

Sustainable Communities for Learning Consultation Document

Proposal to establish a new shared Primary School facility

Relocation of Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School

28th September 2023 – 9th November 2023



This document is available electronically at
<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/sustainable-communities-learning>

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



Cymunedau **Dysgu** Cynaliadwy 
Sustainable Communities for **Learning**



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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 21st 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 Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School.

This booklet sets out the changes we are suggesting to these educational facilities in the Borough and the reasons for these 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 Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme?

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

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.

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 Gyfun Cwm Rhymini, 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

Band B funding is being used to deliver :

 <p>Artist Impression of new YG Cwm Gwyddon</p>	Project Name Band B Investment	
	✓ Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon	
	✓ Trinity Fields School expansion	
	✓ Pupil Referral Unit, Pontllanfraith	
	✓ Llancaeath/Llanfabon School amalgamation	
	✓ Plasyfelin Primary School 'Our 1 st Net Zero Carbon School'	

What are we proposing to do?

We are proposing to:

○ Relocation of Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhydney Primary School

The proposal seeks to create a sustainable Net Zero Carbon school building with shared facilities, to accommodate Ysgol Y Lawnt, Upper Rhydney Primary School and Community use.

Artist Impression



It must be emphasised that both schools would remain independent entities, the existing catchment areas would remain unchanged and each school would occupy their own separate teaching areas within the new building.

- The new building will incorporate primary school facilities as well as childcare and separate Special Resource Base provision for each school, one with 8 places for Welsh medium and the other providing 8 places for English medium.
- The proposed new building will include a shared bi-lingual reception area and flexible and adaptable communal facilities for example a Hall that can be subdivided and a separate kitchen servery so that provision is delivered in the appropriate language medium for each school. The configuration of these facilities will be designed in a manner enabling independent use by each school respectively if needed to minimise infringement on current activities or opened up for shared utilisation to provide wider community cohesion.
- The new primary school site will have improved outside learning space and facilities that will be segregated between each school to provide stimulating teaching and learning environments with 21st Century facilities centred 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 entire building, in partnership with both Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School. The design will seek to include measures to enable safe 'zoning' which can be utilised by the wider community. It should be noted that any existing community provision at the existing schools would be encouraged to relocate to the new site which will have upgraded facilities.

Each school will retain their existing Governing Body arrangements, however, a joint committee will be established consisting of representatives from both schools to establish terms and conditions about the working mechanisms relating to maintenance, access and general policies relating the site as a whole.

Building on the Net Zero Carbon mandate our proposal is framed to demonstrate innovative and collaborative design, encompassing the built environment and the surrounding landscape in a way that enriches pupils' daily life.

Through developing a sustainable, flexible site, this would enable:

- Space maximisation for reconfiguration of site
- Shared communal facilities including adaptable hall, community room, kitchen and storage capable of delivering the universal free school meals offer
- A longer elemental lifespan
- Lower whole life cost
- Improved value for money

For reference, a similar approach has been taken by Cardiff Council as part of their Gabalfa Primary School and Ysgol Gymraeg Glan Ceubal project, whereby both schools are co-located in a building with shared communal facilities and continue to operate successfully as separate entities delivering Welsh and English education.

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](#)

For this proposal, our consultation process must follow the Welsh Government Statutory guidance as set out in the School Organisation Code 2018.

Proposals must be published when we make a 'regulated alteration' to a maintained school under Section 42 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.

