

Newport City Council

Objection Report

Proposal to increase the overall capacity of Bassaleg School from 1,747 to 2,050 with effect from September 2023



Ysgolion yr 21ain Ganrif
21st Century Schools



Purpose

This report is published in line with the requirements of Section 42 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code, November 2018. This is a summary of the statutory objections and the Council's response to those objections. The objections and responses set out in this report must be given due consideration when the Council takes a decision on the determination of the proposal.

Publication of the Statutory Notice

Following the Formal Consultation period and the publication of a consultation report, the Cabinet Member for Education & Skills took the decision to proceed to publish the proposal to increase the overall capacity of Bassaleg School from 1,747 to 2,050 with effect from September 2023, by way of a statutory notice for 28 days from the 3rd March 2021 to the 1st April 2021.

The 2013 Act requires that anyone wishing to make objections to a school organisation proposal has the opportunity to do so. Two formal objections have been received: one from a local resident and another from the Residents Committee of Court Crescent and Forge Lane. Concerns have also been raised by another local resident and by Graig Community Council. Although these concerns have not been submitted explicitly as formal objections to the proposal, they are included within this report for completeness and transparency.

The table that follows summarises each of the objection points lodged by each of the proposal objectors. There are two columns of responses: one column refers to how information was previously made available during the consultation within the initial consultation pack and the subsequent consultation report. The second column of responses is a supplementary response by Newport City Council to further clarify the position in order to answer each of the objection points.

Objection point No.	Number raising the issue	Objection Point	Response previously made available during the formal consultation or consultation report	Supplementary NCC Response following the formal objection
1	3	<p>Traffic impact on the environment</p> <p>The neighbourhood is at total gridlock during school times.</p> <p>Parents and school buses continually block access into Court Crescent and on occasions when buses are stationary on the A467, which is a major hazard to traffic.</p> <p>Pollution levels in the area at the front of the school and Caerphilly Road have been analysed and have far exceeded the levels considered safe. Pupils are affected by this on a daily basis and have been breathing in these levels for seven years of their education.</p>	<p>The additional capacity is proposed to accommodate pupils living in the new housing developments at Jubilee Park and Tredegar Park Golf Club. Both developments are within easy walking distance of the school, and highways infrastructure for these developments has already been put in place. The Council's Highways Team has acknowledged issues relating to the traffic lights around the Bassaleg roundabout and the likely impact of the pupil and associated staff increase is being assessed and will be addressed within the planning application process for consideration as appropriate. The proposal includes increased parking provision at the front (Forge area) of the site and improved bus waiting and turning areas within the school grounds. Overall the proposal will provide 68 additional parking spaces, 57 of them near the main entrance.</p>	<p>A second traffic survey and impact assessment has been commissioned and the results of this will be submitted with the planning application. Traffic and Environmental Officers will be consulted as statutory consultees as part of the planning process, and the Council will be required to comply with any conditions they see fit to impose upon the proposed development.</p> <p>The two main housing developments in the area are more than 98% complete with less than 20 houses still to be built. This indicates that the main traffic impact on the area has already occurred.</p>

2	2	<p>Catchment area</p> <p>The catchment area for Bassaleg School should be reduced and students from Marshfield should go to The John Frost School.</p> <p>It is not unreasonable to expand The John Frost School, the grounds have sufficient room to utilise three demountable buildings from Bassaleg School.</p>	<p>The John Frost School is no closer to Marshfield than Bassaleg School. The John Frost School is also fully subscribed with pupils from within its' own cluster of schools, and cannot be expanded further on its' current site.</p>	<p>The Local Planning Authority has made it clear that any further increase in pupils attending the The John Frost School / Ysgol Gyfun Gwent Is Coed sites will not be possible due to flood risk concerns.</p> <p>The Council considers expansion of Bassaleg School an appropriate response to the local, in-catchment demand for secondary school places.</p> <p>Changes to catchment areas can be disruptive and result in siblings having to attend different schools – something that the Council is keen to avoid wherever possible.</p>
3	2	<p>School size and attainment</p> <p>The school will become a super school and one of the largest schools in Wales. This is likely to have a detrimental impact on behaviour, pupil wellbeing and attainment.</p> <p>There is no certainty in the future that there will be new residential developments.</p>	<p>Bassaleg School is a successful and inclusive school. We are confident that the leadership team will be able to ensure the same opportunities and level of support are provided to all pupils. The consultation response received from Estyn supports this view.</p> <p>This proposal is to expand the school to 2,050 and there is no intention to go beyond this number. The main housing developments in the catchment area are mostly complete and occupied and the</p>	<p>It has been noted that in its response to the consultation, Estyn raised no such concerns over the proposed school capacity and concluded the proposal will at least maintain the education provision for pupils in the Bassaleg School catchment area. Estyn also concluded that the proposal was likely to fulfil its aim of providing sufficient capacity to meet demand into the future.</p> <p>Our assessment of the site suggests that the proposed capacity of 2,050 is the optimum number of</p>

