Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council



## **3-16 Catholic School Site Consultation** January 2022 – February 2022



# Consultation to select the site for the new 3-16 Voluntary Aided (VA) Catholic School

In April/May and July-September 2021, the Council consulted on two options for the siting of the new 3-16 VA Catholic School; Option 1 – Buttercup Fields and Option 2 – Greenie. Responses were received from residents, the school community, parishioners and other members of the local community. An overall majority selected neither option (66%) with 22% selecting Option 2-Greenie and 12% selecting Option 1 – Buttercup Fields.

The Council considered a report on the results of the consultation including appendices containing updated information on the options consulted on, as well as feasibility information on the alternative sites suggested as part of the consultation.

The full Council report and all appendices can be accessed on the Council Website (Merthyr.gov.uk) under the Agenda for Full Council on Tuesday, 7th December, 2021.

Most of the alternative sites suggested are not feasible sites for the 3-16 school for reasons provided in the report to Council (see sections 5.29, 5.30 and Appendix 3). However, the most popular suggestion was to use the existing Bishop Hedley High School (BHHS) sites, both Phase 1 (Lower site) and Phase 2 (Upper site) and a detailed feasibility study of these sites has been carried out and included as part of the Council report (See Appendices 4 and 6). The conclusion to these feasibility studies, as detailed in 9.7 and 9.8 of the Council report is that the existing BHHS sites can be used to accommodate the 3-16 school provided that one of the Buttercup Fields is used to provide a grass sports pitch for secondary aged pupils.

The report also explains that the previous Option 1 – Buttercup Fields has been discounted by Council following further detailed ground and site investigations, updated risk appraisals and evaluation of options against project critical success factors, including significant risks to its viability. This option, which was also the least popular of the two options in the previous consultation, has been removed from further consideration for the 3-16 school.

The two revised options now proposed are:

- **Option A Greenie, with additional open space on current BHHS phase 2** This is the previous Option 2 with changes made in response to the previous consultation. The changes are:
  - the community playground would be relocated but near to the current community MUGA,
  - the community changing rooms would be relocated to the Buttercup Fields next to the community grass pitch and shared third generation synthetic surface (3G) pitch.
  - an additional green space community facility has been included on Phase 2 (Upper Site) of the current Bishop Hedley High School site. A question has been included in the consultation survey to gather the community's views regarding the potential use of this area as a community space.
  - safe pedestrian route provided from the location of the current Greenie playing fields to the Buttercup Fields and new community space on the BHHS Phase 2 site

As per the option previously consulted on, the school building with car parking and drop-off would be located on the Greenie playing fields, with both fields relocated to the Buttercup fields. One of the playing fields would be a shared school/community 3G football pitch, and the other would be open access to the community.

• Option B – Current BHHS site with school rugby pitch on one of the Buttercup Fields This is a brand new option. The school building and primary drop off and primary play areas located on Phase 2 of the current Bishop Hedley High School site, with car parking, sports hall and sports pitches on Phase 1 of the current Bishop Hedley High School Site. A school rugby pitch to be located on plateau 2 of the Buttercup Fields.

Welsh Government requires that the school is built in line with the timescales of the 21st Century Schools Band B Programme<sup>1</sup> i.e. by 2026, and as detailed in the Council report there are no other viable sites to deliver the 3-16 school at this time therefore the Council has agreed to carry out a new public consultation, on these revised proposals for the siting of Merthyr Tydfil's new single all-through 3-16 Voluntary Aided (VA) Catholic school.

#### Playing Fields - Community Involvement in Disposal Decisions

This new consultation is being undertaken in line with the regulations set out in the Playing Fields (Community Involvement in Disposal Decisions) (Wales) Measure 2010 and the Playing Fields (Community Involvement in Disposal Decisions) (Wales) Regulations 2015, and gives everyone an opportunity to comment on the revised proposals and help support a final Council decision on the location of the school buildings and playing fields.

In line with the requirements of the above regulations the Local Authority has conducted an **impact assessment** which evaluates the impact that the proposals would have on the Local Development Plan (LDP), Cwm Taf Well-being Plan<sup>2</sup>, the Merthyr Play Opportunity Sufficiency Assessment<sup>3</sup> and the MTCBC Open Spaces Strategy and Open Spaces Action Plan<sup>4</sup>.

The full impact assessment can be accessed at the following link https://www.merthyr.gov.uk/ media/7459/disposal-of-playing-fields-impact-assessment.pdf but a summary has been provided below.

