Seven hard copies were requested and sent out through these direct request methods.

- 4.11 In line with the Playing Fields (Community Involvement in Disposal Decisions) (Wales) Measure, 2010 and Regulations, 2015, five statutory consultees were invited to submit feedback to the consultation. A PDF copy of the consultation notice in English and Welsh was sent by email to representatives of: Merthyr Tydfil Football League; Gurnos FC; Sport Wales; Fields in Trust and Play Wales.
- 4.12 In order to capture the pupil voice an infographic (Appendix 3) was produced highlighting the differences between both options. Meetings were held with the School Councils of each school and pupils were given an opportunity to select their preferred option. In addition, schools were provided with boxes and counters for pupils in the school as a whole to select their preferred options. Pupil preferences were counted separately from survey responses to ensure that the data is reported accurately.
- 4.13 738 survey responses were received during the six-week consultation period from 6<sup>th</sup> January to 17<sup>th</sup> February.
- 4.14 Define, an independent research company, were engaged to analyse and report on the consultation, in order to provide detailed, objective and timely analysis of the consultation responses.
- 4.15 Appendix 4 provides Define’s detailed analysis of the consultation responses received from the consultation period, including the feedback received from the School Council meetings and pupil preferences.
- 4.16 The following section provides a summary of this analysis.

## 5.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

- 5.1 There were 738 responses to the consultation survey. The number of respondents by category is shown below:

Table 1. Total survey responses by respondent category

<b>Respondent Category</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Resident	501	67.9%
Parent of pupil	102	13.8%
Local community stakeholder	35	4.7%
Teacher / member of school staff	33	4.5%
Member of local parish	27	3.7%
School pupil	20	2.7%
Other inc. members of public, former pupil / residents, family of pupil etc.	19	2.6%
Sport Wales	1	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>738</b>	<b>100%</b>

- 5.2 To understand better the level of engagement by different parts of the community the response rates for different categories of respondent have been considered further in Appendix 5. In conclusion the response rates achieved appear to be a good result with the exception of a low engagement by school pupils with the survey.

- 5.3 To address this a pupil voice exercise was undertaken directly with the school pupils. This helped to ensure the participation of pupils was maximised as part of the consultation process. Further details on this have been provided in section 5.30 to 5.36 below.
- 5.4 It should also be noted that although each respondent has been placed in only one category, reflecting their responses to Question 1, many may belong to several, as many in the school community may also be residents or local community stakeholders, and vice versa. However, for the ease of analysis their responses have been shown against the appropriate interest group they declared on the survey form completed.
- 5.5 Details of respondents who indicated in response to Question 2 that they would like to be informed of the outcome of the consultation have been collected. The minutes of this meeting, with copies of the relevant reports, will be sent to those respondents.
- 5.6 Question 3 asked respondents their views on site Option A (Greenie). Answers to this question were coded to highlight themes in responses that indicated positive and negative feedback to site Option A.
- 5.7 112 responses to Question 3 gave positive feedback to site Option A, noting themes such as “better for students/less disruption for education”, “suitability of site layout for school”, “new community facility/green space”, “Greenie not well utilised”, “better traffic flow” and “lower cost of development”. 44 of these responses were nonspecific positive responses such as “great idea”.
- 5.8 416 responses to Question 3 gave negative feedback to site Option A (Greenie) noting themes such as “loss of Greenie”, “traffic concern”, “other impacts/disruption to residents”, “goes against community preference” as well as nonspecific statements of disapproval such as “not happy with this”. The most raised objection to Option A (Greenie) by far was that it would result in a loss of green space for the community, specifically the Greenie, which was raised by 225 respondents.
- 5.9 As can be seen in Table 2 below, when asked in Question 4 what open air community facility should be provided on the BHHS Phase 2 site, if Option A (Greenie) were taken forward, the most popular suggestions were “open green space”, “playground” and “playing fields” and “sports facilities/gym”. All other suggestions were mentioned by five or fewer respondents. In total 210 of the respondents (28.5%) provided a suggestion for an alternative facility. A full list of suggestions can be found in Define’s report on the findings of the consultation.

Table 2: Alternative community open space suggestions

Suggestion	Number
Green space	82
Playground	73
Playing fields	16
Sports facilities / gym	7

- 5.10 Question 5 asked respondents their views on site Option B (BHHS). Answers to this question were coded to highlight themes in responses that indicated positive and negative feedback to site Option B.