We are obligated to advise the following of our proposals by letter or email:

Table 1: Consultee List	
Pupils and Pupil Councils*	Welsh Ministers
Parents, prospective parents, guardians and carers*	Assembly Members and Members of Parliament representing the area served *
Headteacher, Staff and Governing bodies*	Local CCBC Members
Directors of Education for Neighbouring Authorities	Local Town and Community Councils
Teaching and Support Staff Associations	Estyn
Parent Network	Welsh Education Forum
Diocesan Directors / Boards of Education	South East Wales Consortium (EAS)
Gwent and South Wales Police and Crime Commissioners	South East Wales Transport Alliance (SEWTA)
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership	Mudiad Meithrin, Menter Iaith and voluntary nursery providers

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

Please note:

- All responses received during the consultation period will be recorded and summarised in a Consultation Report.
- The Consultation Report will be presented for initial review and endorsement at Education Scrutiny Committee, with final approval to proceed to the next 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.
- Any negative responses made during the consultation period will not be counted as objections to the proposal but as adverse comments.
- Objections to a proposal can only be registered after the publication of a statutory notice which is the second stage in the proposal, subject to approval by Cabinet.

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.

The School Organisation Code 2018 states that when undertaking a consultation process in connection with a school proposal, the Council must 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 Sustainable Communities for Learning 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 School Council’s 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.

Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School are currently operating over two separate sites within 0.6 miles distance of each other and both within the Caerphilly North, Rhymney area.



Ysgol Y Lawnt



Upper Rhymney Primary School

The proposal seeks to accommodate pupils between the ages of 3-11 years within the existing catchment areas for both schools, through a new fit for purpose, state of the art sustainable school build which will accommodate both Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School. Both schools will continue to operate as independent entities delivering education in their respective language mediums, with no proposed alterations to the existing Head or Governing Body arrangements.

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.

Information accurate as of January 2023

➤ **Ysgol Y Lawnt**

- The site currently has a capacity for 206 pupils
- The published admission number is 29
- There are currently 20.87% surplus places
- 93.33% of current pupils on roll are from within catchment.
- Ysgol Y Lawnt is a feeder for YG Cwm Rhymni at secondary level

➤ **Upper Rhymney Primary School**

- The site currently has a capacity for 184 pupils
- The published admission number is 26
- There are currently 26.63% surplus places
- 86.92% of current pupils on roll are from within catchment.
- Upper Rhymney Primary School is a feeder for Idris Davies School 3-18 at secondary level

Table 2: Actual and Projected Numbers in attendance				
	Ysgol Y Lawnt		Upper Rhymney Primary	
Year	Number on Roll	Excluding Nursery	Number on Roll	Excluding Nursery
Current	187	162	152	133
2023	190	165	156	137
2024	193	170	153	134
2025	194	171	155	136
2026	193	169	157	138
2027	187	163	159	140
2028	189	165	156	137
2029	198	174	155	136
2030	191	167	152	133

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

Condition and Suitability of school buildings

Ysgol Y Lawnt:

Ysgol Y Lawnt is currently a Welsh Medium Primary School, with a capacity of 262 including a childcare and nursery provision.

The main building was established as an English Medium Primary School in 1900 and opened in 1955 as the current Welsh Medium Primary. The school has a published capacity figure of 206 and an admission figure of 29.

There is increasing evidence of growing demand for Welsh Medium places in the area. Over the past 5 years, the number of admission applications for places at the school have increased, with refusals being issued for the last 2 years.

In addition, the Welsh Government published its Cymraeg 2050 Strategy in 2017, which sets out a vision of reaching 1 million speakers by 2050. By 2031, the aim for Caerphilly is for 26% of Welsh-medium education places in our year 1. The council recognises that the education system is a key element in ensuring that children are able to develop their Welsh Skills and for creating new speakers and in order to make further progress to that already achieved in the Borough, further investment into the infrastructure is required. Ysgol Y Lawnt has been identified as a strategic site, to support growing numbers in one of the more socially deprived areas in the borough.

The school currently hosts Cylch Meithrin Mwy Rhymni, delivered by Cylch Meithrin Rhymni for 27 children. However, there is no capacity within the current school to deliver full wraparound provision further and it has been identified that a minimum of a further 32 places are needed.

Based on projections and new builds in the area we are anticipating that by 2025 there will be 6.31% surplus places, which does not allow for any growth particularly if additional childcare is not forthcoming.