It has been determined that the LDP and Open Spaces Strategy & Action Plan would be impacted should **Option A – Greenie with additional open space on current BHHS phase 2** be chosen, however, any negative impact would be mitigated by the plans proposed, and the play opportunities for children in the local area would remain very similar to the current position with a potential positive impact subject to the development of the additional open space provided on the existing BHHS phase 2 site.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The 21st Century Schools Band B Programme is a major capital investment programme in schools and colleges across Wales that is running from 2019 to 2026. Projects are typically funded by a mixture of Welsh Government Grant and Council funds. Voluntary aided school projects such as this 3-16 school, are funded 85% with WG grant monies and 15% from Council funds.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan 2018-23 is created by the Public Services Board and sets out objectives to improve wellbeing in the communities of Cwm Taf. The Plan is based on a wellbeing assessment conducted with the public to ensure public concerns are addressed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The Merthyr Play Opportunity Sufficiency Assessment is an assessment of the availability and quality of play opportunities for children and young people in Merthyr. This can be found on the Council website.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The MTCBC Open Spaces Strategy highlights the types of important open spaces in Merthyr and additional open spaces needed in the Borough. The Open Spaces Action Plan notes quantity, quality and accessibility of open spaces in each ward in Merthyr.

The mitigation is as follows:

Although the community playground would be relocated, it would remain in the open space next to the current MUGA and it would provide upgraded equipment.

Both sports pitches are to be located to the Buttercup Fields. One would be a grass pitch on plateau 1 in a newly designated open space and the other would be a shared school/community all-weather, floodlit pitch, on plateau 2 within the school grounds. This shared pitch would be accessible to the community for organised use of the facility.

Also, in recognition of the overall reduction of protected open space, additional open space is to be created on the existing BHHS Phase 2 (Upper) site, and would be developed in line with community responses, which is supportive of the Cwm Taf Well-being Plan to encourage communities to take ownership of local green spaces.

The relocation and improvement of playground and playing pitch facilities as well as the additional open space provided on the BHHS site is viewed as having a positive impact on the play opportunities for children in the local area. As part of the proposals a safe walking route to the new community green space on the current BHHS sites would be included to ensure this space is safely accessible to children and families.

If **Option B** were chosen, the impact on all plans and strategies would be neutral, as there would be no change to priority open spaces or the play opportunities for children in the area.

#### **New Consultation**

The new consultation is being run for 6 weeks from Thursday 6th of January 2022 to Thursday 17th February 2022 and the consultation documents can be accessed either online via the following link https://www.merthyr.gov.uk/vaschool or, alternatively, hard copies of the consultation documents can be requested from the Council, either by telephoning 01685 725000 or emailing 3-16vaschool@merthyr.gov.uk.

Please complete the survey online using the link above or via hard copy and return to the Council marked FAO 3-16 School Project.

Once all consultation responses have been received a report will be taken to Full Council to agree which site to take forward to a detailed design stage. Once the approved option has been fully designed, a statutory planning consultation will be undertaken. Subject to then receiving planning permission and final approvals from Welsh Government, Council will take a final decision to commence the project build, with construction currently estimated to begin on site between February and May 2023.

Option A – Greenie, with additional open space on current BHHS phase 2 (Aerial view)



An aerial view of the proposed development in Option A (Greenie) with pitches shown on the Buttercup Fields and additional green space shown on the opposite side of the road, on the current Phase 2 of BHHS i.e. upper BHHS site.

A more direct aerial view of this proposed community green space on the current BHHS Phase 2 site has been shown below.



#### Additional green open space (phase 2)

The area highlighted in green on the map above shows Phase 2 of the current BHHS site. This area could be converted into an open space community facility.

Please refer to question 4 in the survey to state what community facilities you would like to see provided in this potential area for community green space.

#### Option A – Greenie, with additional open space on current BHHS phase 2

#### Information about School and Community Facilities provided School Facilities

3-16 school for 1125 pupils (+ 100 Full-time equivalent (FTE) nursery provision for children aged 3 and 4)

Cost =  $\pounds$ 42.5 million approximately and includes cost of developing community facilities already explained below

The cost of developing additional community open space on BHHS phase 2 will be reviewed to reflect the responses to this part of the consultation.

Timescales: Construction Start – February 2023 Construction End – February 2025

A two-storey school building with primary classes on the ground floor.

Segregated primary and secondary facilities

Total external area for sporting facilities = 23,846m<sup>2</sup> which would provide;

Three Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) for school use

Senior rugby pitch (130 x 82m total area) for school use

3G synthetic surface all-weather pitch (97.4 x 60.8m total area) for shared school and community use

#### Shared Community/School use on school site

In addition to the 3G synthetic surface all-weather pitch the following will have shared use

Double height space Chapel located at heart of school and available for parish community use

Community Room available for use by community groups in agreement with the school.