- 5.11 356 responses to Question 5 gave positive feedback to site Option B, noting themes such as “reduces loss of green space”, “acceptable compromise”, “community preference/benefit” and “better access for students”. The most common category of positive response to Option B (BHHS) was a general expression of approval provided by 181 respondents such as “B is the best option” and “much better”.
- 5.12 116 responses to Question 5 gave negative feedback to site Option B (BHHS) noting themes such as “greater disruption to education/safety risk”, “site configuration less suitable”, “impact on residents”, “use of Buttercup Fields as rugby pitch”, “traffic concern” and “cost”. Thirteen of these responses were nonspecific negative statements such as “not wanted”.
- 5.13 As can be seen in Table 3 below the overall preference across respondents was for site Option B (BHHS), with 80.5% of responses in favour. The local community responses indicate a clear preference for Option B with 92.1%, whereas school community responses slightly favour Option A (Greenie) with 51.9%.

Table 3: Preferred Options selected – Respondent Category

<b>Respondent Category</b>	<b>Option A Greenie</b>	<b>Option B BHHS</b>	<b>Total</b>
Local Community (inc. residents and local community stakeholders)	7.9%	92.1%	100%
School Community (inc. pupils, parents, school staff, parishioners and governors)	51.9%	48.1%	100%
<b>All Respondents</b>	<b>19.5%</b>	<b>80.5%</b>	<b>100%</b>

- 5.14 This can be analysed further by considering the preferences of each individual group as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Preferred Options selected – Individual Respondent Group

<b>Individual Respondent Group</b>	<b>Option A Greenie</b>	<b>Option B BHHS</b>
Resident	8.2%	91.8%
Parents	52.0%	48.0%
Teachers / School Staff	72.7%	27.3%
Parishioners	22.2%	77.8%
Local Community Stakeholders	11.4%	88.6%
Pupils	60.0%	40.0%
Others	21.1%	78.9%
<b>All Respondents</b>	<b>19.5%</b>	<b>80.5%</b>

- 5.15 Option B (BHHS) was the most popular option for most individual groups of respondents, except for Teachers / School Staff (72.7%) and Pupils (60.0%) who both selected Option A (Greenie) as their preferred option.
- 5.16 Most respondent groups who selected Option B (BHHS) as their preferred option, were significantly in favour of Option B, except for the Parents group who were the most split with 48% choosing Option A (Greenie) as their preferred option, and 52% choosing option B (BHHS) as their preferred option.

- 5.17 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.

Table 5: Options Ranking – Satisfaction scale

	Unfavourable		Satisfactory		Favourable
	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Option A Greenie</b>	75.3%	1.9%	3.6%	2.7%	16.5%
<b>Option B BHHS</b>	15.7%	3.0%	10.7%	5.1%	65.5%

22.8% of respondents consider Option A – Greenie to be at least satisfactory (a score of three or more) with 16.5% giving a maximum score of 5. 81.3% consider the BHHS site to be at least satisfactory with 65.5% giving a maximum score of 5.

- 5.18 This can be analysed further by considering the satisfaction ranking provided by the local community and school community overall. For ease of comparison, the following tables group scores into ‘less than satisfactory’ (a score of 1 or 2) and ‘at least satisfactory’ (a score of 3 or more)

- 5.19 Table 6: Local Community Satisfaction ranking of options

	Less than Satisfactory	At least Satisfactory
<b>Option A – Greenie</b>	89.7%	10.3%
<b>Option B – BHHS</b>	11.4%	88.6%

The local community overwhelmingly consider Option A (Greenie) to be less than satisfactory, with a comparable percentage considering Option B (BHHS) at least satisfactory with 89.7% and 88.6% reflecting this view respectively.

- 5.20 Table 7: School Community Satisfaction ranking of options

	Less than Satisfactory	At least Satisfactory
<b>Option A - Greenie</b>	42.9%	57.1%
<b>Option B – BHHS</b>	39.2%	60.8%

The majority of school community consider both Option A (Greenie) and Option B (BHHS) to be at least satisfactory, with Option B narrowly scoring 3.7% higher than Option A.