Situated in Rhymney, with access to the school directly from one of the main throughways, situated near the bottom of a steep hill leading from the High Street to Rhymney River and Railway. The school occupies a total area of approximately 1.4 Hectares which accommodates 5 structures with limited outdoor play areas.

The main school is housed within a Grade II Listed building which operates over multiple levels which are not fully DDA compatible due to CADW restrictions. In addition to the main building there are 2 double demountables circa 50m away, meaning children must move between buildings to access the library, catering and to attend assemblies. The school has a condition rating of 'C' under the Faithful and Gould methodology and a Welsh Government Accessibility Banding of 'D'

Additional development of the existing site is limited, with neighbouring residential and industrial properties on the curtilage of the site, the main building being listed, poor and narrow site access and planning arboriculture restrictions linked to the large number of trees occupying the West and South of the site.

Current Site



Site plan



Table 3: Ysgol Y Lawnt Site Information	
CAD Plan Designation	Facilities Provided
Main Building 251	Ground Floor - 2 classrooms, 1 nursery, Assembly Hall, Library, Staff Room First Floor - 3 classrooms, Play area, PPA, Library
Out Building 1815	Meter Housing
Out Building 1494	Nursery Store
Building 1671	Double Demountable - 2 classrooms, WC, Store
Building 1690	Double Demountable - 2 classrooms, WC, Store

Upper Rhymney Primary School:

Upper Rhymney Primary School is an English Medium School with a capacity of 210, which includes nursery provision.

Situated in the North of Rhymney, with the site boundary encompassed by residential properties on all sites, making further expansion limited to within the existing grounds. The school occupies a total area of approximately 0.98 Hectares which accommodates 2 structures.

The Infant and Junior pupils are separated into two buildings, which operate over multiple levels which are not fully DDA compatible due to a lack of lift. The school has a condition rating of 'C+' under the Faithful and Gould methodology and a Welsh Government Accessibility Banding of 'D'. In addition, none of the 6 classrooms are size compliant.

Based on current predictions, 22.91% surplus places by 2027 if no further action is taken. This proposal seeks to stimulate demand through a new innovative build whilst providing the flexibility to manage the surplus places of the English medium provision in line with demand, balanced

with the need to increase places in Welsh medium for Ysgol Y Lawnt. This methodology ensures a sustainable build for future generations.

Current Site



Site plan



Table 4: Upper Rhymney Primary School Site Information	
CAD Plan Designation	Facilities Provided
Building 145 – Infant Block	Infants Block – 4 classrooms, 1 nursery, Office and cloaks
Building 147 – Junior Block	Ground Floor – 2 classrooms, 1 staff room, 1 resource room First Floor – 3 classrooms, Assembly Hall, 1 resource room, cloaks

Decarbonisation Strategy

The Authority acknowledges that the physical conditions of both schools can be limiting. Both schools currently have a condition rating of C / C+ based on the Faithful and Gould methodology.

The current buildings both have 'D' dec ratings (A is the most efficient) and are heated using gas boilers emitting an estimated combined total of 107 Tonnes of CO2 per annum.

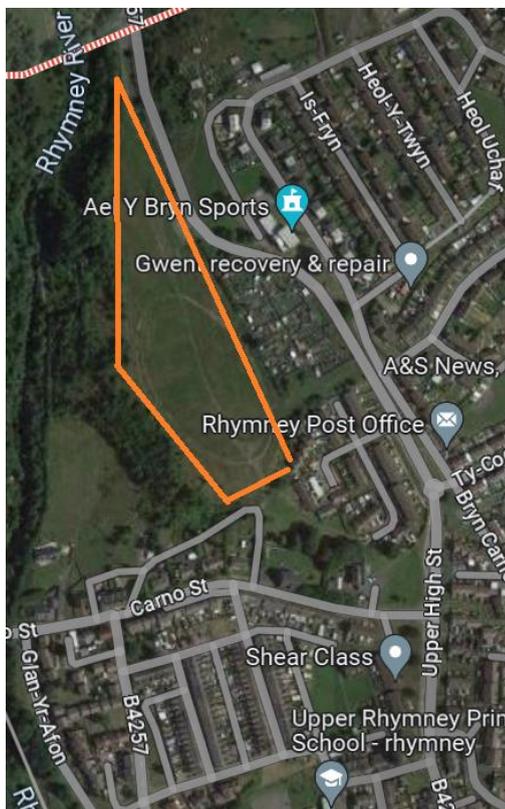
In accordance with our newly adopted Decarbonisation Strategy and Welsh Government targets all new buildings will be designed to be Net Zero Carbon in operation where practical through the use of more efficient material and technology. This includes:

- Higher insulation standards to ensure that heat generated is retained within the building envelope.
- Low carbon heating strategies such as Air or Ground source heat pumps with good controls.

- The generation of renewable green energy on site through the use of solar PV panels on or around the building, or other technologies if appropriate.
- The storage of surplus renewable electricity in Batteries to use in the building when generation is lower.

Proposed Location

The proposed location for the new build site is less than 1 mile of both schools and to the North of Rhymney, with the B4257 to the East Boundary of the site and Carno Street to the South. The total site area is 5.7 Hectares, however, only 3 Hectares is being considered for development to utilise the overall environment to its maximum, taking full advantage of the wooded area for a forest school and adjacent allotments for educational activities. In addition, the school would be designed in such a way as to utilise solar technologies, minimise surface water through a blue/green roof garden accessible to the staff and pupils for wellbeing activities and as outlined in more detail later in the document, tie into developing infrastructure around air source heating and hydrogen.



Aerial view



Concept Sketch of proposed layout

Developing fit for purpose, modern primary school provision in the Rhymney area that will accommodate both schools and their delivery of the curriculum in the medium of Welsh in the case of Ysgol Y Lawnt and English in the case of Upper Rhymney Primary School will build upon the strengths of each separate school through a shared, sustainable and flexible facility to ensure that experiences are enhanced, enabling even higher standards of education to be provided. It will also support the removal of backlog maintenance for two Category C school buildings, with the new school building expected to be an 'A' rated facility and also the installation of Net Zero/Low Carbon technologies will minimise the amount of energy purchased from the grid and therefore reduce the costs of operation.

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 Sustainable Communities for Learning 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.

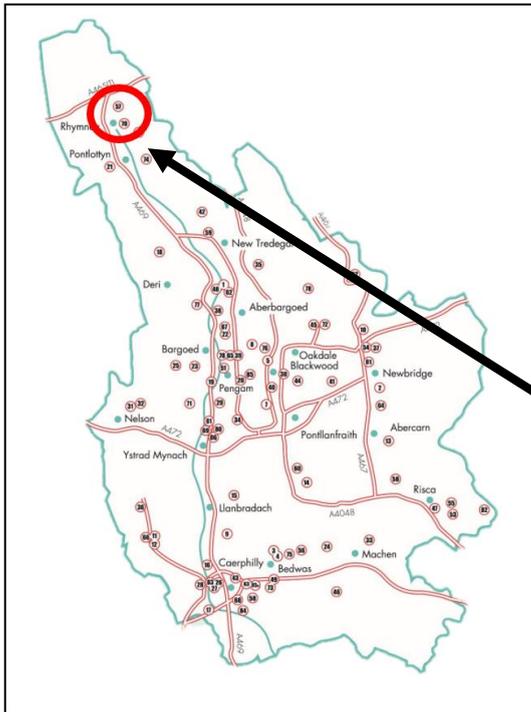
Every 5 years the Welsh Government requires every local authority across Wales to undertake a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, that brings together a range of different data and

information to develop a picture of the current childcare market and to identify whether there are any gaps in supply. The report notes that in the Upper Rhymney Valley, the number of Flying Start settings has increased whilst the number of playgroups has decreased. This could be due to settings changing provider status to sometimes day care (sessional) or to wrap around in certain areas. Notably, Wraparound has remained stable since 2017. Overall, the childcare services throughout the borough have increased in line with demand needs.