Community can also use the school building and school sports facilities subject to agreement with the school

#### **Community**

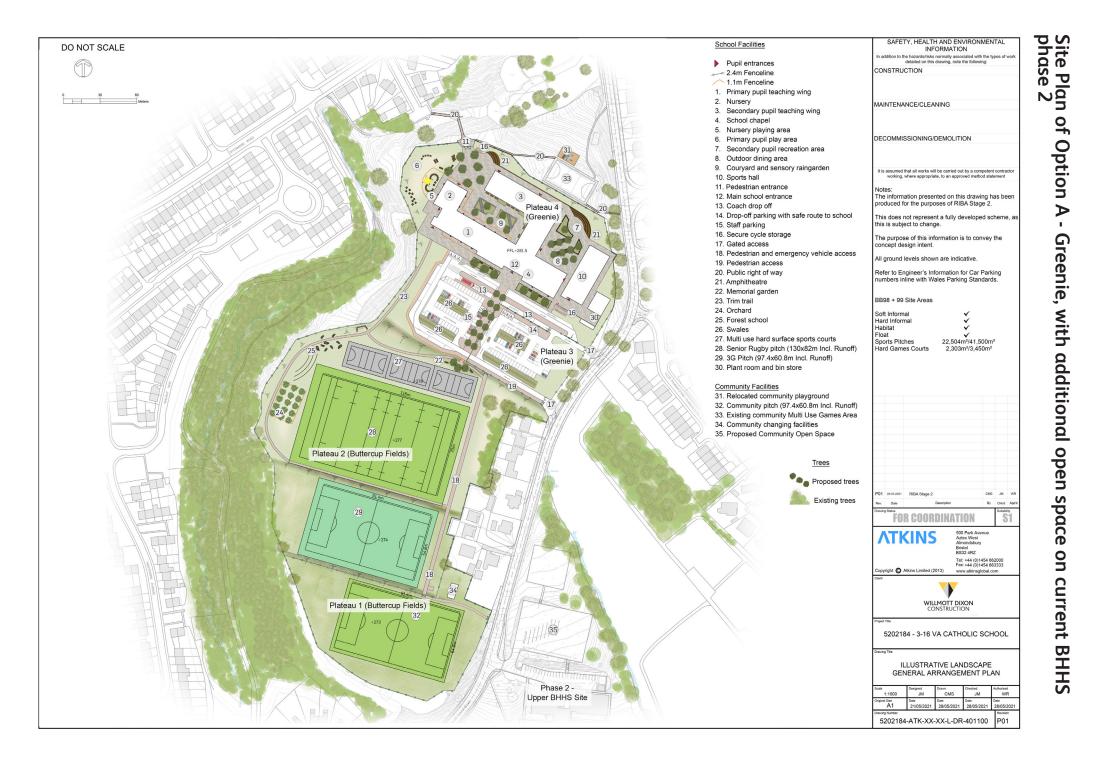
Grass pitch (97.4 x 60.8m total area) open access for community use

Community changing rooms relocated next to community grass pitch

Community MUGA retained at existing location

Community playground relocated next to existing community MUGA at Northern part of the site.

Single car park for vehicles on site, for community use when accessing facilities