- 5.21 Question 8 asked respondents to suggest any changes desired to their preferred option. The table below shows specific suggestions made for both site options:

Table 8: Suggested changes to preferred option

<b>Site Option A – Greenie</b>	
Comment	Number of responses
Parking needs to be carefully managed	6
A bridge or walkway could be constructed for people to cross Galon Uchaf road to access the new community green space	2
<b>Site Option B – BHHS</b>	
Comment	Number of responses
Protect/improve the current green space (Greenie)	29
Location of the rugby pitch to be on the BHHS site	20
Public access to school sports facilities	12
Parking needs to be carefully managed	10
Canopy/walkway from car park to school	2

- 5.22 Respondents had a final opportunity to offer any additional comments in Question 9. Responses to this question primarily reiterated views expressed earlier in the consultation survey. However, other comments made not previously noted include suggestions that the school be built on an alternative site (15 responses) and a preference for neither option (5 responses).
- 5.23 In total 20 responses (2.7%) suggested that the school be built somewhere else. The following Table 11 below details the alternative suggestions made and provides a comment where appropriate regarding the potential to develop as a 3-16 school.

Table 9: Alternative site suggestions

<b>Alternative site suggestions</b>		
	<b>No*</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Goat Mill Road	<b>10</b>	Land is allocated for employment use in the Local Development Plan (LDP). Potential occupier has carried out pre-application consultation, with the planning application anticipated shortly
'Elsewhere'	<b>5</b>	No alternative site specified
Preference for neither option	<b>5</b>	No alternative site specified
Old British Steel site (Ivor Works Dowlais)	<b>2</b>	Site is allocated for a residential led mixed use development in the LDP. The proposed 3-16 school would require the majority of the site, which would result in the development of the site not being in accordance with the LDP.
Heartlands	<b>1</b>	3-16 school would require the majority of the site, (including land on both plateaus) and the land is allocated for 'residential led mixed-use development' in the LDP.
Trago Mills	<b>1</b>	The land is currently under private ownership. The vacant areas that form part of the Trago Mills site consist of 5 separate plateaus ranging between 0.34ha and 1.2 ha. No individual plateau (or combination of plateaus) is large enough to accommodate the 3-16 school.

\*Some responses suggested more than one site

- 5.24 As per the above table, none of the above suggestions are viable options to develop a 3-16 school. Each of these sites, with the exception of Trago Mills, were previously considered in the Council report of 7<sup>th</sup> December.
- 5.25 It should be noted that no consultation responses were received after the closing date of 11:59pm on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February 2022.

#### Statutory Consultees

- 5.26 In line with the Playing Fields (Community Involvement in Disposal Decisions) (Wales) Measure 2010, and Regulation 2015, statutory consultees were invited to respond to the consultation survey including representatives from Merthyr Tydfill Football League; Gurnos FC; Sport Wales; Fields in Trust and Play Wales.
- 5.27 Of the statutory consultees, one response was submitted from a Sport Wales representative. The answers given by Sport Wales were counted as part of the "other" respondents category, and are included in the information presented above.

As a statutory consultee it is important to note specific feedback received for consideration.

- 5.28 The representative from Sport Wales noted a preference for site Option B (BHHS) over site Option A (Greenie), stating that “wherever possible the loss of playing fields should be avoided”.
- 5.29 When ranking the site options, Sport Wales ranked site Option A (Greenie) as a 1 = unfavourable, and site Option B (BHHS) as a 3 = satisfactory.

### Pupil Voice

- 5.30 Meetings were held with the School Council of each school to understand the opinions of pupils and answer any questions. Across all age groups pupils asked similar questions which related to the facilities provided on each site, how the 3-16 school would be run day to day, the separation of age groups, pick up/drop off procedures, the security of the school site and how the construction phase would be managed for each of the options.
- 5.31 Minutes of the School Council meetings can be found at Appendix 6.
- 5.32 In each School Council meeting pupils were asked to select their preferred site option. Table 10 below shows the preferences of each School Council.

Table 10: School Council preferences held in meetings with each School Council.

School Council	Preferred Option A – Greenie	Preferred Option B – BHHS
St Aloysius RC Primary School	11	17
St Illtyd’s RC Primary School	17	2
St Mary’s RC Primary School	11	0
Bishop Hedley High School	11	15
All	50	34

- 5.33 School Councils in St Illtyd’s and St Mary’s primary schools clearly favoured site Option A, however preferences in St Aloysius and BHHS were more split, with the majority favouring site Option B. Total preferences from School Council members overall favoured site Option A by 50 to 34.
- 5.34 Each school was also given ballot boxes and counters so that the remaining pupils in the school could select their favourite option. A total of 1,137 pupils participated in this, representing around 95% of all pupils. The result of these preferences is noted in Table 11 below:

