

**BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL****DRAFT OBJECTIONS REPORT****REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – EDUCATION AND TRANSFORMATION****SCHOOL MODERNISATION PROGRAMME: Outcome of Statutory Notice of proposal to make a regulated alteration to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Cwm Garw by relocating the school.****1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This public report is to inform of the objections received to the statutory proposal to make a regulated alteration to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Cwm Garw by relocating the school to a new school building on the Betws Primary School site.

**2 Connection to Corporate Plan/Other Corporate Priorities**

- 2.1 The school modernisation programme supports many of the corporate priorities, in particular:

- Working together to raise ambitions and drive up educational achievement

**3 Background**

- 3.1 The authority proposes to make a regulated alteration to YGG Cwm Garw by relocating the school to a new building on the Betws Primary School site.
- 3.2 On 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2015, Cabinet approval was received for the Council to adopt revised principles as a framework for school organisation in Bridgend; five key principles were set out to inform the organisation and modernisation of our schools:
- i. Commitment to high standards and excellence in provision.
  - ii. Equality of opportunity, so that all pupils can access quality learning opportunities, regardless of which school they attend.
  - iii. Inclusive schools, which cater for the learning needs of all their pupils.
  - iv. Community focussed schools, where the school actively engages with its local community.
  - v. Value for money.
- 3.3 The Policy and Planning Framework sets out 17 areas where these principles should be applied in practice.
- 3.4 The principles which are particularly relevant in the context of this proposal concern the size of primary schools (to ensure that “all Bridgend’s primary schools are large enough to make the full range of necessary provision”) and value for money,

efficiency and effectiveness and the provision of local schools, planning new provision to reflect changes in the distribution of the population.

- 3.5 Welsh-medium primary school provision for the north east of the county borough is currently provided at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Cwm Garw, which is located in Pontycymer. This school is typical of a number of valley schools, being built on a hillside and with poor access for disabled pupils and visitors. It is not suitable for the delivery of today's curriculum and the last Condition Survey (2007) graded the building as 'Poor' (exhibiting major defects and/or not operating as intended) with an estimated £700,000 backlog of repairs and maintenance.
- 3.6 The current capacity of the school is 210 with 123 (4-11) on roll as of January 2015, resulting in 87 surplus places. The number on roll is projected to rise to 161 in 2022, which would mean that surplus places would be 49. It is the ambition of the Council to increase the numbers of parents choosing Welsh medium education for their children and this needs balancing with the number of surplus places being held. Whilst there are surplus places in this school and our other Welsh-medium provision in the north of the county borough, Ysgol Cynwyd Sant, we have a deficit of places in the south.
- 3.7 Mobile classroom units were installed at both Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr in December 2013 and Ysgol y Ferch o'r Sger in 2014 to meet the immediate sufficiency issues, but a longer term solution is required and this proposal will reduce the pressure on Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr. The relocation of YGG Cwm Garw closer to the Valleys Gateway area would make the school more accessible, as it would be more centrally located. The school would allow for growth in demand for Welsh medium education and accommodate extra pupils coming from an enlarged catchment.
- 3.8 This relocation proposal would facilitate a change to the school's catchment area to encompass an area north of Bridgend town, which would reduce the pressure on places at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr in Bridgend, which is nearing its full capacity and will not be able to meet the expected needs of housing developments in the Bridgend and Valley Gateways areas in the near future. This balancing of Welsh-medium places across the county borough would also make YGG Cwm Garw a more viable size in terms of education provision and provide a school that is fit for purpose and more efficient in terms of operating costs.
- 3.9 This report outlines the statutory objection received during the objection period.

