

# **NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Cabinet**  
**30<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

## **REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, LEISURE AND LIFELONG LEARNING ANDREW THOMAS**

### **MATTER FOR DECISION**

**WARDS AFFECTED: Alltwen, Godre'rgraig, Pontardawe, Rhos  
Trebanos, Ystalyfera,**

### **STRATEGIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH AN ENGLISH- MEDIUM 3-11 SCHOOL TO REPLACE ALLTWEN, GODRE'RGRAIG AND LLANGIWG PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

#### **Introduction**

1. On 20th October 2021, following a thorough consultation process in line with the Welsh Governments School organisation Code 2018, the Council's Cabinet at that time, approved the proposal to establish an English-medium 3-11 school with a specialist Learning Support Centre (LSC) for 16 pupils with a statement of special educational needs relating to Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwg Primary, all of which would be discontinued on 31st August 2024.
2. In January 2022 the Council received notification that the decision was to be challenged by a Welsh- medium education parents group. The challenge was brought on three grounds all relating to the notion that a Welsh Language Impact Assessment should have been consulted upon at the same time as the school consultation. The judgement was received in October 2022 and the judge found in favour of the applicant on one of the three grounds.

3. Furthermore in June 2022 the new Rainbow Coalition administration at Neath Port Talbot Council indicated that it wished to review the decision taken in respect of the Swansea Valley school reorganisation proposal.
4. In light of the decision and the desire for a review, approval is now sought to commence a new consultation on the proposal.  
Participation of stakeholders will be encouraged.

### **Purpose of report**

5. To obtain Cabinet approval to consult on a proposal to establish an English-medium 3-11 school with a specialist learning support centre, in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwig primary, all of which will close on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025.

### **Executive summary**

6. The Council is responsible for promoting high educational standards and for delivering efficient primary and secondary education. This will involve reviewing the number and type of schools the Council has in its area and assessing whether or not best use is being made of resources and facilities in order to ensure future provision is sustainable.
7. Neath Port Talbot 's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Band B Strategic Outline Plan (in January 2022, Welsh Government renamed this programme to Sustainable Communities for Learning) included a proposal for a new build 3-16 middle school, however following informal discussions with stakeholders it was decided that the scheme should be amended.
8. It is proposed therefore to establish an English-medium 3-11 school with a specialist learning support centre, in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwig primary, all of which will close on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025.
9. It is proposed that the new school will be built on land in Council ownership at Parc Ynysderw, Pontardawe and that it will form part of learning, health and wellbeing community campus made up of Cwmtawe Community School and Pontardawe Leisure Centre. The campus will be further enhanced by the addition of a new build

swimming pool on the site to complement the current health and wellbeing offer for pupils and the wider community.

10. The new build will be funded jointly from Welsh Government Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme capital grant monies and from the Council's prudential borrowing capacity. Welsh Government Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme capital grant funding has been approved, in principle.

## **Background**

11. The Council is responsible for promoting high educational standards and for delivering efficient primary and secondary education. Having the right schools in the right place and ensuring that they are fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner is the challenge facing the Council. Achieving this will involve reviewing the number and type of schools the Council has in its area and assessing whether or not best use is being made of resources and facilities.
12. Implementing the Council's Strategic School Improvement Programme (SSIP) involves reviewing existing provision and determining the number and type of schools needed to deliver education effectively and efficiently across the County Borough. It will most likely lead to substantial change involving opening new schools, closing existing schools, merging or amalgamating schools, federating schools and promoting new initiatives that support collaborative working between schools.
13. The Council has determined to review its provision on the basis of:
  - educational standards
  - the need for places and the accessibility of schools
  - the quality and suitability of school accommodation
  - effective financial management
14. Neath Port Talbot Council's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Band B (now Sustainable Communities for Learning) proposal submitted to Welsh Government included a project for a new build school in the Swansea Valley. The initial plans were to establish an 'English-medium, 'all-through' 3-16 school with capacity for 1284 pupils aged 11-16 and 750 pupils aged 3-11 (incl. Nursery), and would require the closure of Alltwen, Godre'rgraig, Llangiwig and Rhydyfro primary schools with education for the pupils being provided at a whole new (primary

phase) build on the site of the existing Cwmtawe Comprehensive school'.

15. Informal consultation took place in March 2019 with local ward Members for the Swansea Valley area along with the AM and MP for Neath Constituency, headteachers and Chairs of Governors for all of the Neath Port Talbot schools in the area - Welsh and English-medium, primary and secondary.
16. Additional scoping work was undertaken, alongside a review of the number of pupils residing in the Swansea Valley area which made it necessary to reconsider the original planned scheme.
17. As a result of the informal consultation and the scoping review, the original scheme was amended to become a new build English-medium school for 630 full time and 140 part time nursery pupils aged 3-11 with a specialist learning support centre, in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwig Primary.
18. On 20th October 2021, following a thorough consultation process in line with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018, the Council's Cabinet at that time approved the proposal to establish an English-medium 3-11 school with a specialist Learning Support Centre (LSC) for 16 pupils with a statement of special educational needs relating to Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwig Primary, all of which would be discontinued on 31st August 2024.
19. In January 2022 the Council received notification that the decision was to be challenged by a Welsh-medium education parents group. The challenge was brought on three grounds all relating to the notion that a Welsh Language Impact Assessment should have been consulted upon at the same time as the school consultation. The judgement was received in October 2022 and the judge found in favour of the applicant on one of the three grounds.
20. Furthermore in June 2022 the new Rainbow Coalition administration at Neath Port Talbot Council indicated that it wished to review the decision taken in respect of the Swansea Valley school reorganisation proposal.

21. In light of the decision and the desire for a review, approval is now sought to commence a new consultation on the proposal.

## **The Proposal**

22. It is proposed to establish an English-medium 3-11 school with a specialist learning support centre, in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwg primary, all of which will close on 31st August 2025.
23. It is proposed that the new school will be built on land in Council ownership at Parc Ynysderw, Pontardawe and that it will form part of learning, health and wellbeing community campus made up of Cwmtawe Community School and Pontardawe Leisure Centre. The campus will be further enhanced by the addition of a new build 25 metre, 6 lane swimming pool with additional learner pool on the site, to complement the current health and wellbeing offer for pupils and the wider community.
24. The new English-medium community primary school for boys and girls aged 3-11 years will accommodate 630 full-time pupils and 140 part-time (70 a.m./70 p.m.) nursery age pupils. It will be managed with one head teacher and one governing body and will have one budget allocation and one group of staff.
25. The new school will serve the combined catchment areas of Alltwen, Llangiwg and Godre'rgraig primary schools. Pupils from the three existing schools will automatically transfer to the new school subject to parental preference.
26. The new school will provide primary education for children aged 3-11 in a new build 21st century facility which will provide a stimulating teaching and learning environment in state of the art facilities .
27. Additionally the new school will provide support for pupils through the establishment of an LSC for 16 pupils with a statement of ASD. It will also provide the opportunity to become a community hub for the area, building on the work already being undertaken by other well established primary school LSCs.
28. The new build will be funded jointly from Welsh Government Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme capital grant monies and from the Council's prudential borrowing capacity.