Table 11: School pupil preferences from ballot boxes

School	Preferred Option A – Greenie	Preferred Option B – BHHS
St Aloysius RC Primary School	44.2%	55.8%
St Illtyd’s RC Primary School	98.7%	1.3%
St Mary’s RC Primary School	87.3%	12.7%
Bishop Hedley High School	51.9%	48.1%
All	67.5%	32.5%

- 5.35 Pupil responses on the whole reflect a preference for site Option A (Greenie) with 67.5% (768) in comparison to 32.5% (369) of pupils for site Option B (BHHS).
- 5.36 The pupil preferences vary between schools with both St Illtyd's RC Primary and St Mary's RC Primary showing a clear preference for site Option A (Greenie). Pupil preference in St Aloysius and BHHS were more evenly split, but with the majority of 55.8% of pupils selecting site Option B (BHHS) in St Aloysius and with 51.9% selecting Option A (Greenie) in Bishop Hedley.

## 6.0 SITE OPTION APPRAISALS

- 6.1 Appraisals of the site options including assessments on risks, critical success factors and external space provided were conducted and presented to Council on 7th December 2021.
- 6.2 Following the site consultation conducted in January/February 2022, the site option appraisals were updated where appropriate to accurately reflect public/stakeholder opinion. The updated options appraisal can be found in Appendix 7, with a summary of main points below.
- 6.3 A risk assessment carried out on the site options highlighted the top five risks to each option. The risks were scored based on likelihood and impact with the highest overall score indicating a higher risk option. The risk assessments for each option have been updated to reflect the consultation outcomes and particularly the strength of feeling within the local community with respect to the loss of the Greenie and the broad support for the option to develop the existing BHHS sites. A summary of the updated risk assessment can be found below and shows that Option B (BHHS) has the overall lowest risk score and lower risk profile with fewer critical and high risks.

Table 12: Risk scores

Option/Risk	Low	Medium	High	Critical	Catastrophic	Total Risk Score
A (Greenie)	0	0	2	3	0	59
B (BHHS)	0	2	1	2	0	48

- 6.4 The design of each site option was also measured against the Building Bulletin (BB) noting the deficit of sporting facilities provided for each option. It is accepted that no solution will fully meet the BB requirements, but that where possible sporting facilities should be maximised. The deficit of sporting facilities on each site option are shown below:

Table 13: Sporting pitch area

	Total sporting pitch area deficit in comparison to BB guidance
Option A (Greenie)	-16,654 m <sup>2</sup>
Option B (BHHS)	-17,679 m <sup>2</sup>

- 6.5 As detailed in the Council report on 7<sup>th</sup> December, for site Option B (BHHS) to be a viable option, it has been necessary to provide a rugby pitch for secondary school pupils on one of the Buttercup Fields (plateau 2). The current option also provides a football pitch on the current BHHS sites but both of these are not able to be provided on the current sites due to the area and topography of the site.

- 6.6 The addition of the rugby pitch to plateau 2 of the Buttercup Fields allows for appropriate facilities to deliver the curriculum within Option B (BHHS), but still shows a deficit of sporting facilities compared to Option A (Greenie) by 1,025m<sup>2</sup>. For scale this area is approximately 1.5 times the size of the existing Multi Use Games Area located at the Greenie.
- 6.7 It should be noted that the cost of delivering Option B (BHHS) is £5.1 million more than Option A (Greenie), although both options would require additional funding to be approved by Welsh Government (WG). Site Option B (BHHS) also has a longer programme with estimated project end date from September 2026 compared to February 2025 for Option A (Greenie).
- 6.8 These cost and programme factors are considered within the overall critical success factors (CSFs) of the project which are based on 21st Century Schools guidance. Both site options have been measured against the following CSFs; strategic alignment, value for money, achievability and affordability, each with sub criteria. Each CSF was weighted to ensure a balanced overall score, with the highest scoring option as the preferable option.

Table 14: Critical Success Factor Scores

Category/Options	A (Greenie) – scores prior to consultation	B (BHHS) – scores prior to consultation	A (Greenie) – updated following consultation	B (BHHS) – updated following consultation
Strategic Alignment	21	21	21	21
Value for Money	18.4	17.8	18.4	17.8
Achievability	16.3	16.3	15.0	18.8
Affordability	8.8	6.3	8.8	6.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>64.4</b>	<b>61.4</b>	<b>63.2</b>	<b>63.8</b>

Following consultation feedback scores were adjusted in the achievability category to reflect the scale of opposition to the loss of the Greenie within the local community in Option A (Greenie) and the broad support for Option B (BHHS). As a result, site Option B now scores 3.8 higher in this category than site Option A (Greenie) and has an overall higher score against the CSFs of 63.8 compared to 63.2.