#### **4. Current situation**

- 4.1 In order to progress the proposal, consultation was carried out between 25<sup>th</sup> April and 1<sup>st</sup> June 2015 in accordance with the statutory School Organisation Code. A copy of the consultation document was also made available during this time on the Council's website:

<http://www1.bridgend.gov.uk/services/consultation/hub/ygg-cwm-garw.aspx>

- 4.2 The consultation document invited views and opinions to be submitted in respect of the proposal. A summary of these views and opinions were then published on the Council's website in the form of a Consultation Report.
- 4.3 A statutory notice outlining the proposals was subsequently published for a period of 28 days and formal written objections were invited during this time.
- 4.4 Since a single objection letter was received during the objection period, an objections report must now be published summarising the objections and the Authority's consideration of the objections. Cabinet will need to consider the proposal in light of objections. Cabinet can then accept, reject or modify the proposal.

## **5 Summary of Statutory Objections**

- 5.1 One statutory objection to the proposal was received during the statutory notice period. See Appendix 1 of this objections report for details of the objections and the Authority's consideration of those objections.

## **6 Equality Impact Assessment**

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out as part of the consultation stage. The assessment has concluded that there is no negative impact on the duties of the Council towards protected groups.

The existing YGG Cwm Garw School is predominantly inaccessible to disabled pupils and visitors with mobility issues. It is anticipated, , that accessibility of provision will be significantly improved upon occupation of the new build school on the current Betws site because the new build would be designed with due regard to accessibility and Building Regulations.

- 6.2 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been carried out as part of the consultation.
- 6.3 A Community Impact Assessment has been carried out as part of the consultation.

## **7 Financial Implications**

- 7.1 The project is one part of the Garw Valley South scheme and the anticipated cost of the new school will be funded by the Council and Welsh Government under the 21st Century Schools Programme for which the Authority has received '*approval in principle*'. The project is included within the Council's capital programme as approved by Council. The total approved budget for the Garw Valley Scheme is £10 million. The financial profile for the scheme has been revised and approved by Welsh Government to reflect the construction programme. The total cost of the scheme will be reviewed in the context of the proposed changes outlined above.

- 7.2 The costs of the scheme will be contained within the approved capital programme budget of £10 million. The scheme is in design phase and some highways works are expected to be required to ensure safe access to the new school, but guidance from the Welsh Government explicitly states that “where a capital project requires works to be done to improve highways access to the school this would not qualify for Welsh Government grant, and would fall to the Local Authority to fund”. The highways works are currently estimated to cost in the region of £200,000. The Welsh Government will provide half of the funding for the eligible elements of the scheme with the rest coming from capital receipts that Council has agreed will be ring fenced for the School Modernisation Programme.
- 7.3 There are currently three buses transporting pupils to YGG Cwm Garw (one from the Nantymoel area one from the Blackmill area and one from Betws/Llangeinor area). The current cost of this bus service is £63,000 per academic year. A school bus service, with sufficient capacity to transport the required projected number of pupils to the Betws site would cost approximately £92,000 per academic year. Additionally, should there be a change in the school catchment area to incorporate the Valleys Gateway area and subsequently relieve pressure on YG Bro Ogwr, one additional bus would be required which is estimated to cost £20,000 per academic year. Therefore, total transport costs relating to this proposal could amount to an estimated £112,000, which is £49,000 more than current transport costs. This will have to be met from existing directorate revenue budgets. The Garw Valley South scheme is not linked to any MTFS budget proposal.

*Hard Copies of this report are available on request from:*

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## **Details of Statutory Objections**

One statutory objection letter was received, from the Governors of YGG Cwm Garw, during the statutory notice period. The letter detailed below was received by BCBC on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2015.

The Authority's consideration of the objections is italicised beneath each objection raised below:

### **RE: OBJECTION : PROPOSAL TO MAKE A REGULATED ALTERATION TO YSGOL GYNRADD GYMRAEG CWM GARW BY RELOCATING THE SCHOOL TO A NEW SCHOOL BUILDING ON THE BETWS PRIMARY SCHOOL SITE.**

1. As governors, we feel strongly that more consideration has been given to the location of the new school than to the probable long term suitability for WM Education.