29. The scheme will also include a new build 25 metre 6 lane swimming pool with additional learner pool, to further enhance the physical activity and wellbeing opportunities for pupils who currently attend Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg primary schools and Cwmtawe Community School, as well as pupils attending nearby YGG Trebannws and YGG Pontardawe.
30. Furthermore the facilities will provide sustainable opportunities for swimming curriculum development for potentially 2500 pupils aged 3-16 in the nearby communities. The swimming pool will complement the current school and community facilities on site to deliver a 21st century health and wellbeing offer for pupils aged 0-16 and for wider community use, making it a sustainable delivery model.
31. The combined new build School, specialist ASD provision and pool will form part of a learning, health and wellbeing community campus at the Parc Ynysderw site, complementing the existing Cwmtawe Community School and Pontardawe Leisure Centre provision. In locating the new build facilities close to Cwmtawe Community School the development will enable pupils and staff from both schools to benefit from increased partnership working, made easier due to their close proximity.

### **Information about the proposed new school**

32. The proposed new, 21st century build, English-medium 3-11 primary school will provide for up to 630 full-time primary age pupils, 140 part-time (70 a.m./70 p.m.) nursery age pupils. This will deliver sufficient accommodation for the total combined forecasted pupil numbers, including potential growth in pupil population. For the purpose of consultation, the proposed admission number for the new primary is 90.
33. These forecasted numbers determine the size of the building and the number of classrooms and additional rooms that will need to be included in the proposed new school. This information has been included in the Business Case submitted to Welsh Government to secure the funding to build the proposed new school, and has been scrutinised and approved.
34. Five year pupil number forecasts for the 3 schools are shown in table 1 below. The projections are calculated based on the January 2022 PLASC Actual data – with all of the year groups dropped down for

subsequent years. Nursery and Reception figures are based on the previous 3 year average.

Table 1

School	Jan 2022	Jan 2023	Jan 2024	Jan 2025	Jan 2026	Jan 2027
Alltwn Primary (exc. nursery)	207	193	189	176	170	163
Alltwn Primary nursery only	48	40	43	44	42	43
Godre'rgraig Primary (exc. nursery)	119	105	103	101	99	99
Godre'rgraig Primary nursery only	15	17	16	16	16	16
Llangiwig Primary (exc. nursery)	110	97	95	90	91	91
Llangiwig Primary nursery only	15	16	16	16	16	16
New Primary (exc. nursery)	436	395	387	367	360	353
New Primary nursery only	78	73	75	76	74	75

35. However the figures in the table above need to be considered with other information that exists. It is difficult to accurately determine the capacity of a new primary school and as the proposed new school is not expected to open until 2025 predicting the number of children who will require a place this far in advance is even more challenging. However it is vitally important to ensure that the size of the school is sufficient to be able to accommodate **all** pupils who are entitled to claim a place at the point of opening and in the future. Insufficient space could mean pupils having to travel to the nearest available school which can be distressing for pupils who are moved away from their peers and can also be costly as additional transport will be required.
36. Therefore a number of factors have been taken into account to estimate the size needed for the new school. This involves a range of data sources combined with experience of previous school builds and outcomes.
37. Over the last 10 years the number of primary aged pupils in Neath Port Talbot Swansea Valley schools has increased by almost 130 extra pupils, and it is expected that these numbers will continue to rise as the population continues to grow. The pupil population is transient across the primary schools.

Table 2

Involved schools	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Alltwn</b>	252	260	226	195	215	223	234	240	231	254	255
<b>Godre'rgraig</b>	95	102	118	126	138	147	156	159	153	155	134
<b>Llangiwig</b>	87	99	136	159	152	150	136	138	136	124	125

Table 3

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Rhos	144	148	161	161	153	150	156	148	150	155	157
Rhydyfro	107	118	124	125	137	154	154	153	167	169	175
YGG Pontardawe	340	332	336	349	351	352	356	347	336	322	335
YGG Trebannws	120	116	123	115	118	104	104	102	101	102	97
YG YBD (primary)							152	159	157	162	160
YGG Y Wern	165	156	150	155	149	148					

38. Data indicates that pupil numbers can alter significantly over a short period of time in these schools, with substantial numbers of pupils attending from outside their schools catchment area, but from within the wider Swansea Valley area, as shown in the table below.

Table 4: Schools and Catchment Pupil Percentages. Data source: PLASC 2022

English Medium Schools	Percentage of pupils in catchment				
	Alltwen	Llangiwg	Rhydyfro	Godre'rgraig	Rhos
Alltwen	59.3%	12.1%	1.2%	6.6%	12.9%
Llangiwg	19.4%	58.6%	20.7%	14.8%	4.3%
Rhydyfro	3.2%	1.0%	59.1%	1.6%	2.2%
Godre'rgraig	9.3%	23.2%	6.1%	69.6%	1.4%
Rhos	3.7%	0%	0.6%	0.8%	70.5%

39. Over 100 children from the catchment area of Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg attend English-medium schools elsewhere in Neath Port Talbot. Data for pupils who reside in Neath Port Talbot but attend schools elsewhere is not held by this authority, however information provided by other local authorities indicates that a significant number of children from the Swansea Valley also travel for English-medium education into Powys and Swansea.

Table 5 (November 2022)

	Pupil Numbers
Pupils living in the catchment area of Alltwen, Llangiwg or Godre'rgraig attending an EM school elsewhere in NPT	109
Pupils attending neighbouring EM schools outside NPT (Swansea and Powys)	204
<b>Total number of pupils</b>	<b>313</b>

40. In addition the Local Development Plan contains details of a number of new housing developments with 486 new units already created in the area, and a further 11 planned housing developments which could generate over 580 more units by 2026. This could see an additional increase in pupil numbers in the area adding to the numbers of pupils the proposed new school would need to accommodate.



## **Benefits of a new build school**

41. A new build school provides the opportunity to deliver a stimulating teaching and learning environment in state of the art, 21st Century facilities that will impact positively on the self-esteem and well-being of pupils and will aim to improve the learning outcomes for all children across the ability range.
42. With a new school comes more choices and improved opportunities because there is more space and better facilities. In the Estyn report of 2007, 'An evaluation of performance of schools before and after moving into new buildings or significantly refurbished premises', it is reported that the attainment and achievement of pupils improves significantly when they move into new or significantly refurbished buildings, particularly when schools are in areas with high levels of social and economic deprivation.
43. The new school will ensure that pupils have adaptable ICT facilities suitable for learning in the 21st century. Mobile technology will be integrated with a sound pedagogical base to provide pupils with enhanced learning experiences, equipping them with the key skills and motivation needed to raise standards.
44. The new build school will be an exciting place for pupils and staff both internally and externally. It will have spacious, light and airy classrooms, with access to a range of high quality and appropriate spaces for social interaction. The 2015 report, 'Clever Classrooms', found that well designed schools can significantly boost children's academic performance in reading, writing and maths. The school will allow for the delivery of a pupil centred, inclusive and skills based curriculum that extends to social and sporting activities. It will aim to promote equality and inclusion by providing facilities, sporting and cultural, which can be accessed by pupils and which the school can share with the community.
45. A new build of this kind is a significant investment in the future of the young people of the area and clearly signals that the Council is serious about making schools fit for purpose places of learning.

## **Information about the proposed Learning Support centre**

46. The Council provides for the pupils of Neath Port Talbot who require specialist support for their educational needs at two community special schools and at learning support/ inclusion centres attached to community primary/secondary schools.