- 6.9 The updated Options Appraisal shows an overall higher rating for Option B (BHHS) than Option A (Greenie) with a lower risk rating and profile and higher score against CSFs. Option A (Greenie) does provide overall more sporting facilities by 1,025 m<sup>2</sup> but both options allow the delivery of the curriculum.
- 6.10 A Strategic Outline Case (SOC) business case was submitted to WG in January and is currently subject to ongoing scrutiny. Discussions with WG have confirmed that approvals for the SOC and the additional funding required are not able to be considered further until a site decision is confirmed and the business case put forward in favour of a single selected site option which can deliver the project.

## 7.0 DISPOSAL OF PLAYING FIELDS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 A disposal of playing fields impact assessment was carried out and shared as part of the consultation information in line with the Playing Fields (Community Involvement in Disposal Decisions) (Wales) Measure, 2010 and Regulations, 2015.

- 7.2 This assessment considers the impacts of the disposal on local policies such as the Local Development Plan, Open Spaces Strategy, Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan and the Council's Play Sufficiency Assessment. It was previously determined that both site options would create positive impact in some areas, and where potential negative impacts could occur, there were sufficient mitigation measures to ensure an overall neutral impact to the community.
- 7.3 Following this consultation, the impact assessment has been updated to reflect the feedback received (Appendix 8). It is clear that the additional open space intended to be provided on the BHHS site in site Option A, was not well received overall by the community, and neither was the conversion of one of the Buttercup Fields to an open space pitch as a direct replacement for the current open access Greenie playing fields. Although the Buttercup Fields are not protected open space, they are still valued green space within the community.
- 7.4 The Option A (Greenie) proposal has now been reflected as a negative impact against the Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan since the above feedback suggests that the community are concerned about the potential negative impacts to the wellbeing of children, young people and residents from the proposals and therefore do not want to amend the local environment in the ways proposed. The impact of the site Option A proposal has therefore changed from an anticipated positive impact against the Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan, to a negative impact following the consultation.
- 7.5 Following consultation with the community, feedback on site Option B (BHHS) indicates that most of the respondents agree that the use of the Buttercup Fields as a school rugby pitch is an acceptable compromise. A small number of respondents (42 of the 738 total) object to the use of the Buttercup Fields for the school rugby pitch however the overall feedback suggests that this would be an acceptable compromise. Some respondents also queried public access to the school rugby pitch. The proposed pitch on the Buttercup Fields and other school sporting facilities would be accessible to the community after school hours with managed use through agreement with the school.
- 7.6 Therefore, Option B provides opportunity for the public to help shape and manage their local environment as it proposes an enhancement to facilities that will be accessible to the community via the school sports pitch on the Buttercup Fields which is not available at present. This option is now considered to have a positive impact on the Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan as prior to the consultation it was considered a neutral impact.

## **8.0 CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 Following the extensive consultation undertaken, 80.5% of respondents, selected site Option B (BHHS) as their preferred option in comparison to 19.5% for site Option A (Greenie).
- 8.2 The majority selecting site Option B (BHHS) as their preferred option, increases to 92.1% when considering residents and local community stakeholders in isolation. However, amongst the school community, support for the site options are more evenly split with 51.9% choosing site Option A (Greenie) as their preferred option.