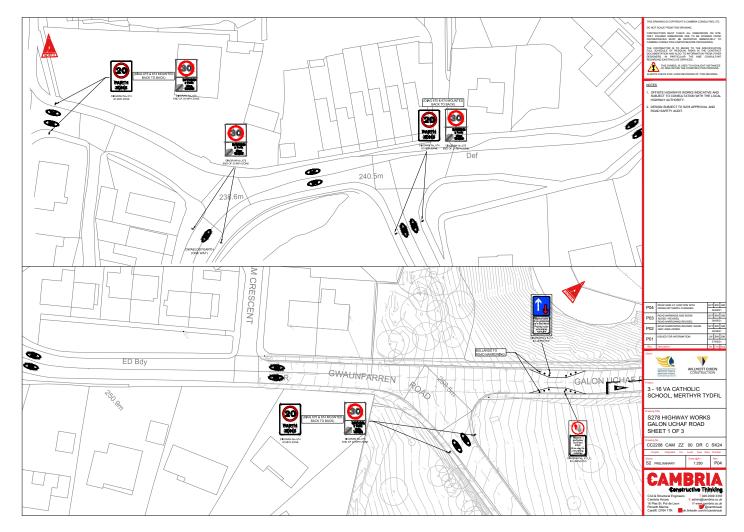


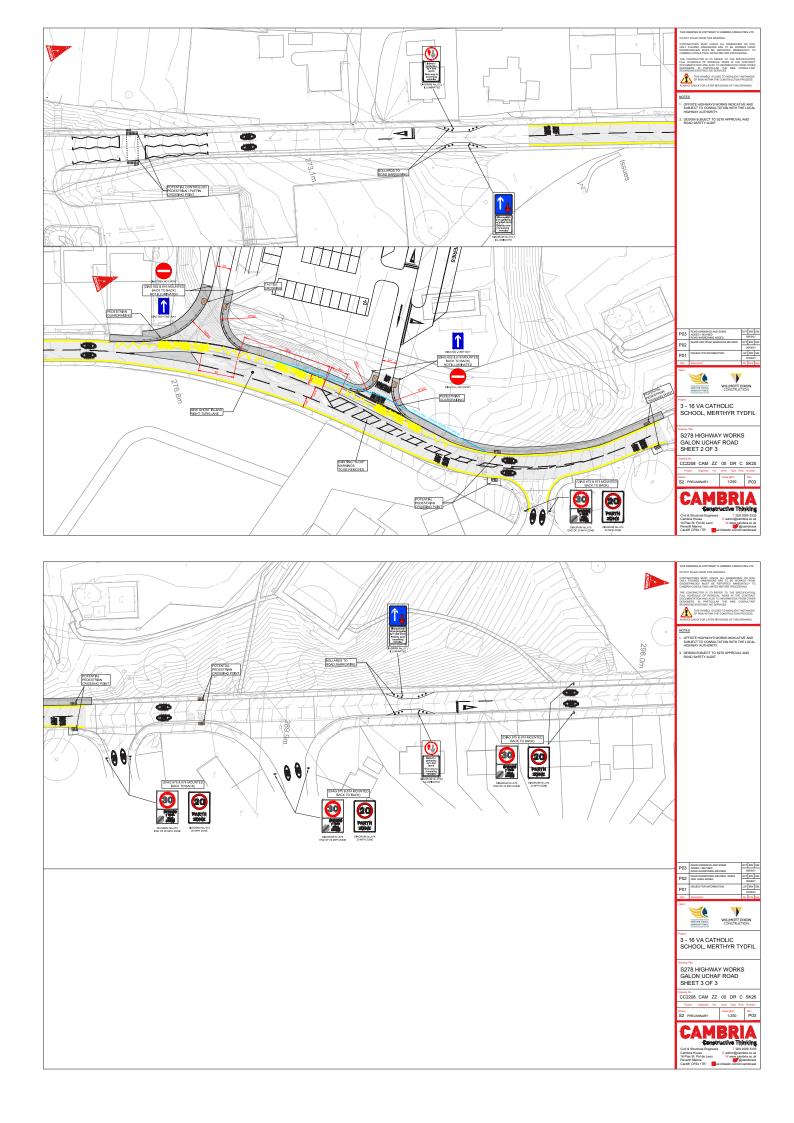
#### S278 Design of Option A – shows traffic calming measures

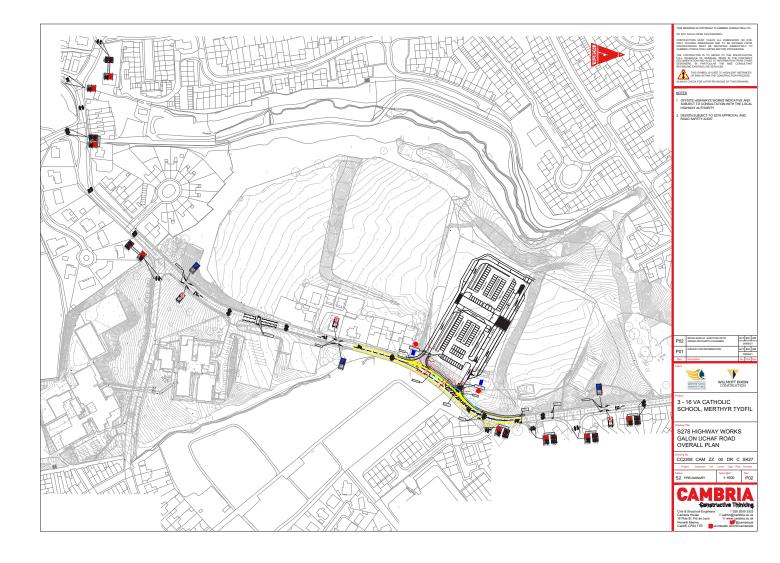
A Traffic Impact Assessment has been carried out using parental/staff travel surveys and counts of traffic along key parts of the highway in and around the school and on connecting roads in addition to detailed assessment of road safety data.

The Traffic Impact Assessments undertaken have been provided as Appendices 8 and 9 in the Council report (see section 8 of report) Agenda for Full Council on Tuesday, 7th December, 2021, 5.30 pm (merthyr.gov.uk) and these have been considered in detail resulting in provisional Section 278 proposals that have been designed and agreed with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council's Engineering & Highways department to provide as minimum disruption as possible to residents.

The indicatively designed schemes, incorporate lower speeds on the road and have additional pedestrian crossings to improve road safety. Detailed versions of the drawings below can be found on the consultation web page.







#### PROS

#### **OPTION A - Greenie, with additional open space on current BHHS phase 2**

#### **Community**

Improved playground facilities for community use would be relocated but would still be sited near the community MUGA, at Galon Uchaf end of site

Improved pitches for community and school use to be located on the current Buttercup Fields, with size of pitches agreed in consultation with community stakeholders.

