

# 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS



## APPENDIX A - COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

### CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO OPEN A NEW 3 TO 19 SPECIAL SCHOOL IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

The Consultation Document and Appendices are also available on the 'Get Involved' page on the Council website.

Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg / This document is available in Welsh.

# **Community Impact Assessment**

## **Introduction**

This Community Impact Assessment is prepared in accordance with the School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018). It is to be read alongside the Consultation Document, Equality Impact Assessment and Welsh Language Impact Assessment as the information contained in each document is related and the themes within are cross-cutting.

Section 2.1 of the School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) refers to elements of school organisation that require the publication of proposals, including:

- The opening of a maintained school (including special school).

The proposal is to open a new English medium 3 to 19 special school in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) and introduce catchment areas for special schools.

The consultation for this proposal will start on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2023 and will be completed at 17:00 on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The Consultation Document has been circulated to all prescribed stakeholders. This Community Impact Assessment is an Appendix of the Consultation Document.

## **The Proposal**

The proposal is to open a new English medium 3 to 19 special school in RCT for 180 pupils, however this will be subject to undertaking further feasibility and progressing with the detailed design of the new school. The new school will provide education for pupils with a range of additional learning needs including autistic spectrum disorders, severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties, and sensory impairment.

It is proposed that the new school will be built in the Clydach Vale area of Tonypany, and it will open no later than the 2026 academic year. The new school is in addition to the four special schools already open in RCT.

In addition, it is proposed to introduce catchment areas for all 3 to 19 special schools across RCT, these are:

- Park Lane Special School.
- Ysgol Hen Felin.
- Ysgol Ty Coch.

## **Community Impact**

The new 3 to 19 special school in RCT would be built in accordance with current requirements of planning and building control legislation and will be fully accessible and compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

Accommodation will consist of:

- Modern, flexible learning environments for all pupils, a hall/dining area, and specialist teaching and learning areas to cater for the needs of all pupils.
- A hydro-therapy pool plus other sensory and stimulating specialist equipment.
- A dedicated area within so that the local community will be allowed to safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day.
- Enhanced outdoor spaces to support the full range of curriculum activities.
- Traffic management systems including on-site pupil bus drop off, and on-site staff parking.

The new school will be a fully accessible and fully integrated community school. A dedicated area will be designed within so that the local community will be allowed to safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day.

The proposal will also include a review of safe routes to school and, if required, an investment in improvements to walkways, road crossings and traffic calming measures to ensure the required safety standards are met. This is the approach we have implemented within other communities through the delivery of the Band B Sustainable Communities for Learning programme, which has seen significant improvements being made.

The estimated capital cost of this proposal is £53.4 million. The Council and the Welsh Government via the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme will fund this, with the Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme funding up to 75.0%. Costs will be developed alongside the consultation process and approvals sought in line with the Council's decision-making procedures.

There are very well-used community facilities adjacent to the proposed new school setting including:

- Clydach Vale County Park and Visor Centre.
- Football Pitch.
- Running Track with changing facilities.

These were a factor in the identification of the site for this school. These community facilities are shown in the following aerial image of the proposed new school setting.



*Aerial image of the proposed new school setting.*

We hope that the additional community spaces that will be part of the new school will enhance and allow the expansion of increased community use in this area.

### **Catchment Changes**

Placement into special schools is currently agreed by the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services' Access and Inclusion Service Panels with pupils being placed in the nearest suitable special school to their home where possible. However, to better manage the allocation of special school places across RCT, the proposal also seeks to introduce defined catchment areas for all of the 3 to 19 special schools across RCT.

On opening, pupils already attending other 3 to 19 special schools that will then reside within the catchment area of the new special school, will be given the option to relocate to the new school. To note this will not be mandatory and this will be down to parental/carer choice. However, once the catchment changes come into effect, the Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services' Access and Inclusion Service Panels will place new pupils into specialist provision according to the newly defined catchment boundaries.

Maps identifying the proposed special school catchment areas are included within the Consultation Document. Maesgwyn Special School will not be included in this process as it offers a different provision to the other special schools in RCT. As well as the new 3 to 19 special school, the proposed new catchment areas will cover Park Lane Special School, Ysgol Hen Felin and Ysgol Ty Coch. These are proposed as:

- **New 3 to 19 Special School in RCT** – Combining the catchment areas of Porth Community School, Tonyrefail Community, Ysgol Nant Gwyn (minus

Pontrhondda Primary) and Coedylan Primary School and Trehopcyn Primary School.