- 8.3 When considering satisfaction ratings for the proposals, 22.8% of respondents consider Option A – Greenie to be at least satisfactory. 81.3% consider Option B (BHHS) to be at least satisfactory.
- 8.4 The local community overwhelmingly consider Option A (Greenie) to be less than satisfactory (89.7%) and consider site Option B (BHHS) to be at least satisfactory (88.6%).
- 8.5 The majority of school community consider both Option A (Greenie), 57.1% and Option B (BHHS), 60.8% to be at least satisfactory.
- 8.6 Pupils indicated a preference for site Option A (Greenie) with 59.5% of School Council selections, 60% of pupil survey responses and 67.5% of whole school pupil preferences selecting site Option A.
- 8.7 St Illtyd's RC Primary (98.7%), St Mary's RC Primary (87.3%) and BHHS (51.9%) indicated a preference for site Option A (Greenie). St Aloysius RC Primary indicated a preference for site Option B (BHHS) with 55.8%.
- 8.8 In order to consider which site option should be taken forward, the consultation outcomes should be considered, alongside the updated Options Appraisals and Disposal of Playing Fields Impact Assessment.
- 8.9 The updated Options Appraisal shows an overall higher rating for Option B (BHHS) than Option A (Greenie) with a lower risk rating and profile and higher score against CSFs. Option A (Greenie) does provide overall more sporting facilities by 1,025 m<sup>2</sup> but both options allow the delivery of the curriculum.
- 8.10 Following the consultation, the Disposal of Playing Fields Impact Assessment has been updated to reflect feedback on site Option A (Greenie) from the community and Sport Wales against the loss of the Greenie playing fields and the lack of approval for the mitigation option to provide replacement open space on the Buttercup Fields and Phase 2 of the BHHS site. The impact assessment now notes that site Option A (Greenie) would have a negative impact on the Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan and Option B (BHHS) a positive impact.
- 8.11 Considering site specifications, risks, impact assessments and consultation feedback from all stakeholders, the preferred viable and achievable option for the delivery of the 3-16 VA school is site Option B (BHHS) and therefore the disposal of the Greenie playing fields will not be proposed.

## **9.0 NEXT STEPS**

- 9.1 Submit revised SOC business case to WG to seek approval in principle for the selected site option and the additional budget requirement to deliver the project.
- 9.2 New 3-16 school to open across the current four school sites on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022.
- 9.3 Develop final option for the school on the BHHS site through ongoing design development and obtaining relevant permissions such as Planning, SAB (Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) Approval Body) etc in readiness to start on site in approximately May 2023.

9.4 Subject to Council decision on the school site, and WG approvals, new school building to be completed in readiness for occupation from September 2026.

## 10.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The total project costs to deliver Option B (BHHS) are estimated to be £47.9 Million.

10.2 Project costs are funded 85% WG grant and 15% local authority match funding, except for costs for facilities outside of the school boundary which are funded 100% by the authority i.e. the S278 highways works and the Net Zero Carbon costs which are 100% funded by WG.

10.3 The following table details the funding split between WG and MTCBC.

	Cost £'000	Includes S278 costs of £'000	WG Funding £'000	MTCBC Funding £'000
Option B - Current BHHS Site	47,903	933	40,351	7,552

10.4 Costs for the additional matched funding budget requirement have been included in the Council's MTFP 2022-2026.

## 11.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

				<b>Applicable</b>
	1 of 1	1 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1
<b>Summary</b>				
<b>The main positive impacts are:</b>	<p>The main positive impacts are that the proposal to develop a 3-16 school on the current BHHS school sites will provide enhanced school facilities and additional accessible community facilities that best meet the needs of stakeholders and makes a positive contribution to the Best Start to Life Living Well and Environmental wellbeing objectives.</p> <p>The aim of the proposals will be to maintain and enhance the overall biodiversity of the area. Further assessment and appropriate management of site ecology is required to effectively report and manage any biodiversity impacts as any development progresses.</p>			
<b>The main negative impacts are:</b>	<p>The main negative impact of the proposed option is the disruption caused by the necessary decant into temporary accommodation for some current pupils and the elongated programme of works delaying the delivery of the new school building.</p>			

**SUE WALKER**  
**DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

**COUNCILLOR LISA MYTTON**  
**CABINET MEMBER FOR LEARNING**

<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>		
<b>Title of Document(s)</b>	<b>Document(s) Date</b>	<b>Document Location</b>
A report on the findings of the consultation carried out between January 6 <sup>th</sup> and February 17 <sup>th</sup> 2022 for the siting of a new 3-16 Voluntary-aided Catholic school (Report by Define including all Appendices)	March 22	Education Department
3-16 VA Catholic School – Extended Site Consultation 2	7 <sup>th</sup> December 2021	Intranet
3-16 VA Catholic School Site Consultation	14 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	Intranet
3-16 VA School Site Consultation report 2	26 <sup>th</sup> May 2021	Intranet
3-16 VA School Site Consultation report	6 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Intranet
School Reorganisation 3-16 VA School Cabinet Report	11 <sup>th</sup> September 2019	Intranet
21 <sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme Cabinet Report	17 <sup>th</sup> April 2019	Intranet
21 <sup>st</sup> Century Schools Band B Strategic Outline Programme (SOP)	August 2017	Education Department
21 <sup>st</sup> Century Schools Band B SOP Revision Annex 1	February 2019	
<b>Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?</b>		No

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