Going forward, our focus for the next 5 years will be to first and foremost support the recovery of the sector and try and understand the new levels of demand for childcare. We will continue to grow the sector in areas of identified need in particular in relation to the Childcare Offer both in Term Time and during School Holidays, and to ensure we have sufficient places to deliver Flying Start places, Flying Start expansion, and Early Years Education, while giving parents choice.

In light of this we will be working closely with our colleagues in the umbrella organisations and the schools where new space is developed, to ensure that quality childcare providers are able to apply openly and transparently to rent the space to deliver the new quality provision.

Catchment Area Arrangements



The Authority believes that this proposal represents the best opportunity to further safeguard and sustain educational standards for the future and provides a platform for improvement through significant investment in new permanent primary phase facilities at a single location. This will provide a stimulating teaching and learning environment with 21st Century facilities including improved ICT facilities, outdoor play and extended access provision for community use, centred on the learning, self-esteem and wellbeing of all.

The existing Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School are both located within the Rhymney area.

The ward profile based on the 2011 census information indicates that 13.9% of the ward population is between 5-15 years.

It is proposed that the catchment area would remain unchanged as part of this development.

Impact on other schools

The Council is mindful to ensure that new school developments have minimal impact on neighbouring schools. For this scheme it is proposed that increasing the admission number by a manageable amount will allow for the growth of both schools while not over developing the provision to destabilise other already established educational provisions within the area.

Welsh Medium

There are 3 Community Welsh Medium Primary Schools are within a 10 mile radius from Ysgol Y Lawnt, these include Ysgol Bro Sannan, Ysgol Gymraeg Gilfach Fargoed and Ysgol Penallta, the closest being circa 7 miles.

Table 5: Actual and Projected Numbers in attendance (Neighbouring Schools)			
	Ysgol Bro Sannan	Ysgol Gymraeg Gilfach Fargoed	Ysgol Penallta
Capacity	306	210	240
Admissions	29	30	34
Year	No. on Roll (excluding Nursery)	No. on Roll (excluding Nursery)	No. on Roll (excluding Nursery)
2023	116	92	212
2024	112	88	213
2025	110	87	209
2026	110	85	202
2027	118	90	197
2028	118	86	192
2029	119	88	191
2030	119	87	189

English Medium

There are 3 Community English Medium Primary Schools are within a 2.6 mile radius from Upper Rhymney Primary School, these include Bryn Awel Primary School, Fochriw Primary School and Idris Davies School 3-19 (Primary Phase). The closest being 1.4 miles.

Table 6: Actual and Projected Numbers in attendance (Neighbouring Schools)			
	Bryn Awel Primary School	Fochriw Primary School	Idris Davies School 3-18
Capacity	173	120	1185 <i>for whole school</i>
Admissions	24	17	34 <i>for primary phase</i>
Year	No. on Roll (excluding Nursery)	No. on Roll (excluding Nursery)	No. on Roll (excluding Nursery)
2023	107	94	195
2024	114	88	184
2025	112	88	190
2026	113	97	181
2027	103	103	175
2028	101	100	170
2029	103	102	172
2030	106	100	175

Both Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School will retain their own individual admission numbers and consideration will be given when the new build initially opens to a lower admission number for both that will be increased incrementally until reaching full capacity to cater for growing demand and minimise the impact on neighbouring schools.

Disruption to pupils

The proposal seeks to build a new school facility on an alternative location to that of the current schools. As such, there will be no disruption to pupils at either Ysgol Y Lawnt or Upper Rhymney Primary School during the build phase. In addition, there will also be no transportation or access related issues as construction is off site.

Secondary Provision

Changes to primary education be that Welsh or English Medium will inevitably have an impact upon secondary education.

Ysgol Y Lawnt is a feeder school for Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Rhymni, whilst Upper Rhymney Primary School feeds into Idris Davies School 3-18.