Improved community changing room facilities provided adjacent to the enhanced all-weather and community pitches.

Additional community open space provided on the current Bishop Hedley High School Site Phase 2 – to be developed following community feedback from this consultation, if this option is supported by Council.

#### School / Education

Provides 3-16 Education provision on a single site.

Specialist teaching facilities such as labs able to be used by all pupils with appropriate timetabling to ensure pupils of all ages can benefit from learning opportunities using modern facilities in subjects typically only available to Secondary pupils.

No disruption to lesson time when accessing sporting facilities as they are on a single site

Maximum sporting facilities created in this option with total of 23,846m<sup>2</sup> of external sports pitches

Project completion at earliest opportunity to minimise disruption to the local community and to minimise duration of 3-16 school having to operate on different sites.

No disruption to pupils by construction as the school would be built independently of any existing school sites.

Two storey building with elevated position that maximises daylight and increases visible presence of the school building within the community.

#### <u>Other</u>

Promotes connection with neighbouring residential areas to north, west and east with potential to use existing, safe pedestrian routes into the site from all directions

All parking and drop off located on the same side of road as school so no pedestrians required to cross Galon Uchaf Road from parked vehicles/drop off.

One way entry to and exit from site would ease congestion as there is enough room to avoid queues blocking the junction. Safer entry to and exit from junctions with better visibility.

Intuitive vehicle circulation on site with one way drop-off; passengers to exit vehicles onto footpath not carriageway.

Traffic calming measures introduced on roads leading to the new school site, which include a pedestrian crossing to allow safe access to new community open space on Phase 2 of the BHHS site.

Cheaper of the two schemes to build by approx. £5m. subject to further development of the replacement community space on current BHHS site phase

#### CONS

#### OPTION A - Greenie, with additional open space on current BHHS phase 2

#### **Community**

The Greenie playing fields are designated as priority open space and this local asset would be lost and requires replacement nearby

Requires existing playing fields/pitches to be relocated to Buttercup Fields

Community sports pitches/fields would be located in close proximity to residential properties including floodlight provision on all-weather surface.

Community playing field at bottom of Buttercup Fields would be set back from the road with less visibility to the local community than the current fields. This makes supervising users of the field more difficult.

The elevated location means the building would be prominent on site from the surrounding residential areas. This could also be a positive in respect of providing a visible community building.

#### School/Education

Further design development required to ensure all primary classrooms are able to be accommodated on ground floor

No MUGA immediately adjacent to primary play area for easier access for youngest pupils in the school.

#### <u>Other</u>

Potential impact on local biodiversity which will need to be managed with local ecologist to ensure appropriate biodiversity achieved.

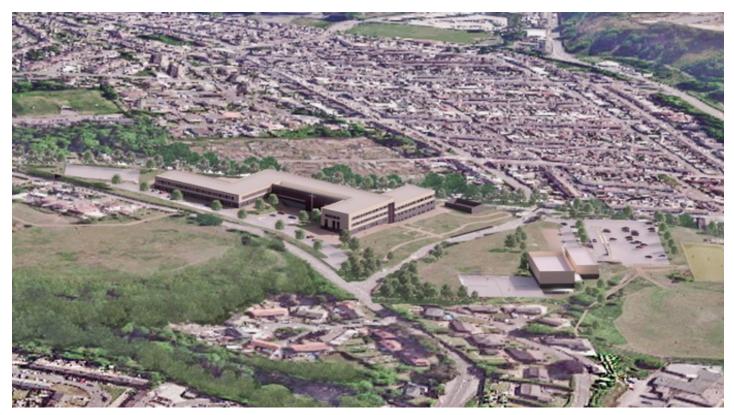
Unknown cost of developing community facilities on existing Bishop Hedley High School Site as this will be determined based on consultation feedback.

Option B – Current BHHS – Phase 1 (lower) and Phase 2 (upper) sites with rugby pitch on Plateau 2 of Buttercup Fields (Aerial view)



The wide aerial view above shows the proposed development Option B on the BHHS Site, with the school rugby pitch shown on plateau 2 of the Buttercup Fields. The main school building is shown on Phase 2 of the current BHHS site with some staff/visitor parking. The sports hall is shown on Phase 1 along with the main staff car park.

Option B – Current BHHS – Phase 1 (lower) and Phase 2 (upper) sites with rugby pitch on Plateau 2 of Buttercup Fields Aerial view (zoomed in)



The aerial view above shows a closer view of Option B. The school rugby pitch on the Plateau 2 of the Buttercup Fields cannot be seen in this shot but a closer view of the main school sites is provided.

