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21st Century School’s Programme: Proposed New School Building for Ysgol Y Graig Primary School

# Purpose of the issues paper

We want to listen to the views of local organisations, community groups, businesses, residents, school staff and governors, pupils and parents. We want everyone to have a clear understanding of the potential solutions, to ensure that together we make the right decisions when developing this new learning facility for our young people.

This paper discusses the possible sites for where the new Ysgol Y Graig Primary School could be built and how we have arrived at this point in the process.

This is not a public consultation document and there will be another information pack when the public consultation takes place.

Your views and ideas will help to inform the formal public consultation, which will take place at a later stage.

# Why we need a new school

The existing school building is in poor physical condition, which would need a lot of investment to repair and improve.

The Council is proposing to build a new primary school, which will be of a suitable size and sustainable construction to enable the school community to thrive and develop, to serve the needs of pupils in the community, now and in the future.

The Welsh Government 21st Century Schools and Education Programme is a £1.4billion investment over the five year period ending 2018/19. Local authorities were asked to submit bids for the refurbishment and rebuild of schools. The programme is 50% funded by Welsh Government using a mixture of capital and revenue funding, with the other 50% from local authorities.

There are three stages:

* Strategic Outline Case (SOC);
* Outline Business Case (OBC); and
* Full Business Case (FBC).

The purpose of the SOC is to establish the need for investment, to look at the potential solutions and to provide a recommended or preferred way forward for further study.

# Public consultation in 2011

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC) approved its Strategic Outline Programme for the 21st Century Schools Programme on 8th December 2010. This long-term plan identified the key priorities for improving schools over the period 2012 – 2024 and was later approved by Welsh Government.

In 2011, MTCBC hired ‘Austin-Smith:Lord’ architects to produce a feasibility study for a new primary school and to undertake a public consultation with the community to identify the preferred site.

The report looked at a range of proposals and considered two sites in more detail:

* Site of former Vaynor and Penderyn High School.
* Godre’r Coed Playing Field (Former Vaynor and Penderyn High School playing fields).

Consultation was held with the community over the proposals, with the focus on the two sites referred to above. The aim of the public consultation was to understand the views of all interested parties and to help the decision as to where the new school should be built.

Details of the advantages and disadvantages of both sites were displayed at the public consultation event held on the 23rd March 2011, which was well attended. Attendees were asked to fill in questionnaires and 254 were completed. The majority response was that the school should be sited on the former Vaynor and Penderyn High School site.

On the 28th October, 2011, a report to Council recommended that Members agree the former Vaynor and Penderyn High School site as the preferred site for the re-location of Ysgol Y Graig Primary School, to be used with the existing playing fields at Godre’r Coed.

# What has changed?

Funding became available for the design development of Ysgol Y Graig Primary School in 2016/17. The Council began preparing the OBC for Ysgol Y Graig Primary School, which involves revisiting the case for change and the preferred way forward identified in the SOC; establishing the solution which gives the best value for money; outlining the deal and assessing affordability; and demonstrating that the proposed scheme is deliverable. At the OBC Stage, a council can update a Strategic Case in the light of any changes or new information.

To support the development of the OBC, in October 2016, the Council prepared a further Site Options Appraisal for the new school.

In addition, the Council sought expert advice on the public engagement and consultation process, as it has been 5 years since the proposal was discussed.

There are a number of potential solutions, including the six sites considered in 2011. Following advice it has been agreed that there should be an engagement and listening process in order to ensure that the community has information about all of the possible solutions before any decision is made about which sites to put forward for public consultation. It will also give the community the opportunity to suggest alternatives.

# Exploring possible solutions

The report in 2011 looked at six sites (1 to 6 below). A further two sites have been identified (7 and 8) and there may be others. A site fact sheet of each proposal is included with this issues paper.