Whilst secondary education is being reviewed within the authority at present which includes single sex, surplus places and provision, 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 current projections and available data, this proposal would have minimal impact on secondary provision.

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.

Copies of the full reports for each individual school are available from the [Estyn website](#)

The reports reflect that both schools have made improvements in creating a caring environment where the pupils feel valued, safe and happy, these being notable features that encourage pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning.

Governance Arrangements

The proposed changes would be planned carefully so that the existing arrangements for the leadership and governance for both schools are disrupted to a minimum, to minimise any negative impact on educational outcomes.

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.

The Council recognises that retaining the experience and support of the existing staff cohort at both existing schools will support pupils through a period of transition. Further discussions with both schools will be made as the proposal progresses to fully understand how each team will integrate into the new site.

Financial Matters

This proposal is being made under the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B Programme which is funded at a 65%/35% intervention rate between Welsh Government and the local Authority (with the exception of the Special Resource Base element which is a 75%/25% split).

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 Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B proposals.

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.

It is proposed that a new dual-purpose building will incorporate both schools and continue to provide Welsh and English Medium Primary education. It must be emphasised that both schools would remain independent entities, the existing catchment areas would remain unchanged and each school would occupy their own separate teaching areas within the new building.

The proposed new building will include a shared bi-lingual reception area and flexible and adaptable communal facilities for example a Hall that can be subdivided and a separate kitchen servery so that provision is delivered in the appropriate language medium for each school. The configuration of these facilities will be designed in a manner enabling independent

use by each school respectively if needed to minimise infringement on current activities or opened up for shared utilisation to provide wider community cohesion.

The new building will incorporate primary school facilities as well as childcare and separate Special Resource Base provision for each school, one with 8 places for Welsh medium and the other providing 8 places for English medium.

Consideration has been made to potential concerns relating to the dilution of the Welsh Language where the Welsh speaking community may utilise English when they all come together. However, the Council intends to mitigate as far as reasonably possible through utilising this site as an archetype in fully exploiting the opportunity to make Upper Rhymney Primary School and exemplar school whereby it will use the Welsh language more, via the Cymraeg i Blant scheme, engagement in Welsh for the Family course, potential twinning of the schools whereby cultures of the schools can be shared and the possibility of a Welsh Language mentoring scheme whereby Upper Rhymney Primary School Pupils are mentored for Welsh lessons by their peers from Ysgol Y Lawnt. Consideration will also be given to setting targets in line with the Welsh Language Education: White Paper to enhance Welsh language provision in maintained schools that are not already designated Welsh-medium schools. Further discussions and support with both schools will be undertaken as the proposal progresses to investigate the options available to support this aspiration.

Learner Travel Arrangements

The proposal seeks to create a new and enhanced primary facility through a new building which will accommodate both Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School from one location.

The distance between both schools and the proposed new build site is within less than 1 mile, therefore the likely effect of different travelling arrangements as a result of the proposal is negligible.

It is also anticipated that the joint location will have a positive impact on traffic and travel within the area, removing high volumes of traffic and parking congestion from the main thoroughway through Rhymey Town and also decreasing journeys where siblings will now be attending the same location.

The table below details the nearest available alternatives:

Table 7: Geographically Nearest Alternative schools			
School Name, Postcode	Medium	Condition	Distance / Travel
Ysgol Bro Sannan	Welsh	B	7.2 miles
Ysgol Gymraeg Gilfach Fargoed	Welsh	C+	8 miles
Ysgol Penallta	Welsh	C+	10 miles
Bryn Awel Primary School	English	B	1.4 miles
Fochriw Primary School	English	C	2.6 miles
Idris Davies School 3-18	English	B	2.1 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.

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 Sustainable Communities for Learning team, it has been identified that the access road, parking and designated bus/taxi turning points could potentially be improved, especially for Ysgol Y Lawnt, 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.

The new building will incorporate primary school facilities as well as childcare and separate Special Resource Base provision for each school, one with 8 places for Welsh medium and the other providing 8 places for English medium.