## Option B – Current BHHS – Phase 1 (lower) and Phase 2 (upper) sites with rugby pitch on Plateau 2 of Buttercup Fields

#### Information about School and Community Facilities provided School Facilities

3-16 school for 1125 pupils (+ 100 full time equivalent (FTE) nursery provision for children aged 3 and 4)

Cost = Approximately £47.5 million

Timescales: Construction Start – May 2023 Construction End – September 2026

A stepped building design rising to three storeys tall at southern elevation

Primary classes on ground and first floors. Secondary classes are segregated from Primary phase and are on both ground, first and second floors.

Primary and Secondary play areas segregated on Phase 2

Segregated primary and secondary facilities

Sports hall on Phase 1 of the site.

Total external area for sporting facilities = 22,821m<sup>2</sup> which provides

Four Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) for school use

Senior rugby pitch on Buttercup Fields (total area 130 x 82m) for school use

3G synthetic surface all-weather pitch (2 x 5 a side pitches, total area 27 x 74m) for school use

Existing school grass pitch shared with neighbouring primary school retained

Drop off for parents of Primary aged children on Phase 2 of the site

Secondary/coach drop off and staff/visitor parking on Phase 1 of the site.

Pupils, staff and visitors to go between Phase 1 and Phase 2 using existing tunnel which would have a lift and other improvements added as required, to ensure it is accessible, in line with the Equalities Act, 2010.

#### Shared Community/School use on school site

Double height space Chapel located at heart of school and available for parish community use

Community Room available for use by community groups in agreement with the school.

Community can use the school building and school sports facilities subject to agreement with the school



35. Existing community Multi Use Games Area

sites with rugby pitch Site Plan of Option B L on Plateau **Current BHHS** N of L **Buttercup Fields** Phase 1 (lower) and Phase 2 (upper) up Fields Site Plan

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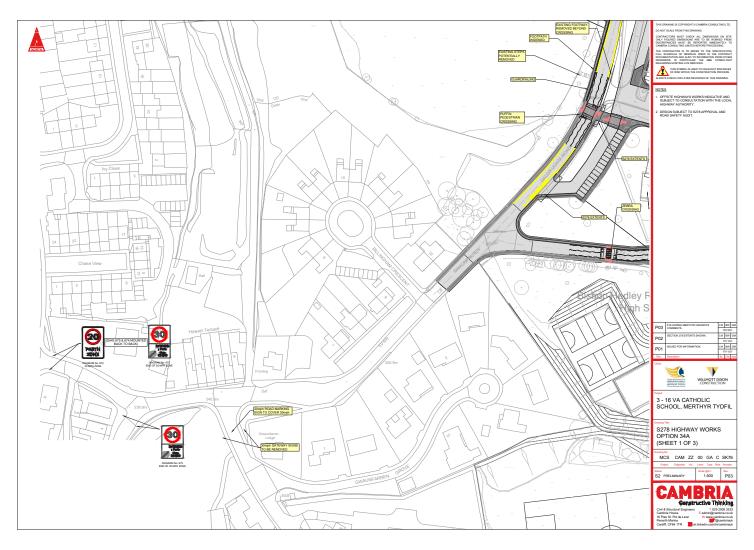
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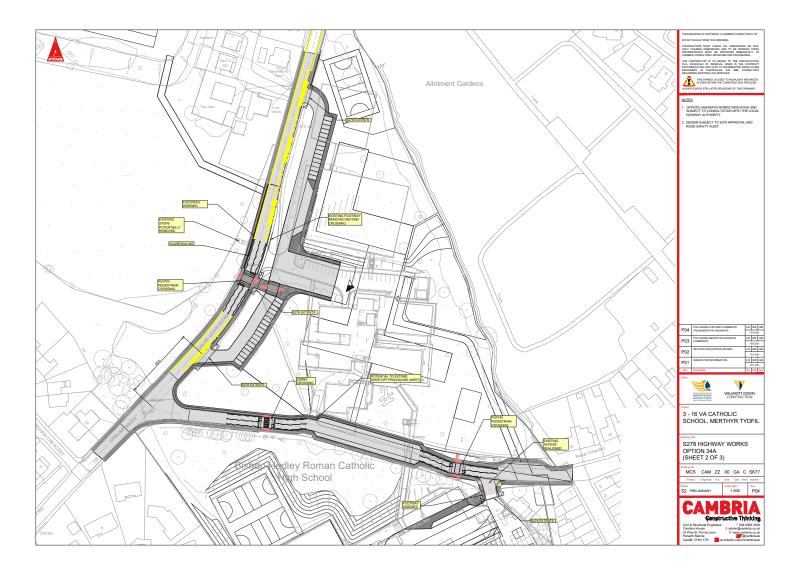
### S278 Highways Improvement schemes along Galon Uchaf / Gwaunfarren Road for Option B – shows traffic calming measures

