



# CONSULTATION REPORT: PROPOSED REPLACEMENT FOR BLENHEIM ROAD COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

September 2014



TORFAEN  
COUNTY  
BOROUGH



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## **1. BACKGROUND**

Torfaen County Borough Council's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools proposals were well received by Welsh Government in 2011, which for some parts of Torfaen will result in new schools. This is not something new in Torfaen as since its inception, the council has been carrying out school reorganisation work to upgrade the estate.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme has been well documented, with the council taking the decision to include every school as part of it in October 2010. The council sought the views of all interested parties on its programme during a series of roadshows that were held across the county borough in March 2011.

The outcome of this public engagement was reported to cabinet in July 2011. Subsequent to this meeting, Welsh Government asked councils to revise their original Band A proposals (originally submitted in October 2010) against the following prioritisation criteria:

- The level of match funding required by the council increased from 30% to 50%
- The poorest condition of the estate (prioritisation to reside with the council although the independent school survey data will be applied)
- Surplus capacity – the key indicator being surplus places (both as a percentage and as an estimated actual reduction in a number of places)
- Running efficiencies (e.g. reduction in running costs, backlog maintenance)
- The length of 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Band's B, C and D are yet to be determined.

The revised Strategic Outline Programme was approved by Council in November 2011 with the Welsh Government confirming match funding in principle in December 2011.

Torfaen's primary school estate has some schools that:

- Are trying to operate in buildings or grounds which are not fit for purpose and have an unaffordable maintenance backlog
- Are too small to run economically in today's financial climate
- Have significant surplus capacity in their local cluster of schools
- Are not located where the demand for school places is concentrated

The Council has to reduce surplus capacity in its schools and has been set targets by the Welsh Government to reach those targets by 2015.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme in Torfaen and across Wales is intended to tackle these issues in a strategic rather than piecemeal way.

The proposal in relation to Blenheim Road Community Primary School is one identified in Band A (2014 to 2019) of the agreed Programme. This proposal specifically refers to the replacement of Blenheim Road Community Primary School within its current site with a new 315 place school with a 52 Part Time Equivalent (PTE) nursery.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

Statutory consultation was not required for the Blenheim Road Community Primary School proposal. This is because the proposed capacity (315 places) will be greater than the highest number of pupils on roll at the school at any time in the previous two school years (September 2012 – 161; September 2013 – 158) prior to the publication of the proposal.

However, informal consultation was undertaken in relation to the proposed replacement school on the current site.

Consultation was also undertaken with children and young people at Blenheim Road Community Primary School using the Torfaen Play and Short Break Services.

The consultation ran from Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2014 to Monday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2014, with the following “drop in” public engagement event held to support the consultation, which was attended by a number of council officers:-

<b>Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Intended Audience</b>
Monday 7th July 2014	Blenheim Road Community Primary School	3.30 to 6.30pm	Teaching, non teaching and support staff of Blenheim Road CPS, the Governing Body of Blenheim Road CPS, Parents/carers of pupils of Blenheim Road CPS, and Other Interested Parties.

The consultation process was extensively promoted online, via the Torfaen Council website and social media channels, and also received coverage in the local press.

## **3. RESULTS AND COMMENTS**

The Local Authority received a small number of responses to the consultation exercise.

A file of those comments and views received during the consultation period has been made available to Elected Members as part of this process and, before any decisions are made.

Only a small number of stakeholders attended the event and similarly a small number of responses/comments were received/made in respect of the proposal. The comments received were generally very supportive and understandably, it was clear that there was support for the proposal to proceed as soon as possible. However, some concerns were raised which along with the Local Authority responses are summarised below.

COMMENT	RESPONSE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is current public access through the site. Will this be moved to safeguard the school and its pupils and staff?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no registered Public Rights of Way across either of the school grounds. This was because they were all extinguished by a confirmed order in June 2007.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If new houses are built will the new school be big enough? Will there be overcrowding; Will classes be too big?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school is being designed and built for 315 pupils (plus a nursery). A case was made for 420 places but was not accepted by Welsh Government. The council will try to secure a flexible design approach that would allow further extension and/or keep under review the potential for additional capacity in neighbouring schools. This is to mitigate the risk that currently unplanned but predicted, by virtue of their inclusion in the Local Development Plan, long term housing developments occur in those areas and demand exceeds capacity.</li> <li>Infant Class size legislation means that key Stage 1 (Infant) classes must not exceed 30 pupils. At Key Stage 2 (Junior) there is no statutory requirement on class sizes but they are monitored by both the Council and Welsh Government to wherever possible keep them to 30 pupils.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will the playing fields be big enough?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school is being designed and built to current standards and requirements in terms of play areas for the pupils.</li> </ul>

## **4. CONSULTATION WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Torfaen Play and Short Break Services were contacted to carry out consultation with pupils in Blenheim Road Community Primary School.