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 building suited to local demand.

- **Community Provision and Community Use**

The proposed new building will include a shared bi-lingual reception area and flexible and adaptable communal facilities for example a Hall that can be subdivided and a separate kitchen servery so that provision is delivered in the appropriate language medium for each school. The configuration of these facilities will be designed in a manner enabling independent use by each school respectively if needed to minimise infringement on current activities or opened up for shared utilisation to provide wider community cohesion.

The proposed project will take into account the desire to encourage and facilitate community use of the entire building, in partnership with both Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School. The design will seek to include measures to enable safe 'zoning' which can be utilised by the wider community. Existing Community Groups at both Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School will be encouraged to relocate to the new premises which will have upgraded facilities to those presently offered. An initial data gathering exercise has been undertaken, showing minimal community use at either existing school at present, however, any groups identified will be engaged with as part of the consultation process.

Digital Inclusion

Caerphilly Council has clear aspirations for all schools to become community learning centres as part of their Hwb Programme. All schools within the borough are required to meet the Education Digital Standard and any new developments, including this proposal will have the required infrastructure built into the specifications in advance to ensure compliance which will include community Wi-Fi.

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. Wider access to learning and participation in learning activities for communities is already in place, so that learners are not restricted by their physical location and have greater flexibility to learn in a time, place and language that suits their preferences and availability around home and work commitments.

Sport and Outdoor Play Facilities

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.

Working collaboratively with colleagues in Sports Development, investment has already been made in the area with the addition of full 3G facilities at Idris Davies School 3-18.

As part of this proposal, the school building will be orientated in such a way as to maximise the outdoor space available for both schools respectively, this will include provision of a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) with 3G surface. The buildings will also include the utilisation of a blue/green roof garden for staff wellbeing, Forest School and allotments for the pupils, staff and wider community.



Concept Artistic Impression of new site layout

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' shared primary school for 525 pupils plus additional nursery and SRB places
- ✓ A new school to replace two existing buildings, one a 100+-year old listed premises with substantive restraints on any further development, the other a multi-floor complex with no lift facilities
- ✓ Provision of an energy efficient facility, achieving net zero operational targets
- ✓ Modern state of the art classrooms
- ✓ New and improved outdoor facilities for both schools, to include utilisation of adjacent woodland for a forest school and allotments for growing and educational purposes
- ✓ Modern flagship primary facility in Caerphilly acting as a blueprint for future schemes
- ✓ Space maximisation through reconfiguration of site and shared communal facilities i.e., reception, hall, kitchen, community rooms
- ✓ A stimulating environment to deliver high quality learner outcomes and improve pupil wellbeing
- ✓ Community Use
- ✓ Utilisation of infrastructure to support green energy utilisation and maximise investment in the area

Disbenefits

The principal disbenefits of the scheme are as follows:

- Travel times may change for a minority of pupils dependent on their proximity to the new school location
- Community usage and accessibility of alternative provision for groups using the existing site needs to be supported and new site will offer enhanced facilities
- There will be a period of transition for the pupils and appropriate support for 'Settling in' will require consideration
- The current school sites will need to be decommissioned and disposed of in line with appropriate guidelines
- 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 principal risks of the delivery of the scheme are identified as follows:

Table 8: Risks and Mitigation	
Principal Risks	Mitigating Factors
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 applies in relation to this proposal. The identified consultees and decision making process along with the relevant publication of documentation at the appropriate stage will be utilised to ensure the appropriate level of engagement in informing and consulting stakeholders</p> <p>The principles of the Council's Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025 and "Spectrum of Engagement" is synergistic with those contained within the Code. However, the code as stipulated by Welsh Government is the Statutory process that must be followed.</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 Sustainable Communities for Learning 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: -

Table 9: Options Appraisal Longlist	
Option	Longlist Options: Description
Option 1 *	Do Nothing : No change to existing schools
Option 2	Do Minimum: Internal refurbishments of both school sites
Option 3a	Do Intermediate: Develop on existing Ysgol Y Lawnt site only
Option 3b	Do Intermediate Develop on existing Upper Rhymney School site only
Option 3c	Do Intermediate Relocation of one/both schools into alternative existing school stock (if available)
Option 4	Do Major: Build two new Net Zero Carbon school buildings to accommodate each school respectively on the new site
Option 5	Do Maximum Build a single new Net Zero Carbon school building, with shared communal facilities, accommodating both schools on the new site

*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
- Net Zero 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.