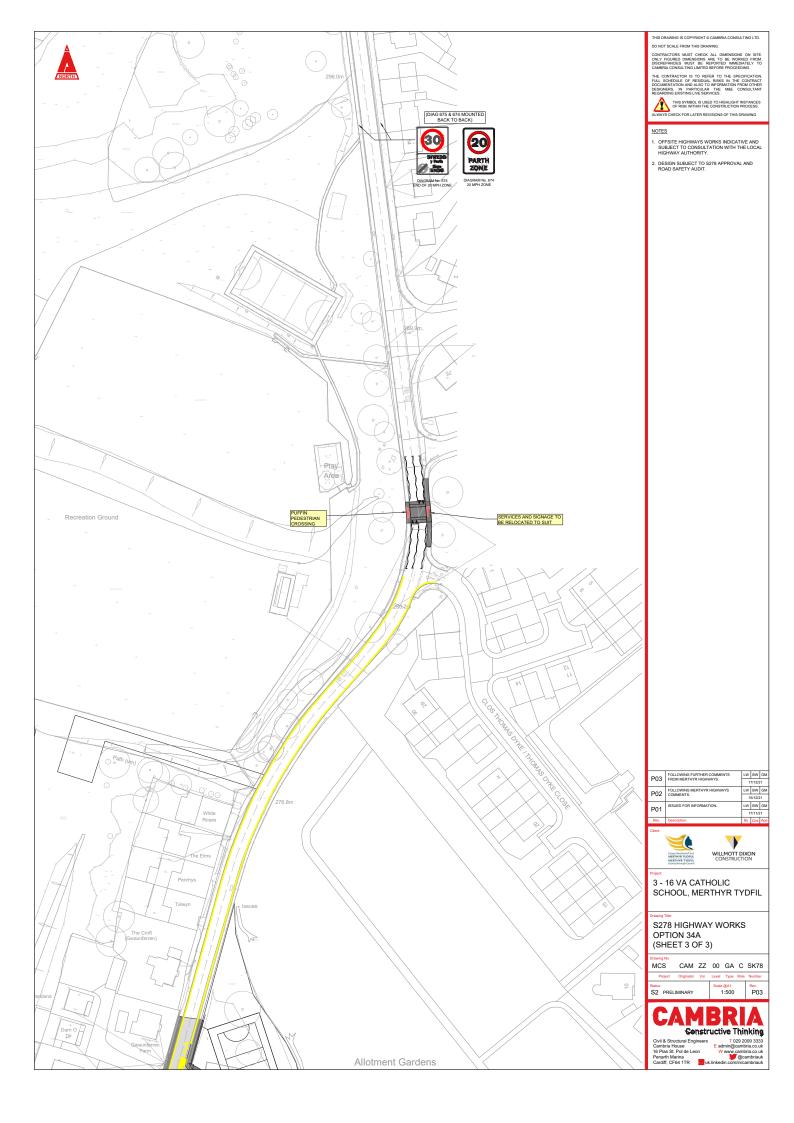
A Traffic Impact Assessment has been carried out using parental/staff travel surveys and counts of traffic along key parts of the highway in and around the school and on connecting roads in addition to detailed assessment of road safety data.

The Traffic Impact Assessments undertaken have been provided as Appendices 8 and 9 in the Council report Agenda for Full Council on Tuesday, 7th December, 2021, 5.30 pm (merthyr.gov.uk) and these have been considered in detail resulting in provisional highways improvement proposals that have been designed and agreed with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Engineering & Highways department to provide as minimum disruption as possible to residents.

The indicatively designed schemes, incorporate lower speeds on the road and have additional pedestrian crossings to improve road safety. Detailed versions of the drawings below can be found on the consultation web page.







#### **PROS**

#### OPTION B – Current BHHS – Phase 1 (lower) and Phase 2 (upper) sites with rugby pitch on Plateau 2 of Buttercup Fields

#### **Community**

The site is already a school site - no change of use

No impact on protected open space on the Greenie

No requirement to relocate community sports pitches, changing rooms or playground - these would remain as they are currently.

#### School / Education

Additional school MUGA available in this option

Specialist teaching facilities such as labs able to be used by all pupils with appropriate timetabling to ensure pupils of all ages can benefit from learning opportunities using modern facilities in subjects typically only available to Secondary pupils.

#### <u>Other</u>

Additional drop off facilities in comparison with existing school site with Primary drop off adjacent to the school building

Traffic calming measures extended to include a controlled crossing on Galon Uchaf Road and an additional crossing on Gwaunfarren Road to ensure safe access to all facilities.

Safer entry to and exit from site than currently provided with better visibility

Intuitive vehicle circulation on both Phase 1 and 2 sites with one way drop off will ease congestion.

Passengers to exit vehicles onto footpath not carriageway

Additional traffic calming measures introduced on roads leading to the school site, which include a pedestrian crossing to allow safe access to the rugby pitch on the Buttercup Fields.