47. Recent work on reviewing the number and type of planned places and assessment provision across Neath Port Talbot has indicated that there is a need for extra places in the areas of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD), and for those early years pupils with identified additional learning needs which require further assessment.
48. It is proposed that the new school includes an LSC for up to 16 primary aged pupils with a statement of ASD. Including this provision in the new build will ensure that pupils are provided with purpose built, 21<sup>st</sup> century standard facilities, with the aim of ensuring best possible outcomes for pupils, and will also address identified need for further provision for pupils with ASD, specifically primary aged pupils.
49. Currently for primary age pupils with ASD who need specialist support or assessment, provision is made at Gnoll Primary (18 places), Maesmarchog Primary (18 places) and Waunceirch Primary (19 places). Secondary provision is available at Cwmtawe Community School (13 places), Ysgol Bae Baglan (29 places), Ysgol Hendrefelin (32 places) and at Dwr Y Felin Comprehensive school (16 places) . The high demand at both primary and secondary level is placing pressure on existing provisions which are consistently full.
50. Data analysis suggests that a number of pupils within the Swansea Valley travel to gain additional learning support in specialist units elsewhere within Neath Port Talbot. Creating a new provision in the proposed new school would provide additional places in an area where need has been identified.
51. It is therefore proposed that the new school will include an LSC which will provide learning support for pupils with ASD for up to 16 pupils who are in receipt of a Statement of SEN.
52. The provision will be managed by the school and be under the school's governance. However it will be a provision recognised by the Council as reserved for pupils with ALN and pupils admitted to the provision would be in addition to the admission number of the school. Admission to the provision would be via a special admission panel of the Council and specific entry and exit criteria would apply.
53. Pupils at the proposed provision will benefit from being taught by specialist staff, experienced in working with pupils with ASD needs. There is also the possibility that mainstream pupils with ASD could also benefit from the expertise available.

54. The provision will alleviate the current pressure to address demand for places for pupils with more complex needs, avoiding potential costly out of county placements and allowing opportunities for children to access learning within their local community and will complement the specialist provision and support already available within the County Borough.

### **Information about the proposed pool**

55. In addition to the new build primary school and specialist ASD provision, it is also proposed to include as part of the scheme a new build 25metre, 6 lane swimming pool with additional learner pool to replace the existing Pontardawe Swimming Pool. The pool will provide an additional facility alongside the leisure centre, revitalising and increasing the health and well-being facilities in the area.
56. The combined new build school, specialist ASD provision and leisure facilities will form part of a learning, health and wellbeing community campus at the Parc Ynysderw site, complementing the existing Cwmtawe Community School and Pontardawe Leisure Centre provision. The pool is currently used by some schools in the area but this scheme aims to increase usage by schools and by the wider community due to its improved co-location.
57. Pontardawe Swimming Pool was built in 1974. The latest condition survey from August 2014 indicated that while the building was in reasonable condition, the core building services have exceeded their recommended anticipated lifecycle. A total of £1,221,783 of maintenance works was identified as being required between 2015 and 2022. Due to the complexity of the works required the recommendation at that time was that the vast majority of the works be completed within one single phase in order to reduce the overall disruption to the facility. To date due to Capital expenditure pressures and logistics surrounding phasing, these works have not been completed.
58. In 2022 a further survey was undertaken which has identified that “the already serious structural defects noted in previous reports have continued to deteriorate. Comprehensive structural repair of these elements is now both necessary and urgent.”
59. In summary, the report notes that to extend the life of the existing building significantly would require extensive and costly repairs to be

made which are likely to be cost prohibitive when compared to the cost of providing a new facility. It highlights the fact that “If the Council wishes to continue to operate the facility in the meantime, immediate action will be required” (2022 survey report)

60. Given the poor condition and age of the current facilities, aligned with the space available at the proposed Parc Ynysderw site, the Council are presented with an opportunity to integrate the pool and school facilities creating a new sustainable school and community asset. Inclusion of a pool at the site will further enhance the physical activity and wellbeing opportunities open to pupils who currently attend Alltwen, Godre’rgraig and Llangiwig Primary schools as well as those at Cwmtawe Community School which is also closely located to the new build site, and those of other nearby schools including YGG Trebannws and YGG Pontardawe.
61. The facility will also provide sustainable opportunities for swimming lessons and participation to residents of all ages within the nearby communities. This campus will provide modern leisure facilities where people can enjoy physical activity, and where physical, mental health and wellbeing is positively promoted throughout local communities.
62. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) data states that six out of the eight LLSOA’s that serve the Swansea Valley are in the 50% most deprived areas of Wales, including the employment, health, education and access to services domains. The creation of the learning campus will provide all members of the Swansea Valley community with modern, fit for purpose educational, health and leisure facilities, providing a community focal point for intergenerational health, wellbeing and cohesion in the wider Pontardawe area. It will help to deliver the Council’s aim of improving the health and wellbeing of all people living in Neath Port Talbot and reducing the gap between the least and most healthy.

## **Information about the existing involved schools**

### **Alltwen Primary School**

63. Alltwen Primary School is an English-medium community school serving boys and girls aged 3-11 years. It is situated in the village of Alltwen approx. 0.7miles from the possible site of the new school.

– **Pupil Numbers**

57. As at January 2022 there were 207 full-time and 48 part-time (nursery) pupils on roll. With the physical capacity to accommodate 239 full-time and 30 (30a.m/ 30pm) part-time (nursery) pupils, the school has a surplus capacity of 13.4% (32 full-time pupil places).

Table 6

<i>Alltwn Primary School</i>				
		<i>Jan 2022</i>		<i>Jan 2023</i>
	School capacity	Actual Pupil Numbers	Surplus places	Projected Pupil Numbers
<i>Full-time</i>	239	207	13.4% (32)	193
<i>Part-time (Nursery)</i>	30	48	-60% (-18)	40

64. The table below shows pupil numbers over a 5 year period:

Table 7

<i>Alltwn Primary School</i>						
<i>School Census Jan 2018 – 2022 + Sept. '22 roll</i>						
<i>Year</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>Sept.22</i>
<i>Pupil numbers</i>	234	240	231	254	255	229
<i>Full Time</i>	197	208	200	216	207	202
<i>Part Time</i>	37	32	31	38	48	27

Notes:

- Capacity: Taken from 22-23 Capacities
- Actual Pupil numbers: Taken from PLASC Report Jan 2022
- School Census Data '18-'22: Taken from PLASC – Actual.

– **Quality and standards in education**

65. Alltwn Primary School was last inspected in October 2018 and Estyn reported that it was a school with many good features, awarding good judgements in the 5 inspection areas.

**Standards**

66. Alltwn Primary school has 255 pupils on roll (Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) 2022). During PLASC 2022 the school had a **lower than average** number of children in receipt of free school meals (20.3% of pupils in years 1-6) when compared to other schools in Neath Port Talbot (30.2% of years 1-6) and lower than similar schools across Wales (24.2% in primary schools). There was also a **lower than average** number of children who have been identified as having additional learning needs (14.1%) when compared with Neath Port Talbot (20.2%) and all Wales (15.8%).

67. Since 2020, Welsh Government do not expect returns for all statutory data collections that would have been due to take place before the school summer holidays as a result of the Covid pandemic. This includes National Data Collection (NDC) 2020 data collection and Welsh National Tests (WNT) 2020 data collection.
68. Wellbeing and attitudes to learning of pupils was judged to be 'good' in the recent Estyn report (October 2018) in that: 'Pupils' wellbeing is a very strong aspect of the life of Alltwen School. Nearly all pupils feel safe, happy and secure in school.'
69. Attendance during 2021/22 was 90.3% for years 1-6 which was above the Neath Port Talbot average of 89.2%.

### ***Teaching and Learning***

70. Estyn, in 2018, reported that across Alltwen Primary School effective teaching promotes pupils' good progress and as a result, relationships are positive and respectful, many classrooms are productive and orderly, and most pupils want to learn.
71. The quality of teaching and learning experiences in Alltwen Primary was judged to be good overall and there are well-planned opportunities to develop pupil's oracy and reading skills in a wide range of contexts across the curriculum.