*The Authority has considered both school location and long term suitability for WM Education. Relocating YGG Cwm Garw Welsh-medium primary to a purpose built new build school closer to the Valley Gateway area, would make the school more accessible, as it would be more centrally located in the County Borough. As the consultation document explained, the proposed relocation enables a rebalancing of WM provision (directing new provision to areas experiencing WM demand pressures rather than to areas experiencing significant surplus provision). The Local Authority is currently looking at the potential of establishing a WM starter class in the south of the County Borough and a project team has been authorised and is scoping and evaluating a range of options. To support Welsh Medium education across the County Borough of Bridgend the proposed change to the LAs Learner Travel Policy proposes that pupils in Welsh Medium schools living 2 miles or further for primary schools and 3 miles or further for secondary schools would receive free transport regardless of whether the school is the nearest suitable school.*

2. During this second consultation, we feel that it was a gesture rather than a consultation. We don't feel that we've been equipped with the full facts, and/or, that on occasion there have been inconsistencies in information given and received from officers.

i.e.; That the three locations were re-visited and scored on the current proposal. On request of the information, the original matrix was received and then information changed to that the locations were re-looked at but that it was done in a different way. This report hasn't materialised. At a meeting with officers it was explained and made clear that we do not understand the reasoning for Favouring the BETWS site and requested the documents that determined the location decision on this current proposal.

*The Authority has undertaken the consultation process in compliance with the School Organisation Code. In addition to the consultation document itself, the Cabinet report requesting permission to consult on this current proposal (which contains the options scoring matrix) was shared with YGG Cwm Garw Governors on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 and the detailed reasoning favouring the Betws site is*

contained therein. The internet link to the report was emailed to YGG Governor representative on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2015 (see appendix 1 of the report for the options scoring matrix) :

<https://democratic.bridgend.gov.uk/documents/s3987/150331%2012%20School%20Modernisation%20Programme%20Garw%20Valley%20South%20Scheme.pdf>

3. This proposal is a diluted and completely different proposal to the original, and, as such the governing body have concluded that they strongly oppose it. It is a much smaller school 1 FE as opposed to 1.5 FE which will mean less capacity and flexibility to increasing reasonable and convenient access to Welsh Medium education within the area.

*The current proposal is only different to the original proposal in terms of proposed pupil capacity i.e. the location is exactly the same as it was in the original proposal - in respect of which no objections were received.. The current capacity of YGG Cwm Garw is 210 with 123 (age 4-11) on roll as of January 2015, resulting in 87 surplus places. The number on roll is projected to rise to 161 in 2022, meaning that surplus places would then still be 49. It is the ambition of the Council to increase the numbers of parents choosing Welsh medium education for their children and this needs balancing with the number of surplus places being held. Whilst there are surplus places in this school and our other Welsh-medium provision in the north of the county borough, Ysgol Cynwyd Sant, we have a deficit of places in the south.*

4. We strongly dis-agree with a number of the suggested advantages in the consultation paper if the proposal went ahead:
  - Allow for growth in demand of Welsh Medium Education in the county borough.
  - Reduced pressure on Bro-OgwrAnd,
  - Community provision could be incorporated into new school build.

*Noted. It is the Authority's view, however, that the above suggested advantages are legitimate as the relocation of the school nearer the Valley's Gateway area will allow the authority to consult on a school catchment change between YGG Cwm Garw and Ysgol Bro Ogwr thereby rebalancing the Welsh medium provision between both schools. Currently Ysgol Bro Ogwr is under increased pressure for places and there are unfilled places at YGG Cwm Garw. The relocation of the school to the Betws site will, together with a catchment change, free up some places in Ysgol Bro Ogwr allowing for more parents to access Welsh medium provision. The new school will be DDA compliant and suitably designed for community use.*

5. The original plan shared some services between two schools in Betws, such as, kitchen, heating etc., however, now that is not the case, there is no reason that both schools need to be located on the same site.