Options Shortlist

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

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

Table 10: Options Appraisal Shortlist and Comparison	
<p>Do Major Build two new Net Zero Carbon school buildings to accommodate each school respectively on the new site</p>	<p>Do Maximum: Build a single new Net Zero Carbon school building, with shared communal facilities, accommodating both schools on the new site</p>
<p>Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two new enhanced school buildings • Both schools would operate independently • Additional space created to meet the needs of Cymraeg 2050/ WESP • Improved access to outdoor learning facilities with potential for Forest Schools and wider Community participation • Potential to achieve better educational outcomes for pupils currently at the school through enhancing their learning environment. • School buildings and facilities built to Net Zero Carbon standards • Land identified is already within the ownership of the Council and identified for Educational use 	<p>Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single enhanced school building with a high quality sustainable offering • Whilst both schools will remain as separate entities, delivering education in their medium of choice, they will have shared, more cost effective communal facilities, bringing the school and wider community together • Additional space created to meet the needs of Cymraeg 2050/ WESP • Improved access to outdoor learning facilities with potential for Forest Schools and wider Community participation • Potential to achieve better educational outcomes for pupils currently at the school through enhancing their learning environment.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal financial and environmental impact anticipated linked to transportation • Eliminates backlog maintenance at 2 school which would then become surplus to educational requirements <p>Viable option that would meet the majority of the critical success factors.</p> <p>Perceived as weaker option in relation to Strategic, Financial and Environmental fit as would involve 2 new school buildings and potential replication of facilities and additional cost/running implications on the same site.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School buildings and facilities built to Net Zero Carbon standards • Land identified is already within the ownership of the Council and identified for Educational use • Minimal financial and environmental impact anticipated linked to transportation • Eliminates backlog maintenance at 2 school which would then become surplus to educational requirements <p>Viable option that would meet all critical success factors and align with key investment objectives.</p> <p>Perceived as the stronger option as it would maximise investment, provide better use of resources through operational effectiveness and act as an exemplar for future planning.</p> <p>Proposal also considers innovative best practice from other neighbouring authorities</p>
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Preferred Option and Alternative options that have been discounted

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 single 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.

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 Thursday 28th September 2023

This consultation document and response form are available electronically on the Council website. Further information is available on the [Sustainable Communities for Learning webpage](#)

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.

The closing date for responses to this consultation is midnight on Thursday 9th November 2023

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

Statutory Notices, Reporting and Decision Making

Following consultation, Caerphilly's Cabinet will receive a Consultation 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, a Statutory Notice will be published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 provides that anyone wishing to make objections to a school organisation proposal has the opportunity to do so. To be considered as statutory objections, objections must be made in writing and sent to the Council within the 28-day period.

Cabinet will then consider the outcome of the Statutory Notice at a future meeting and determine whether to implement the proposal having given due consideration to all the information provided.

In the event of objections, the Council will publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and Cabinet's response to those objections. This report will be available for all persons to view on the Council website and paper copies will be available on request.

Should Cabinet approve the proposal, a full planning application process will commence.

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.

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 printed response form and return via post
- Email your comments to the Sustainable Communities for Learning Team at Caerphilly

Your views matter

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

Consultation Response 'YYL/URP'

c/o Sustainable Communities for Learning Team
Directorate of Education and Corporate Services
Caerphilly County Borough Council
Penallta House
Tredomen Park
Ystrad Mynach
CF82 7PG



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.