### ***Care, Support and Guidance***

72. Estyn reported that care, support and guidance were good, noting that the Headteacher has established an inclusive and caring ethos that permeates the daily life of the school.

### ***Leadership and Management***

73. In 2018, Estyn judged Alltwen Primary school's leadership and management to be good, reporting that: 'The Headteacher is a well-motivated leader who provides a clear, shared and strategic vision for the school.'

#### ***– Quality of accommodation***

74. Alltwen Primary school occupies a prominent elevated position on Alltwen Hill, Alltwen, Pontardawe and whilst contained within a single enclosed site, operates between two separate buildings (a short distance apart within the site boundary).

75. The most recent building condition survey (June 2022) reports that the building is overall in a fair condition, with investment needed internally and externally, including the mechanical and electrical services.
76. A new boiler has recently been installed, however the heating distribution system is old and inefficient and has exceeded its practical and recommended life span, and will need to be renewed.
77. Overall the site is graded C+ for condition i.e. the building is operational but major repairs or replacement will be needed.
78. Backlog maintenance and accessibility costs required within 5 years amount to £811,500.

### **Godre'rgraig Primary School**

79. Godre'rgraig Primary School is an English-medium community school serving boys and girls aged 3-11 years. It is situated in the village of Godre'rgraig approx. 3.2 miles from the possible site of the new school.
80. In July 2019 Godre'rgraig Primary was relocated temporarily from Godre'rgraig to Parc Ynysderw, adjacent to Cwmtawe Community School after geological experts found there was a potential landslide risk to the school's playground.
81. Earth Science Partnership (ESP), the experts commissioned by Neath Port Talbot Council, reported a medium level risk from a quarry spoil tip near the school after the Council asked them to extend their extensive landslide risk investigation work carried out in nearby Panteg, Ystalyfera.
82. A further report in September 2021 has revealed that the quarry tip is moving and is now noted to be 'actively unstable'. It is therefore clear that it would be unsafe for staff and pupils to return to the school. This new build school proposal provides the opportunity for Godre'rgraig Primary pupils to be permanently relocated and to benefit from the 21st century facilities provided.
83. The Graig Road site building is circa.100 years old and the most recent building condition survey (November 2018) reports that the buildings are in poor to fair condition and are categorised as condition grade C-.The combined total backlog maintenance and accessibility costs (index adjusted to April 2022) amount to £869,419.

As the site is unsafe and non-operational this figure has not been included in total backlog maintenance and accessibility information quoted elsewhere in this report.

– **Pupil Numbers**

84. As at January 2022, there were 119 full-time and 15 part-time (nursery) pupils on roll. With the physical capacity to accommodate 162 full-time and 19 (19 am/ 19 pm) part-time (nursery) pupils, the school has a surplus capacity of 26.5% (43 full-time pupil places).

Table 8

<i>Godre'rgraig Primary School</i>				
		<i>Jan 2022</i>		<i>Jan 2023</i>
	School capacity	Actual Pupil Numbers	Surplus places	Projected Pupil Numbers
<i>Full-time</i>	162	119	26.5% (43)	105
<i>Part-time (Nursery)</i>	19	15	21.05% (4)	17

85. The table below shows pupil numbers over a 5 year period:

Table 9

<i>Godre'rgraig Primary School</i>						
<i>School Census Jan 2018 – 2022 + Sept. '22 roll</i>						
<i>Year</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>Sept.22</i>
<i>Pupil numbers</i>	156	159	153	155	134	111
<i>Full Time</i>	134	134	135	139	119	103
<i>Part Time</i>	22	25	18	16	15	8

Notes:

- Capacity: Taken from 19-20 Capacities
- Actual Pupil numbers: Taken from PLASC Report Jan 2020
- School Census Data '16-'19: Taken from PLASC – Actual.

– **Quality and Standards in Education**

86. Godre'rgraig Primary School was last inspected in June 2017 and Estyn reported that it was a school with many good features, awarding good judgements in the three inspection areas and awarded a good for current standards and a good for prospects for improvement.

**Standards**

87. Godre'rgraig Primary school has 134 pupils on roll (Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) 2022). During PLASC 2022 the school had a **lower than average** number of children in receipt of free school meals (25.9% of pupils in years 1-6) when compared to other schools in Neath Port Talbot (30.2% of years 1-6). There was also a **lower than average** number of children who have been identified as having additional learning needs (17.9%) when compared with Neath Port Talbot (20.2%).



88. Standards Since 2020, Welsh Government do not expect returns for all statutory data collections that would have been due to take place before the school summer holidays as a result of the Covid pandemic. This includes National Data Collection (NDC) 2020 data collection and Welsh National Tests (WNT) 2020 data collection.
89. Wellbeing was judged to be 'good' in the latest Estyn report (June 2017) in that: 'Pupils are confident that all staff care for them and will sort any issues quickly and fairly;' and '.....a real strength of pupils, throughout the school, is the way that they work collaboratively and interdependently'.
90. Attendance during 2021/22 was 90.9% which was above the Neath Port Talbot average of 89.2%.

### ***Teaching and Learning***

91. Estyn in 2017 reported that Godre'rgraig Primary School provides learning experiences that are adequate across the school. The quality of teaching in Godre'rgraig Primary was judged to be good overall.
92. Care, support and guidance were also judged 'good' with Estyn (June 2017) stating that, 'the school promotes a caring environment that develops pupils' health and wellbeing effectively.'
93. Provision for pupils who have additional learning needs at Godre'rgraig Primary School was deemed by Estyn in 2017 to be strong.

### ***Leadership and Management***

94. In 2017, Estyn judged Godre'rgraig Primary school's leadership and management to be good, reporting that: 'The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and she shares this effectively with all stakeholders.'

#### ***– Quality of Accommodation***

95. Since July 2019 Godre'rgraig Primary has been relocated from Godre'rgraig to temporary buildings at Parc Ynysderw. These buildings are of a good standard and suitable for the purpose of accommodating primary aged pupils, however they are on hire and not intended for permanent use in the longer term.

## Llangiwg Primary School

96. Llangiwg Primary School is an English-medium community school serving boys and girls aged 3-11 years. It is situated in the village of Ynysmeudwy approx. 1.3 miles from the possible site of the new school.

### – **Pupil Numbers**

89. As at January 2022, there were 110 full-time and 15 part-time (nursery) pupils on roll. With the physical capacity to accommodate 147 full-time and 53 (53 am/ 53 pm) part-time (nursery) pupils, the school has a surplus capacity of 25.1% (37 full-time pupil places).

Table 10

<i>Llangiwg Primary School</i>				
		<i>Jan 2022</i>		<i>Jan 2023</i>
	School capacity	Actual Pupil Numbers	Surplus places	Projected Pupil Numbers
<i>Full-time</i>	147	110	25.1% (37)	97
<i>Part-time (Nursery)</i>	53	15	71.7% (38)	16

97. The table below shows pupil numbers over a 5 year period:

Table 11

<i>Llangiwg Primary School</i>						
<i>School Census Jan 2018 – 2022 + Sept. '22 roll</i>						
<i>Year</i>	18	19	20	21	22	<i>Sept.22</i>
<i>Pupil numbers</i>	136	138	136	124	125	102
<i>Full Time</i>	120	124	119	108	110	95
<i>Part Time</i>	16	14	17	16	15	7

Notes:

- Capacity: Taken from 22-23 Capacities
- Actual Pupil numbers: Taken from PLASC Report Jan 2022
- School Census Data '18-'22: Taken from PLASC – Actual.