			<p>anticipated impact on pupil numbers has been fully considered.</p>	<p>pupils to be accommodated. Our pupil population projections indicate a 11-18 school population of 1,890 in 2025 as outlined in the consultation material.</p> <p>It is not anticipated that any future proposal will be taken forward in the future to increase the pupil population of the school beyond 2,050.</p>
4	2	<p>Alternative Secondary Provision in Newport City Council</p> <p>The building of a new 1000 place school in Rogerstone would benefit all pupils in the areas of Jubilee Park, High Cross and Mount Pleasant without the need for the provision of a bus service and would negate the need for parents using their cars.</p> <p>The Council has stated that they don't have the funding to support a new school, however a document used by local Councils in England indicates that the cost of a new school would be under £20m, leaving £8m to refurbish Bassaleg School and also provide additional classrooms at The John Frost School.</p>	<p>There is no available site for another secondary school, nor would this address the need to replace poor quality accommodation at Bassaleg School. Also, the establishment of a new school would have significant revenue funding implications which would adversely impact all secondary schools in Newport.</p>	<p>There is no available site in the area that would be suitable, and Bassaleg School has been judged to deliver good standards of secondary education and excellent care, support and guidance. The respondent quotes reasonable build costs but fails to consider land acquisition, which could be expected to push the cost up to around £30m. In addition, the suggested £8m is not sufficient to replace the poor quality accommodation at Bassaleg School. The latest cost estimates for replacement without expansion is c.£16m.</p>

5	3	<p>Collaboration with Caerphilly County Borough Council</p> <p>Newport Council should consider collaboration with Caerphilly County Borough Council on cross border use of Risca Comprehensive School, which is undersubscribed and is closer than Bassaleg School for some pupils.</p>	<p>The consultation document details five alternative options that have been considered. These include only replacing existing facilities, expanding another school site and amending current catchment areas.</p>	<p>The Council considers expansion of Bassaleg School to be the appropriate response to the local, in-catchment demand for secondary school places.</p> <p>Any suggested collaboration with Risca Comprehensive would entail a change in governance and would require a proposal supported by both Local Authorities.</p> <p>A realignment or change to catchment areas would also require a proposal supported by both Local Authorities.</p> <p>It is not clear whether this option would maintain the high quality educational outcomes delivered by the current system, or that it would be in the best interests of pupils and families which could see siblings separated.</p> <p>By contrast, Estyn has concluded that the proposed expansion of Bassaleg School will at least maintain the current standards of education provision.</p>
6	3	<p>Reorganisation of Post-16 provision</p> <p>This would negate the need to increase the population of Bassaleg</p>	<p>Newport City Council has been clear in its commitment to a 3-18 model of education delivery. While changing the age range could create</p>	<p>The Post-16 students at Bassaleg School are valued members of the school community, representing the potential and success of the</p>