CONS OPTION B – Current BHHS – Phase 1 (lower) and Phase 2 (upper) sites with rugby pitch	
on Plateau 2 of Buttercup Fields	
Community	
Three storey building that is stepped to match the existing levels of the site meaning the building would have an increased visible presence from the surrounding residential areas in comparison to the existing school buildings.	
No upgraded surface for current community sports pitches.	
<u>School</u>	
Disruption on BHHS site for pupils over a three year construction period - this would need to be carefully managed.	
The option with the longest duration meaning the 3-16 school would have to operate over four separate sites for an extended period with additional cost and a longer transition for school pupils, staff and leadership.	S
PE department separated from the rest of the school due to sports hall and PE classrooms location on Phase 1 (lower site)	
One of the Buttercup Fields (Plateau 2) would be needed to provide sufficient sports facilities for the school. Pupils would need to use new crossing on Gal Uchaf Road to access this facility. The time taken to reach this facility from the school building would reduce lesson time.	on
One MUGA will not be fully accessible due to the dramatic change in levels at the lowest plateau of Phase 1 (lower site) i.e. it will not be accessible to wheelchair users	
Fewer external sporting facilities in this option by 1,025m², this is the equivalent of an area slightly larger than a 5 a side football pitch.	
<u>Other</u>	
A number of drop off points which would be more difficult for the school to manage as they are spread across Phase 1 (lower site) and Phase 2 (upper site	e).
Coach drop off and staff parking on Phase 1 (lower site) which would require staff and secondary pupils to walk through the tunnel adjoining the sites.	
The more expensive project to deliver for the Council by approximately £5m.	

## Consultation Survey to select the new 3-16 Voluntary Aided Catholic School

Full Council has considered all the feedback from the public consultations recently undertaken in 2021 and has agreed revised options to consult upon further with the public so that a decision can be taken regarding the siting of the new 3-16 school.

• **Option A** to develop the Greenie, now includes provision of more green open space for the community on the current BHHS Phase 2 site. The aim is to provide enhanced community facilities across the Greenie, Buttercup Fields and current BHHS sites so that the development provides the best facilities for the both the school and the community.

Please find the site plans, pros/cons and S278 Highways Improvement schemes along Galon Uchaf / Gwaunfarren Road below.

• **Option B** to develop the existing Bishop Hedley High School (BHHS) sites for the 3-16 school. This includes a grass rugby pitch for the school to complement the sports provision able to be provided on the current BHHS sites. This option provides a viable alternative to developing the school building on the Greenie.

Please find the site plans, pros/cons and S278 Highways Improvement schemes along Galon Uchaf / Gwaunfarren Road below.

We would be very grateful if you could take a short time to fill in our survey on the 3-16 school site options.

Please read the site plans, pros/cons and S278 Highways schemes prior to completing the survey.

Your feedback will support the Council to choose the best site for the 3-16 School, for both the school and local communities, whether this be **Option A – Greenie with additional open space on current BHHS phase 2 or Option B – Current BHHS sites with school rugby pitch on plateau 2 of the Buttercup Fields.** 

Any feedback provided as part of this consultation will be considered by the Council in accordance with Playing Fields (Community Involvement in Disposal Decisions) (Wales) Measure 2010 and Regulations 2015.

#### 1. Are you: (please select one only that best describes you)

a resident
local community stakeholder
school pupil
parent of pupil
teacher/member of staff
member of a local parish
Other (please specify below)

2. If you wish to be informed directly regarding the outcome of the consultation and to receive a copy of the decision notice and any final Council report please provide details of your full name, address and email address below.

Please also indicate whether you wish to receive a hard copy of the above information otherwise only an electronic copy will be sent.

3. What is your view of Option A - Greenie? (School building on Greenie with additional community facilities on Phase 2 (Upper Site) of Bishop Hedley High School (BHHS))

4. If option A was taken forward, what open air community facility would you like to be developed on the Phase 2 (Upper site) of the current BHHS site? For example, this could be an open green space only, or also a playground, or you may have other suggestions.

5. What is your view of Option B – Current BHHS sites? (School on existing Bishop Hedley High School site with school rugby pitch on plateau 2 of Buttercup Fields)

6. Please rank the options out of 5.

	Unfavourable 1	2	Satisfactory 3	4	Favourable 5
Option A Greenie, with additional open space on current BHHS phase 2			J		
Option B – Current BHH Sites with school rugby pitch on plateau 2 of Buttercup Field					

7. What is your preferred option?

Option A - Greenie, with additional open space on current BHHS phase 2

Option B - Current BHHS Sites with school rugby pitch on plateau 2 of Buttercup Fields

8. Are there any changes or suggestions you would like to make with respect to your preferred option?

#### 9. Are there any further comments you would like to make on the proposals?