### – **Quality and standards in education**

98. Llangiwg Primary School was last inspected in January 2019 and Estyn reported that it was a school with many good features, awarding good judgements in 4 inspection areas and 1 inspection area as adequate and needing improvement.

### **Standards**

99. Llangiwg Primary school has 125 pupils on roll (Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) 2022). During PLASC 2022 the school had a **higher than average** number of children in receipt of free school meals (34% of pupils in years 1-6) when compared to other schools

in Neath Port Talbot (30.2% of years 1-6). There was also a slightly **higher than average** number of children who have been identified as having additional learning needs (21.6%) when compared with Neath Port Talbot (20.2%).

100. Since 2020, Welsh Government do not expect returns for all statutory data collections that would have been due to take place before the school summer holidays as a result of the Covid pandemic. This includes National Data Collection (NDC) 2020 data collection and Welsh National Tests (WNT) 2020 data collection.

### ***Wellbeing and attitudes to learning***

101. Wellbeing and attitudes to learning of pupils was judged to be 'adequate and needs improvement' in the recent Estyn report (January 2019) but stated that, 'Most (pupils) show high levels of engagement and approach tasks with enthusiasm..... and engage constructively with other pupils.'

102. Attendance during 2021/22 was 89.1% which was slightly below the Neath Port Talbot average of 89.2%.

### ***Teaching and Learning Experiences***

103. Estyn in 2019 report that Llangiwig Primary School provides a broad, balanced curriculum enhanced by a range of experiences, activities and visits that consolidate and enrich the learning.

104. The quality of teaching and learning experiences in Llangiwig Primary was judged to be good overall (Estyn January 2019). Estyn state that, 'most teachers set appropriate expectations for pupils' achievement and motivate them to work hard.'

### ***Care Support and Guidance***

105. Estyn also reported that care, support and guidance were good, noting that, 'The school is a happy, inclusive and caring community, where pupils and staff show high levels of respect for each other.' Estyn also report that all staff responded sensitively to the social and emotional needs of pupils.

### ***Leadership and Management***

106. In 2019, Estyn judged Llangiwig Primary school's leadership and management to be good, reporting that: 'Leaders at all levels plan appropriately for the strategic development of the school and bring about worthwhile improvements.'

– **Quality of accommodation**

107. Llangiwg Primary School holds a prominent kerbside position on New Road, Ynsymedwy and operates across two distinct sites approximately 100m apart along the same road.
108. The main teaching block is constructed of stonework with concrete detailing and concrete cladding to the front whilst the separate nursery is housed in a demountable type building.
109. The most recent building condition survey (June 2022) reports that the demountable nursery building is structurally sound and has received moderate investment over recent years to renew aging elements and is categorised as condition grade B, i.e. the building is sound, operationally safe and exhibits only minor deterioration.
110. The main block overall is in poor to fair condition and is categorised as condition grade C. The boiler system and distribution has reached the end of its practical and economic lifespan and needs to be replaced. Internally, timber floor coverings and kitchen areas require upgrading.
111. Overall, the combined total condition and accessibility costs required within 5 years for Llangiwg Primary school across both sites amount to £1,041,000.

**Options that have been considered**

112. Numerous options have been explored prior to this report being brought forward, and the benefits and disadvantages of each option has been considered carefully by officers. A table detailing 14 of the most reasonable options is provided at Appendix A
113. In relation to options referring to refurbishment of Alltwen and Llangiwg Primary schools it is important to note that Welsh Government have a strict business case process that must be satisfied in order to obtain Sustainable Communities for Learning grant funding , which includes scrutiny of the strategic, economic and financial case of any proposal.
114. In their '**Sustainable communities for Learning Business Case Guidance**' document it states –

*The Capital expenditure for schools/educational purposes comprises of the following:*

- *The cost of acquiring land and buildings*
- *Cost of new construction*
- *Cost of extensions to existing buildings*
- *The enhancement\* of land, road or buildings (within the school/college footprint)*
- *Purchase of computers/computer equipment if they form part of a large scale capital project can be capitalised, including associated cabling and hardware.*

***\*Enhancement is where money is spent on an existing asset which substantially increases its value or lengthens its useful life. It excludes routine repairs and maintenance.***

*Funding for the 21st Century Schools and College Programme is targeted to support **remodelling and reconstruction**:*

- *Remodelling – extensive upgrading of the existing building and redesign of the accommodation (e.g. curriculum-led upgrades, new facilities and full DDA compliance).*
- *Reconstruction – e.g. partial/total demolition and rebuilding to modern standards (i.e. 21st Century Schools' standard).*

115. The guidance also contains detailed information regarding the **additional aspects** that need to be met to satisfy Welsh Government, including ensuring modern construction standards for acoustics, accessibility, recycled content and carbon reduction, and that the requirements of the biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty are discharged, along with achieving British Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) standard EXCELLENT. Projects funded through Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme are also expected to optimise the use of infrastructure and resources, to deliver facilities that can be used by communities.

116. It is the case that both existing schools are compromised in terms of their building suitability for 21st Century teaching and learning, and fall short of many of the internal and external space standards and requirements as set out within Building Bulletin 99 that would ordinarily be expected in a brand new 21st Century school. The difficulties of ensuring that a robust business case can be developed and approved, with the likely significant additional costs of creating 3

21<sup>st</sup> century schools to the required standards, would be extremely challenging.

117. Without Welsh Government funding, any alternative proposal that revolved around maintaining all three existing schools and the pool in their current locations would mean that the Council would have to meet 100% of any associated capital costs.
118. The Council currently spends circa £1.2m each year of its own capital funding to address maintenance needs on schools and there are many competing priorities each and every year. Given the current financial situation it is not realistic to expect a huge influx or redistribution of finances in the foreseeable future.
119. Total backlog maintenance and accessibility costs for Alltwn and Llangiwig primary schools and the swimming pool amount to circa. £3.1m.
120. With this in mind if the Council only addressed the notional £3.1m of backlog maintenance costs then that alone would exhaust all of the capital resources currently allocated to cover repairs and backlog maintenance pressures across the whole of the school portfolio for almost three years.
121. It is important to clarify that the backlog maintenance and accessibility costs derived from the condition reports are **estimates for putting the existing buildings back into repair**, and do not account for improving, extending, remodelling or upgrading (internally or externally).
122. Developing a scheme to undertake this type of improvement work would prove to be considerably more than the figures outlined in the condition report. The backlog maintenance and accessibility estimates do not take account of costs associated with design, supervision or any statutory fees nor do they provide for any remodelling works internally or externally to improve the suitability and layouts of the existing premises. The condition report has not considered needs beyond 5-10 years (mainly 1-5 years in accordance with Welsh Government backlog maintenance returns); other works, required after 10 years, may be of a substantial and significant cost that would need to be undertaken during any future refurbishment and fall outside the scope of the current condition survey.