### **Methodology**

The method used to consult with pupils who attend Blenheim Road was to engage with a group of children of mixed ages by delivering inclusive group activities.

Firstly, a group discussion was undertaken on the hopes and fears of the children in moving to a different school. Many topics were discussed during the process including how the children would like the new building to look, the features and facilities, equipment, friends, teachers, the current building they are in and many more. This was the chance for children to express their opinions in a democratic and open forum in order to gain the best possible answers.

Secondly, an art activity was undertaken with the children which enabled them to draw what they would like to see at a new primary school building or any changes they would like to see. This allowed them to put their views and ideas about possible changes which could be implemented within their new primary school setting. This method enabled the Play and Short Break Service to prompt younger children to think about their ideas and talk about them.

Finally, it was explained to the group what will happen with the information they had given and how it would be followed up. During this conclusion the children were thanked for their input and it was further explained that all this information and the ideas they had provided would be passed on to the council. The children were advised that the Play Service had no powers to make their ideas become reality, therefore ensuring no promises were made and the children had no unrealistic expectations from the exercise.

Attached at appendix 1 of this report are the outcomes of the consultation.

Appendix 1 – Results of consultation with pupils



# CHILDRENS CONSULTATION RESULTS ON RELOCATION OF BLENHEIM ROAD COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

June 2014



## Number of children consulted: 70

A group discussion was held with the children. The children gave the following opinions on the proposal to relocate the school to a new building:

*"I would like to see a bigger yard"*

*"I would like to have bigger classrooms"*

*"I would like to see swings, a slide and a roundabout on the playground"*

*"I would like to see a see-saw on the playground"*

*"I would like more equipment to use"*

*"I would like bullying to stop in a new building"*

*"I would like to have a pond with fish in a forest school area"*

*"I would like to see more teachers to improve our learning"*

*"I would like to see a bigger football pitch"*

*"I would like to have bigger doors in a new school"*

*"I would like to see a wide range of stationary"*

*"I like our current hall so I would be sad to see it go"*

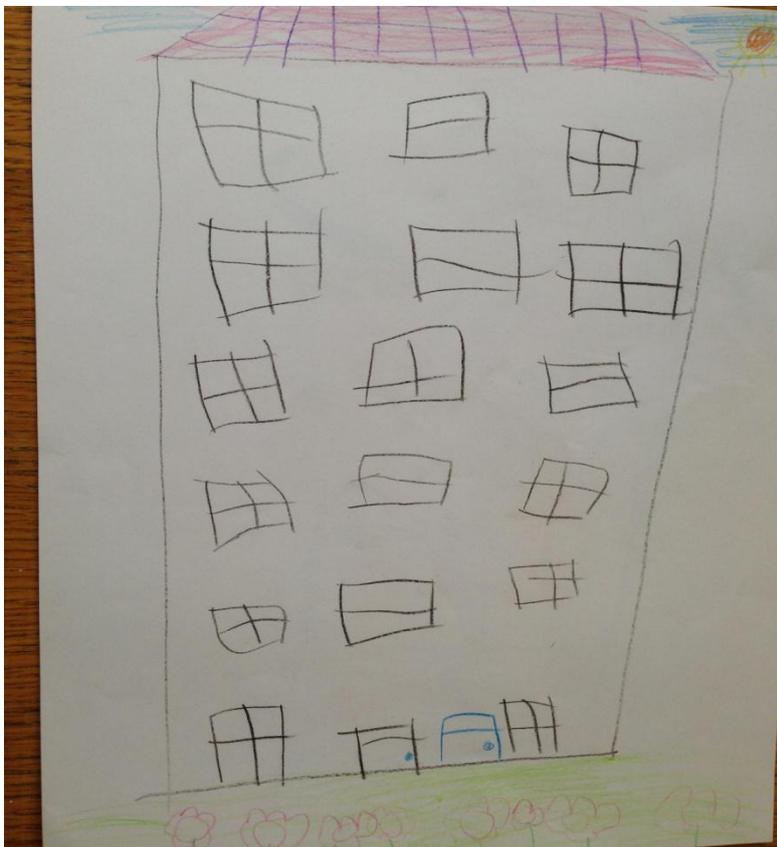
*"Our work would be lost and damaged if we move to a different school"*