- **Park Lane Special School** – Combining the catchment areas of Aberdare Community School and Mountain Ash Comprehensive School.
- **Ysgol Hen Felin** – Combining the catchment areas of Ferndale Community School, Treorchy Comprehensive, Pontrhondda Primary.
- **Ysgol Ty Coch** – Combining the catchment areas of Bryncelynnog Comprehensive, Hawthorn High, Pontypridd High (minus Coedylan Primary School and Trehopcyn Primary school) and Y Pant Comprehensive.

### **Transport and Travel Implications**

There is a statutory duty placed upon all Local Authorities in Wales to provide pupils with free transport to their nearest suitable school if they reside beyond safe 'walking distance' to that school. The term suitable school applies to the catchment area English, Welsh, dual language or voluntary aided mainstream primary school, secondary school or special school/class as appropriate. The law relating to safe 'walking distance' is defined as two miles for pupils of compulsory school age receiving primary education and three miles for pupils of compulsory school age receiving secondary education.

The Council has exercised the discretionary powers afforded to it under the provisions of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 (2008 Measure) to make a more generous provision to pupils. The relevant information in relation to the new school is set out below:

- The eligibility criterion for walking distance for pupils receiving compulsory primary education at their nearest suitable school has been set at one and a half miles, instead of two miles as required by the 2008 Measure.
- Free transport to their nearest suitable school, where places are available, is provided to pupils who meet the one and a half mile eligibility criterion from the start of Foundation Phase (the start of the school term after their third birthday), rather than from the start of compulsory education (the start of the school term after their fifth birthday) as required by the 2008 Measure.
- The eligibility criterion for walking distance for pupils receiving compulsory secondary education at their nearest suitable school has been set at two miles instead of three miles as required by the 2008 Measure.
- Free transport is provided to post 16 pupils until the end of the academic year in which they attain their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday who meet the two mile eligibility criterion.

Further information in relation to the Council's Home to School transport provision can be viewed and downloaded from the Council website via:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ParkingRoadsandTravel/Travel/SchoolandCollegeTransport/SchoolandCollegeTransport.aspx>

Many pupils (75.9%) currently accessing the special schools across RCT use home to school transport. The proposal will include a review of safe routes to school and, if required, an investment in improvements to walkways, road crossings and traffic calming measures to ensure the required safety standards

are met. This is the approach we have implemented within other communities through the delivery of the Band B Sustainable Communities for Learning programme, which has seen significant improvements being made.

### **'Out of School Hours' School Usage**

As the new school will be built in accordance with the current requirements of planning and building control legislation and will be fully accessible and compliant with the Equality Act 2010, the headteacher of the new school will be encouraged and supported to consider using these facilities to increase out of school hours use. This could include breakfast club and a variety of after school clubs, including sports, cookery and art.

However, as this proposal is to create a brand new provision, this provision will be developed.

### **Impact on Health and Wellbeing**

The new school will be a modern, colourful, 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning environment. It is determined that the impact upon the health and well-being of staff and pupils will be positive given the brand new facilities and the green, biodiverse, peaceful location.

The new school building will be fit for purpose and will deliver flexible teaching and learning areas to ensure delivery of the New Curriculum for Wales. The external spaces will have a positive impact upon the health and well-being of both staff and pupils. The new school site will have new outdoor play spaces, an outdoor classroom, a forest schools' area and a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA), and all areas will be fully accessible.

These positive benefits for the school community will also be realised in the local community, as these facilities will also be available for community use. The school will be supported to establish links with local community groups to ensure that all can benefit from this positive investment.

The proposal will also include a review of safe routes to school and, if required, an investment in improvements to walkways, road crossings and traffic calming measures to ensure the required safety standards are met.

Further information relating to the impact of the proposal on pupils, including how the proposal contributes to all seven goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015 and an assessment of the proposal on the five ways of working, can be found in the Equality Impact Assessment which is at Appendix B.

### **Community Safety**

The new school will be designed to comply with 'Secure by Design' which will ensure that amongst other things, the school boundary and buildings are fully secured and protected with CCTV. Designs will be developed in conjunction

with the local Designing Out Crime Officer ensuring that school and community safety are key principles embedded within the process.

The new school will be a fully accessible and fully integrated community school. The aspiration is that the new school will be designed so that the local community will be allowed to safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day. The full scope of this community use will be dependent on further project development that will be undertaken as the design process progresses.

The new school will establish new relationships with the South Wales Police and the local Police Community Support Officer.

Given the proposed location of the new school, and the design development work that will be undertaken with partners in South Wales Police, no concerns regarding community safety are anticipated.

### **Community Engagement**

Members of the community wishing to find out more about the plans to build a new special school can attend a public drop in session where they can discuss the proposal with Officers from the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services. This engagement event will be held on Tuesday 22nd August 2023 between 15:00 to 18:30 at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.