123. Some of the options explore new build schools made up of combinations of the current schools. For these the base figures are the pupil numbers currently within the schools along with an estimate of the pupils from the catchment or combination of catchments attending elsewhere.
124. Options have also been considered which suggest alternative sites for a new school. Extensive desktop work has been undertaken on all identified potential sites across the area and all but two have been ruled out for a range of reasons including being too small, at risk of flooding, previous mine workings, contaminated land and land of ecological value. Of the remaining two sites Parc Ynysderw is the preferable site and will also support the development of a health and wellbeing learning campus.
125. The second feasible site is at Gnoll Road in Godre'rgraig. This has been identified through desktop studies as a very challenging site. This is due to the site being identified as high risk area for coal workings, and partly within a flood zone (lower end).
126. Contamination of the land is also noted, so the site would require full investigation and standard conditions. The site is also noted to be outside settlement limits and in a prominent position in open countryside which could pose planning approval difficulties.
127. The location of the site leads to a challenging gradient and bends close down the area of visibility, making the current access road unsafe and unsuitable; work to address this would need to take up significant amounts of land into the site to address TAN 18 requirements. There are also currently no suitable pedestrian footway links to the site.
128. It could be possible to access the site off the A4067 – this is likely to require formal traffic reduction orders, and significant works to allow safe exit of vehicles from the A4067 onto the site, possibly a new right turn lane or controlled junction. These works are likely to require significant design and cost.
129. It is clear that if a proposal for this site were to be considered in any more detail, then significant site investigations would need to be undertaken. Based on previous investigations at other sites around the county it is estimated that these could cost circa. £100-150k. No funding has been identified to undertake such investigations.

130. It should also be noted that should funding be sourced for undertaking this detailed work on a new and potentially unviable site, then this would inevitably increase the time needed before a new build could be progressed, therefore Godre'rgraig Primary staff and pupils would inevitably remain for a longer period of time in temporary accommodation.
131. Additionally it should be noted that a new IIA and WLIA would need to be completed for a new scheme in a new location, which may identify negative impacts. In the case of the Welsh language the impacts of a new build English-medium primary in close proximity to a new build Welsh-medium 3-19 school would have to be carefully considered. Under the current proposal pupils in the Godre'rgraig area do not have to travel to access Welsh-medium provision but they do need to travel to English-medium provision, making Welsh-medium an easier choice. A new build English-medium school however in very close proximity removes the easy choice.

### ***Preferred Option***

104. Having considered all the information gathered to date, it is the view of officers that closing Alltwen, Llangiwig and Godre'rgraig Primary schools and establishing a new community school for 630 pupils and 140 nursery pupils in a 21<sup>st</sup> century new build will deliver the greatest benefits to pupils, staff and the wider community as a whole.
105. The inclusion of an LSC for primary aged pupils with ASD gives an opportunity to provide pupils with a purpose built facility with the aim of ensuring best possible outcomes for pupils.
106. Additionally establishing the school on the identified site of Parc Ynysderw and creating enhanced learning, health and wellbeing facilities to include the leisure centre, new swimming pool and Cwmtawe Community Comprehensive, will provide opportunities to develop and improve primary education in the area.

### **Impact on pupils and parents**

107. The new primary school will serve the combined catchment areas of Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig Primary schools. The proposed new school will provide a stimulating teaching and learning environment in state of the art, 21<sup>st</sup> Century facilities that will impact positively on the self-esteem and well-being of pupils and will aim to



improve the learning outcomes for all children across the ability range, including those pupils attending the LSC.

108. The new school will have sufficient playing fields and green space available on site which is not the case with the existing schools and which can be made available for community use.
109. The arrangements for admission to the new primary school will allow full-time pupils on roll at Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary schools at the point of closure to transfer to the roll of the new school, subject to the wishes of parents or unless pupils are transferring to secondary education. Prospective pupils (including nursery pupils transferring to full-time education) will need to apply for a place at the primary school, in line with the Council's school admissions policy.
110. Class sizes at the new primary school will be set by the head teacher and governing body. When setting the class sizes the relevant Welsh Government legislation and guidelines will be followed, including the recommendation that classes are no larger than 30 pupils.
111. Admission to the proposed LSC would be via a special admission panel of the Council and specific entry and exit criteria would apply.

### **Impact on travel arrangements**

112. Support with home to school travel will be made available in line with the Council's Home to School Transport policy. This means that primary school aged pupils living 2 miles or more from their nearest suitable or designated school will be considered for transport assistance.
113. For many of the primary aged pupils the possible location of the proposed new school on the site at Ynysderw remains within 2 miles travel distance for homes in the catchment area. An estimate of the numbers of pupils who live further than 2 miles away from the proposed new school site at Parc Ynysderw, based on the numbers and addresses of the pupils in the three schools (2020) suggests that approx. 176 pupils could potentially be eligible for assistance with transport, which removes the need for parents to transport pupils to school by car. Home to school journey times from within the catchment area fall within reasonable limits for primary age pupils.

114. The remaining pupils live on routes that have been assessed as safe, although these routes will be reassessed should the proposal progress and when details of the pupils who will be attending the new school are known. At that time the Neath Port Talbot Road Safety Officers will be available to assist and support schools, parents and pupils in planning safe routes in line with Welsh Government Learner Travel Guidance.

115. Under the School Travel Plan requirements, all schools, together with the Council's Road Safety Team, are committed to:

- improving road safety within the local community
- raising awareness about travel issues
- encouraging walking, cycling and public transport for the school journey where applicable
- encouraging independent travel where applicable

### **Impact on governors**

116. A temporary governing body will be established prior to the opening of the new school. The temporary governing body will take important decisions about the new school including the appointment of a head teacher, agreeing a staffing structure and adopting operating procedures and agreeing a name for the school. The temporary governing body will also resolve other issues including school uniform which, in line with good practice, will be determined following consultation with pupils and parents.

117. The temporary governing body is likely to be made up of existing governors from Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary schools as this ensures continuity and will place the new school on a sound footing.

118. Each school will continue to exist, managed by their respective governing bodies, until all three schools are closed on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025. During this period the existing and temporary governing bodies will undertake their duties in parallel.

119. When the new school is opened, it will be managed by the temporary governing body until a permanent governing body is established. The governing bodies of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwg Primary will cease to exist once the new school is opened.

## Impact on special needs education provision

120. There are no specialist units for children with statements of special educational needs at either of the three schools, i.e. provision recognised by the Council as reserved for pupils with SEN. Pupils with additional learning needs, including children with statements of special educational needs, are supported in a mainstream setting with appropriate funding for this purpose. The new school will continue to offer this level of support.
121. Data analysis suggests that a number of pupils within the Swansea Valley travel to gain additional learning support in specialist units elsewhere within Neath Port Talbot. The data also shows increasing demand for specialist support at primary age for pupils in NPT with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.
122. Pupils attending the proposed LSC provision within the new school will benefit from being taught by specialist staff, experienced in working with pupils with ASD needs. There is also the possibility that mainstream pupils with ASD could also benefit from the expertise available as the specialist knowledge and skills-set of the staff employed to work at the proposed LSC will be available to share with mainstream staff and, as such, will indirectly benefit SEN provision at the new school.
123. It is also envisaged that the LSC provision will be able to provide support and training for other mainstream primary schools across Neath Port Talbot, building skills, competencies, expertise and capacity of all staff working with children with ASD.