*The potential sharing of some services between two schools in Betws, such as, kitchen etc. was not the overriding reason for favouring the Betws site. As stated in the consultation document itself and in the options scoring matrix referred to above, the proposed new build relocated school on*

*the Betws site was favoured because it is considerably more geographically 'central' to the county borough than any of the other Garw Valley areas sites and will assist with the rebalancing and accessibility of WM provision reduced Pressure on Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr as a result of future housing developments in the Bridgend and Valley Gateways areas.*

6. As parents and governors of YGG Cwm Garw, we were given assurances that the outcome of the judicial review would not hinder or effect the Cwm Garw proposal.

*The outcome of the challenge has not affected the YGG Cwm Garw proposal. The Authority still proposes to make a regulated alteration to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Cwm Garw by relocating the school to a new school building on the Betws Primary School site.*

7. We understand that a land survey recently carried out on the proposed Betws site has revealed major issues which require significant part of the funding designated to groundworks as opposed to the building. This in our opinion is not value for money.

*Given the topography and industrial heritage of much of the County Borough, it is inevitable that significant groundwork considerations will be a feature of many of our School Modernisation Programme schemes. Technical Officers have confirmed that, taking into account all of the costs required to deliver the project, the revised size of school is affordable, and it is considered that the school provided at this location will be value for money.*

8. There is a genuine concern that this proposal is being driven forward from fear of losing funding. This is not the right motivation and the original objectives should be remembered and realised.

*It is not the case that this proposal is being driven forward from fear of losing funding. This proposal is being driven forward for the reasons stated in the Consultation Document. Welsh-medium primary school provision for the north east of the county borough is currently provided at YGG Cwm Garw, This school is typical of a number of valley schools, being built on a hillside and with poor access for disabled pupils and visitors. It is not suitable for delivery of today's curriculum and its condition is graded 'Poor' (exhibiting major defects and/or not operating as intended) with an estimated £700,000 backlog of repairs and maintenance.*

*The current capacity of the school is 210 with 123 (4-11) on roll as of January 2015, resulting in 87 surplus places. It is the ambition of the Council to increase the numbers of parents choosing Welsh medium education for their children and this needs balancing with the number of surplus places being held. Whilst we have surplus places in this school and our other Welsh-medium provision in the north of the county borough, Ysgol Cynwyd Sant, we have a deficit of places in the south.*

*Mobile classroom units were installed at both Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr in December 2013 and Ysgol Y Ferch O'r Sger in 2014 to meet the immediate sufficiency issues, but a longer term solution is required and this proposal will reduce the pressure on Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr. The relocation of YGG Cwm Garw closer to the Valleys Gateway area would make the school more accessible, as it would be more centrally located.*

9. We feel strongly that this proposal is not fit for purpose in relation to the significant housing developments that are planned long term. Officers also confirmed that the methodology in calculating the future need for WM education does not take into account the likely increase in demand from Promoting Welsh Language policies.

The LA's own projections confirms that the school is growing with 162 (4-11) on the roll as of September 2015 with this projected to rise to 177 in September 2019, which would mean that any surplus places would fall even further.

*The LA's January 2015 projection for 2023 predicts a pupil population of 162 (4-11). Currently, the highest projection is at 2022 with the projected pupil population of 167 (4-11). Despite the projected increase in population from the current numbers, there would still be a significant surplus of approx. 20% at the projected highest point. This proposal is not intended to meet all of the potential future demand in respect of all future housing developments in the Bridgend area. It will bring the development closer to the Valleys Gateway area where there is housing development.*

*The Local Authority is currently looking at the potential of a establishing a WM starter class in the south of the County Borough and a project team has been authorised and is scoping and evaluating a range of options.*

10. YGG Cwm Garw is already a community based school servicing the local area, and, with a significant number of children walking to school. It is right in the heart of the community and plays a pivotal role in the identity, culture and language of the village and surrounding area. It's re-location would be a huge loss to the community and would seriously hinder the use of Welsh Language in the Valley.