1. Vaynor and Penderyn High School

2. Godre’r Coed Playing Fields

3. Teddington Playing Fields

4. Current Ysgol-y-Graig Primary School

5. Black Patch Playing Fields

6. Ysgol-y-Graig Nursery Site

7. Pen y Dre High School Site

8. Cyfarthfa Junior School Site

See figure 1 below

*Taken out to email*

**Key factors**

1. **Education**
	1. Sufficient and appropriate outdoor space
	2. Ability to offer a range of facilities
	3. Factors that will improve education outcomes
2. **Access, Parking and Travel**
	1. Safe vehicle access
	2. Safe available pedestrian routes
	3. Sufficient off road parking for safe drop off and pick up
3. **Technical**
	1. Size of site
		1. Accommodate building, outdoor play space, sufficient off road staff parking, delivery access.
		2. Access to site for construction traffic
	2. Site levels and ground conditions
4. **Planning**
	1. Complies with the Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan (LDP)

# How can you help shape our thinking?

We want to hear your views on the possible sites for the new school. The listening and engagement stage revisits what was looked at before and to look at other possible sites before the public consultation.

You will be asked to discuss the possible sites and provide the reasons for your views so that these can be looked into before the consultation process begins.

You will also be asked to suggest other sites that may not have been included. This is an important part of the listening and engagement session so we get the best possible development for the new school.

# Processes and timescales

## Co-production

This follows the listening and engagement sessions.

The outcomes of the listening and engagement stage are reviewed so that Council officers and stakeholders can consider what proposals to recommend and take forward into the consultation process.

## Report to Council

On the 22nd March, 2017, a report will be presented to full Council listing the proposals and asking permission to go out to public consultation.

## Public Consultation

The public consultation will be for a 12 week period. The consultation will be available on the Cwm Taf Community Engagement Hub [www.cwmtafhub.com](http://www.cwmtafhub.comt) the Council’s website [www.merthyr.gov.uk](http://www.merthyr.gov.uk) and social media sites (Facebook and Twitter).

To access a paper copy of the consultation survey contact the Communications, Consultation and Engagement Office on (01685) 725052/725166 or email: Corporate.communications@merthyr.gov.uk. All documentation relating to this project will be available in Welsh upon request.

In addition to this, throughout the consultation period, a series of roadshows and drop-in sessions will be held across the County Borough.

# Where can I get more information?

Regular updates will be available on the Council’s website [www.merthyr.gov.uk](http://www.merthyr.gov.uk) and the Council’s social media sites, Facebook and Twitter.

If you have any questions please email: Corporate.communications@merthyr.gov.uk

# Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. Why has the project been delayed?**

A. Funding has only recently been made available.

**Q. Why are you going back out to public consultation?**

A.This is a multi-million pounds project and we want to make sure we get it right.

**Q. Is this a waste of taxpayer’s money?**

A. The costs of ensuring that we choose the correct site are small compared to the total cost. This will be a modern facility that is intended to serve this community for at least the next 50 to 100 years.

**Q. What will be the capacity of the school?**

A. The proposed new school is a full replacement of the current school and nursery and will be a one-form entry primary school for 190 pupils and 30 nursery pupils, plus a unit for up to 20 pupils with Additional Learning Needs.

**Q. How can you build on the playing fields when it is protected by the Fields in Trust?**

A. We would require a field change request to be approved by Fields in Trust. This would require MTCBC to offer an alternative site of at least equal quality and accessibility.

**Q. Who will make the final decision on the location of the school?**

A. The results of the public consultation will inform a Full Council decision.

**Q. What are the project timescales?**

A. Ideally the new school will be completed by March 2020.

**Q. Why is Pen Y Dre now being considered?**

A. Pen Y Dre is being put forward as a proposal because it is the secondary school for the pupils in Cefn Coed. There is a current trend for siting Primary and Secondary schools on the same site to support educational outcomes.

**Q. If Pen Y Dre is the chosen site, will school transport be provided?**

A. Transport will be provided for children who live more than 2 miles (walking route) from the new school.

**Q. Why are you putting forward proposals that are not feasible?**

A. A decision will be made on whether sites are feasible or not based on all the information gathered during this process.