## Financial impact

124. The cost of the new build is estimated at c. £22,705,000 apportioned as per table 12 below.

Table 12

Project	NPT Investment	WG Investment	Total Investment
Ysgol Newydd Swansea Valley	7,946,750	14,758,250	22,705,000

125. The funding from the Welsh Government is Welsh Government Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme which has been approved at the Outline Business Case stage of project development. Full business case approval has also been awarded subject to conditions.
126. Combined backlog maintenance and accessibility costs for the existing schools amounts to circa. £1.9m which would be removed by this proposal along with the ongoing need to fund the associated costs of Godre'rgraig Primary School's current off-site hired/leased accommodation. Additionally backlog maintenance costs for the current pool at Pontardawe amounting to £1,221,783 would also be removed by this proposal.
127. Revenue funding for schools is distributed on an annual basis by means of an approved formula. This ensures school budget shares are allocated on a simple, objective and measurable basis.
128. Most of the revenue budget allocation to Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig Primary schools is generated by pupil numbers. Similarly, the new primary school's budget will be based mainly on the combined pupil roll. Efficiencies will be secured as the new school will have one head teacher and one management structure. Revenue savings will be re-invested in the education budget. In this regard, the proposal supports the Council's management of its education budget and promotes the more equitable distribution of funding across local schools.
129. The proposed new school will receive additional funding to manage the LSC provision for up to 16 pupils. Meeting the special needs education of pupils in local settings, i.e. within the County Borough, avoids having to secure expensive out-of-county provision. The cost of providing education outside the County Borough for pupils with specialist needs is high, and can amount to circa. £80k per pupil per year. This annually presents a significant demand on the Council's education budget.
130. Additional recurring revenue costs associated may be incurred, similarly there will be revenue efficiency savings associated with this proposal.
131. Based on the funding delegated to schools in the 2022/2023 financial year, per pupil funding for Alltwen Primary school is £4,006 whilst for

Llangiwg Primary school per pupil funding is £4,561 and for Godre'rgraig Primary school £ 4,206. This compares with the average for NPT primary schools at £4,272.

132. Based on a school of 770 pupils (700 F.T.E) the projected budget share for the proposed new school is estimated to be in 2022/23 = £2,556,487. Per pupil funding for the proposed new school would be approximately £3,652.
133. Additional transport costs are likely to be incurred should the proposal be implemented. Currently annual transport costs for Godre'rgraig Primary School amount to £101,245. It was agreed when Godre'rgraig Primary School moved from Graig Road to the temporary location at Parc Ynysderw that nursery pupils would be granted discretionary transport assistance, this cost is included in the above figure. In terms of additional pupils requiring transport as a change of school raises the number of pupils with entitlement for every minibus the average cost is £150 - £200 per day; alternatively for every coach the average cost is £220 - £260 per day. It is not yet known how many children will be entitled to transport.
134. Prior to the proposed new primary school opening on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025 Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg primary schools will receive their annual school budget shares for the 5/12<sup>ths</sup> of the financial year 2024/2025. When the new school opens on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025 it will receive a budget share based on the number of pupils on roll at that time.
135. Plans for the vacated school buildings and sites have not yet been developed. The school sites are owned by the Council and any future use will be considered within the context of the Council's corporate asset management process. If the vacated sites in whole or part are sold the monies raised will be reinvested into the general education budget.

### **Integrated Impact Assessment**

136. An Integrated impact assessment, attached at appendix B, has been undertaken. The proposal would create a new build, 21st Century School for pupils which would enhance well-being, and would provide the conditions to improve standards. The addition of an LSC for primary aged ASD pupils would address the need for additional

provision in Neath Port Talbot and would seek to improve opportunities for these pupils as well as provide training and development for mainstream staff in the proposed school and the wider area. The proposed new pool would complement current provision and enhance the health and wellbeing offer for pupils and the wider community.

137. The Socio-Economic Duty (Equality Act 2010) came into force on 31 March 2021. This duty requires councils, when taking strategic decisions such as setting priorities, to consider how their decisions might help to reduce the inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage. As relevant to the Public Sector Equality Duty under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010, the proposal can be seen to have positive impacts on Age and Disability and a neutral impact on all other protected characteristics. A new build 21st Century school would impact positively on pupils from all socio economic groups, due to the significantly improved facilities provided and would also positively impact on community cohesion, and social exclusion. An explanation of the Public Sector Equality Duty can be found at paragraphs 19-31 of Appendix C
138. With the implementation of mitigating actions the proposal should have at least a neutral impact on biodiversity.
139. The Wellbeing of Future generations has been considered and the proposal directly supports the Council's wellbeing objectives.
140. Members are reminded that in response to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 the Council has set four strategic objectives which contribute to the seven national well-being goals that the Welsh Government requires all public bodies in Wales to contribute to, in order to achieve 'the Wales we want'.
141. The Council's well-being objectives and the supporting improvement priorities are set out in the Council's Corporate Plan. This proposal directly supports wellbeing objective – 'to ensure all children get the best start in life' through the provision of a 21st century school for current and future generations of primary aged pupils. With the inclusion of a 16 place LSC for primary aged pupils with ASD in the proposal further support for the plan is evidenced, through ensuring that pupils with ALN are also given opportunities to benefit from new purpose built facilities.

142. Through creating facilities that can be used by the community the proposal also contributes to wellbeing objective –‘all communities are thriving and sustainable’.
143. To obtain Welsh Government approval of the business plan it has been essential to ensure that community benefits are fully explored and implemented throughout the construction phase. Part of this work will ensure that local businesses are used to supply labour and materials whenever feasible, local people will benefit from employment schemes and the local economy will benefit due to an increased number of people working in the area. This contributes to well-being objective 4 - ‘Working with our partners we create the conditions for more secure, well paid and green work in the area and support local people into those jobs’

### **Welsh in Education Strategic Plan**

144. Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 requires Local Authorities to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). Neath Port Talbot’s draft WESP details the plan to support and further develop Welsh language education in schools, both Welsh and English medium, and in the wider communities and planning for future growth. The plan details how further development will be secured over the next 10 years, January 2022 - January 2032.
145. The WESP 2022-32, is the cornerstone for the Council’s vision for increasing and improving the planning of the provision of Welsh medium education in Neath Port Talbot, to enable all learners to develop their Welsh language skills and to use the language confidently in everyday life. It both complements and assists in facilitating the National vision for the Welsh language, to have 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050.
146. The plan has been developed through close working with partners including Neath Port Talbot schools, Menter Iaith, RhAG, Muddiad Meithrin, Neath Port Talbot College, Academi Hywel Dda Swansea University, the Urdd and with Welsh Government.
147. The draft WESP was submitted to Welsh Government ministers following approval by full Council on 2nd February 2022. In May 2022, in line with Section 85(5)(a) of the School Standards

and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 ("the 2013 Act"), Welsh Government consulted with officers regarding modifications to the plan. Following further discussions the majority of modifications were agreed and the WESP was amended. Formal approval of the WESP was then granted by the Minister for Education and Welsh Language in July 2022, and Council approval was granted on September 28th 2022.

## **Welsh Language Impact Assessment**

148. A Welsh Language Impact Assessment (WLIA) has been undertaken, and is included as Appendix D to this document.
149. Whilst these proposals directly affect English-medium school provision, there is also a potential effect (that may be positive, negative or neutral) on Welsh-medium schools in the county, which has also been considered.
150. This is due not only to Welsh Government regulations on Education provision, but also considerations under a range of other statutory duties identified in this assessment, and in particular due to the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, further details of which are set out in Appendix D
151. The Welsh Language Standards that stem from the Measure require policy decisions of any kind to be assessed as to their effect on the Welsh language in the policy and/or geographic area in question. Those same policy-making standards apply to both Welsh Government and Neath Port Talbot County Council.
152. A council's policy framework is an interlinked set of documents, and in the same way, an impact assessment's contents are interlinked and cannot be regarded section by section in isolation, but as a cumulative whole. Even when driven by a primary policy or legislative requirement, other policies and legislative requirements have to be acknowledged and considered, even if they do not ultimately change the final decision that is made. Accordingly, members are required to consider all factors as part of decision making.
153. The WLIA recognises that there may be impacts as a result of this proposal on the development of the Welsh language in the community and on Welsh-medium schools in the area.