*"What if we don't like the school when we move?"*

*"They did work on the school recently so it wouldn't make sense to move"*

*"Will Blenheim Road still be called Blenheim Road if we move from Blenheim Road?"*

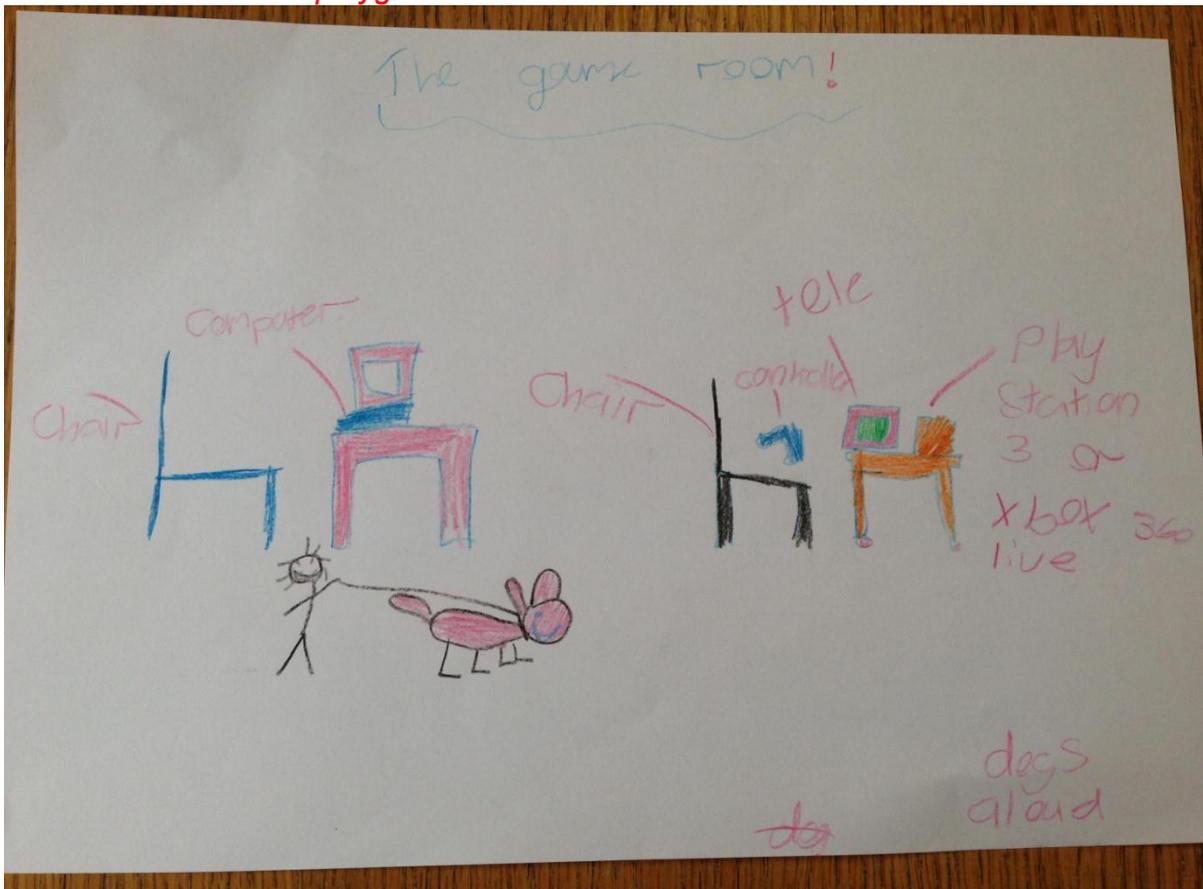
**The art activity was carried out to find out what children would like to see in a new school building. Here is a selection of drawings that were drawn:**



*"I want the new Blenheim Road Community Primary School to be huge!"*



"I would love the new playground to look like this"



"I would love to have a games room for lunch times at Blenheim Road"

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