*Over two-thirds of pupils currently attending YGG Cwm Garw do not live in Pontycymer or within walking distance of the existing school site. Many are therefore transported to the existing school from other catchment areas/communities on free BCBC School Transport or by car. The proposed Betws relocation site (4.7 miles down the Garw Valley from the existing site) is part of the Garw Valley – and locating a new purpose built WM school there is intended to help improve the use of Welsh Language in the Valley.*

11. We Question the assessment that suggests that its anticipated the move would have a positive effect in terms of the Welsh Language and would provide Welsh-medium to a wider catchment. The GOAL being to decrease the already dis-proportionately bigger catchment areas that WM schools must contend with at present. YGG Cwm Garw should be focused on as a project for bettering education provision and not for elevating demands from another area.

*The proposal is focused on as a project for bettering WM education provision. By building a brand new, purpose built WM school in a geographically more central and more accessible location, closer to identified areas of WM demand pressures and housing developments – it is intended that education provision will be enhanced.*



12. Welsh Government's objectives in its Welsh-medium Education Strategy (WMES), is to 'encourage greater access to Welsh medium early years and primary provision within the child's community'.

In its original draft WESP (2012) the council included the intention to establish 'community based WM Schools in parts of the County Borough where Access is currently more constrained and in response to parental wishes.

*As stated previously, the majority of pupils currently attending YGG Cwm Garw do not live in Pontycymer or within walking distance of the existing school site. Many are transported to school on free BCBC School Transport or by car from other areas. The proposal retains WM provision in the "Garw Valley community" – albeit 4.7 miles further down the Garw Valley so as to be closer to areas experiencing WM demand pressures.*

*The Local Authority is currently looking at the potential of a establishing a WM starter class in the south of the County Borough and a project team has been authorised and is scoping and evaluating a range of options.*

13. Catchment areas of current WM schools are far greater and their size disproportionate to those of EM schools in BCBC. This has implications on travel times and distances for pupils and parents and raises a number of equality issues.

*The proposal is to relocate YGG Cwm Garw from Pontycymer to a new build Welsh-medium primary school on the current Bettws Primary School site, which is a distance of just 4.7 miles away. The majority of pupils currently attending YGG Cwm Garw do not live in Pontycymer or within walking distance of the existing school site. Many are therefore transported to school on free BCBC School Transport by car. Potentially, therefore, the travel times of many pupils will decrease if the proposal is implemented.*

14. Public Transport is not ideal for parents without the use of a car to Bettws.

*As stated above, the majority of pupils currently attending YGG Cwm Garw do not live in Pontycymer or within walking distance of the existing school site. Many are therefore transported to the existing YGG Cwm Garw school site on free BCBC School Transport. The parents of such pupils without the use of a car therefore face the same issue of reliance on Public Transport when attending the existing site. It is intended that the proposed new site in Bettws will have a 'site-minibus' available for use during the school day by the co-located EM and WM schools. Potentially this could be used e.g. in situations where parents/pupils require transport to or from site at times other than school start or finish.*

15. We strongly believe that this proposal undermines a number of BCBC's current WESP visions:

- a. Deliver the three principles of equality, choice and opportunity for all.
- b. Be consistent with the national aspirations set out in the Welsh Government WM Education Strategy (WMES).
- c. Ensure that Welsh Medium Education is available to all children of pre-school age and above whose parents /carers wish them to receive their education through the medium of Welsh, and this within reasonable travelling distance from children's homes.

We, the Governing Body of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Cwm Garw, feel strongly that, Welsh Language Provision needs to be retained in the Garw Valley.

*The Authority believes that this proposal is consistent with its WESP visions, delivering enhanced equality, choice and opportunity in terms of WM provision.*

*Welsh Language Provision will be retained in the Garw Valley. The proposal is to relocate the existing school to a suitable, fit for purpose new school building 4.7 miles down the Garw Valley in Betws. The Betws site is part of the Garw Valley.*

We would like to take the opportunity to re-iterate to all stakeholders that we are committed to working in a positive manner, towards realising the needs of WM education with a suitable, fit for purpose new school building.

Yours sincerely,

The Governors  
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Cwm Garw.