		<p>School, and the proposed provision in the centre of Newport could accommodate all Post-16 pupils.</p> <p>This raises the question as to the long-term future of the current approach for maintaining a viable Post-16 provision at Bassaleg School.</p> <p>The current proposal is not part of a long-term strategic plan for secondary and Post-16 education provision in Newport.</p>	<p>additional capacity in our secondary schools for children of statutory school age, alternative Post-16 provision would still have to be arranged and this process would take several years to agree and implement. Meanwhile there is a need to provide additional secondary school places in the Bassaleg area.</p>	<p>school's pupils and providing inspiration to the younger learners. The proposed city centre college is a Coleg Gwent development which is intended to re-provide vocational facilities currently offered at other locations in the area. Our understanding is that there is no intention to accommodate additional pupils who would normally progress to Post-16 provision in a Newport school setting, nor is there a focus on an A-level offer from Coleg Gwent at this site. Newport City Council's involvement in this scheme is the vacation of the Newport Centre to facilitate the new college development, and the building of a new Leisure and Wellbeing Centre on the Riverfront. The Council is not contributing to the funding of the city centre college facility.</p>
7	2	<p>Concerns over the proposed 3G pitches Light and noise pollution and environmental/health impact of use of rubber and plastics</p>	<p>Community use of these facilities would take place out of school hours when the school site is quiet. The impact of this use is not expected to be significant and the facility will be a benefit to the community.</p>	<p>The potential impact of light and noise pollution from the proposed pitches on local residences is being fully assessed with options considered to minimise this impact. There are regulations which set acceptable limits, and the acceptability of the proposal will be considered by Environmental Officers as statutory consultees to the planning application.</p>

				<p>The preference for 3G pitches relates to the fact that they do not become waterlogged or boggy, and so can be used all-year round. As such they are a far better facility for the school and contribute significantly to the sufficiency of sports facilities on site. The Council is advised that the Football Association of Wales have concluded that there is no evidence to support claims that 3G pitches pose any threat to the environment or to the health of people using them.</p>
8	1	<p>Inability to deliver the project by September 2023</p> <p>From a recent FOI, the project is currently running 4 months behind the original anticipated timescale.</p>	<p>This is a new point not addressed previously via the formal consultation or the consultation report.</p>	<p>The target delivery date is challenging, but our revised programme indicates that the new building can still be delivered for September 2023. However there are established mechanisms for implementing a proposal later than initially planned, if necessary, and this is not considered good reason not to proceed with the proposal.</p>
9	1	<p>Existing anti-social issues relating to the school will be exacerbated</p> <p>Noise from pupils, litter, out-of-hours activities for school trips and parking issues.</p>	<p>Pupil behaviour issues, including any concerns over littering, is a matter for the school leadership team and therefore any concerns should be reported directly to the school.</p>	<p>The Bassaleg School leadership team has assured the Council that they are committed to ensuring adequate break time supervision is provided throughout the school site. Littering and environmental</p>

				concerns are regularly considered by the School Council, Eco Committee and Senior Leadership Team. A recent audit undertaken by the school has confirmed that there is just one annual school trip that requires early/late bus pick-ups. The proposed site development will help alleviate some of the local parking concerns.
10	1	<p>Insufficient/Weak Options Analysis</p> <p>The Council has not considered a sufficiently wide scope of options. The Council has not adequately considered the alternative option of a merger with Risca Comprehensive School. The Council has not adequately considered the alternative option of a new secondary school for 1000-1200 pupils.</p>	<p>The consultation document details five alternative options that have been considered. These include only replacing existing facilities, expanding another school site and amending current catchment areas. The Council does not own sufficient land, or hold sufficient capital reserves, to build a new secondary school. Other options were considered and discounted at the Strategic Outline Case stage, including the delivery of post-16 and sports provision off-site by a third party. The Strategic Outline Case has been considered and approved by Welsh Government.</p>	<p>In addition to the five alternative options outlined in the consultation document, the council undertook a full longlist – to – shortlist options appraisal as part of the Strategic Outline Case business case submission to Welsh Government, using the preferred Welsh Government options framework. This process is summarised in the Strategic Outline Case for the project which is published on the Council’s website and was approved by Welsh Government in February 2020.</p>

Recommendations

It is recommended that this proposal be moved forward to the final determination stage. Since objections were received during the statutory proposal stage however, this decision will need to be taken by the Council’s Cabinet acting as the Local Determination Panel. The internally agreed timetable of Cabinet meetings means that this will be referred for a decision in June 2021.

In accordance with the School Organisation Code (2018) this report is published electronically on Newport City Council's website at www.newport.gov.uk/schoolreorganisation

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