154. Potential impacts are highlighted along with proposed actions to mitigate against possible negative impacts, as well as identifying additional steps to reinforce positive impacts.

## **Workforce impacts**

### ***School staff***

155. There are potential teaching and learning benefits for staff working at a large primary school, including greater opportunity for staff development and career progression through a broader range of experiences.

156. The proposal will mean changes that impact on the employment of school staff as the existing schools will close on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025. Upon closure all staff will cease to be employed at their respective schools. The new school will set a new staffing structure appropriate to its needs and budget.

157. A temporary governing body will be established before the opening of the primary school. The temporary governing body will have the responsibility of appointing a head teacher. Specifically in relation to the posts of head teacher and deputy head teacher, the Council's policy is for these to be advertised nationally. Once the head teacher has been appointed that person will, together with the temporary governing body, be responsible for determining the staffing structure for the new primary school.

158. The new primary school will open on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025 and school staff will be employed by the new governing body for the primary school (albeit appointed by the temporary governing body).

### ***Centrally employed staff***

159. Although this proposal rationalises provision across the three schools, there will be employment opportunities at the new school for centrally employed catering and cleaning staff.

### ***Staff support***

160. As part of the process all school based staff will be supported by the relevant school policies and procedures which will include full consultation. Previous experience has shown that some staff wish to secure employment in the new school but others take the opportunity to take on new challenges elsewhere. Employees identified at risk of redundancy will be given access to the Council's prior consideration

register. The Council is committed to supporting staff at risk of compulsory redundancy and has secured the support and goodwill of the teacher associations/trade unions and governing bodies across the Council, via an employers' pledge. The Council has a good track record for supporting staff in such situations.

## **Legal impacts**

161. Members are referred to Appendix C which sets out in detail the relevant legislation and legal implications relating to a decision on this proposal.
162. The proposal requires the establishment and discontinuation of schools. The School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (the Act) provides the legislative framework by which the Council may implement the proposal. The Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, November 2018, made under Sections 38 and 39 of the Act, imposes on the Council requirements and guidelines on matters relating to school organisation, including consultation.
163. Pupil travel arrangements will be in line with the requirements of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008; the Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance 2014; and the Council's Home to School Travel Policy.
164. Revenue funding will be in line with the requirements of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998; the School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010; and the Council's approved formula for funding schools.
165. The management of staff affected by the proposal will follow the relevant school policy and procedure requirements.
166. The legislation referred to above is available using the electronic links in the section on background papers, below.

## **Risk management**

167. A risk assessment has been carried out under the Council's Risk Management Policy 2018.
168. The potential risks associated with the proposal comprise the Council's reputation, educational standards, financial management, staff employment and service delivery.

169. Potential risk areas in implementing the proposal include:

- resistance to change leading to lack of pupil, parent and staff support
- educational standards not maintained
- less effective support for pupil well-being in a larger school and in a different location
- increased home to school travel time for some pupils
- staff anxiety about job security and new management arrangements
- loss of school identity from closure of existing establishments
- forecasted pupil numbers do not materialise
- budget allocation insufficient to meet needs
- Welsh Government Sustainable Communities for Learning capital funding opportunity not realised
- Welsh language not developed further
- negative impact on the Welsh language
- discrimination against protected characteristics
- loss of community facilities
- increased governance and staff responsibilities

170. Failing to implement the proposal will result in the following teaching/learning and financial benefits not being fully realised, particularly in relation to:

- providing a stimulating and innovative teaching and learning environment that will impact positively on the self-esteem and well-being of all pupils and staff
- pupils accessing a wider range of staff expertise
- opportunities for wider peer group interaction
- staff having greater opportunity for curriculum development and career opportunities through broader experience and enhanced continuing professional development options
- a more efficient and effective use of resources, and savings from economies of scale
- reducing the number of surplus pupil places and improving the school building environment
- creating a learning and recreational campus promoting community cohesion

171. The benefits of implementing the proposal will mitigate the effects of identified risks. A new school provides greater prospects for improving educational attainment for pupils. Estyn (Jan 2007) reported on the performance of schools before and after moving into new buildings, stating that ageing school buildings which are in a poor state of repair cannot meet modern teaching and learning

needs. The report also states that inadequate buildings make improvements in standards more challenging and that in nearly all schools with new or refurbished buildings, pupils attainment and achievement have improved and in some cases the improvement has been significant.

172. The full risk assessment is attached to this report as Appendix E.

### **Community usage impact assessment**

173. A Community Impact Assessment (CIA) has been undertaken for the purpose of providing information on the impact of the proposal on the local community's access to facilities and services currently available at the three schools. It has been prepared in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code. The CIA has been prepared using a range of sources and evidence, including discussion with various partner organisations in the Swansea Valley and the schools and provides further information all of which enables decision makers to have a fuller understanding of the possible consequences on communities as a result of school closure.

174. The CIA recognises the importance of Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary School in providing a venue for school based events, extracurricular activity and community use. Following evaluation, it has been demonstrated that under this proposal the existing community/ school interaction is either retained, preserved, relocated or enhanced as appropriate with no adverse effect or loss of amenity to the wider community. It is recommended that the community use developed over an extended period should not be lost.

175. The CIA contains a comprehensive assessment of the facilities and services in the Swansea Valley and while the need to understand and mitigate the impact of a school closure proposal on a community is a right and proper consideration, the deciding factor in determining school organisation proposals should be one of securing the best educational offer for pupils.

176. It should be noted that it is not necessarily the case that by closing a school the community in which it is situated automatically declines. The report of the Institute of Welsh affairs - Small School Closure in Wales: New Evidence David Reynolds and Meriel Jones, 2007 states

“There are many examples within Wales of strong, vital, connected communities that have no local school at all. It is the people, not a school building, who surely create a community. “

177. There is no reason to suggest that by attending school outside of the village children and young people will no longer ‘belong’ to the community where they live. The Community Impact Assessment (CIA) highlights the fact that many community based activities and events are not reliant on the schools and so there is no obvious reason why these activities would not continue, or why children and young people who currently enjoy participating in them would not want to do so should they attend school elsewhere. Schools are open to pupils for 190 days of the year. Outside of the school day; that is, before and after school, weekends and during school holidays, pupils will be in the areas where they live and available to make use of local facilities.

178. Estyn states in its report, ‘Community schools: families and communities at the heart of school life’, July 2020, that the most effective community schools place families, communities and their wellbeing at the heart of the school. The proposed new school will look to build on the strengths of the individual schools and provide leadership that has a strong community vision and sense of civic responsibility; the new school has an important role to play by working in close partnership with families, parents and the wider community. It is envisaged that the school will look to provide opportunities for parents to play a full part in the life of the school and on the wider education of their children.

179. The proposal for the new build school also includes the creation of a learning, health and wellbeing community campus through the addition of a new build pool on the Parc Ynysderw site, with the aim of providing opportunities for all members of the Swansea Valley community to benefit from modern, fit for purpose facilities.

180. The new build school and pool co-location alongside the existing Cwmtawe Community School and Pontardawe Leisure Centre will provide opportunities to further develop and integrate community provision with delivery partners for indoor and outdoor sporting activities. The pool is currently used by some schools in the area but this scheme aims to increase usage by schools and by the wider community due to its improved location.

181. Cwmtawe Community School has a range of facilities that can be used by community groups including hard tennis courts, meeting spaces, specialist facilities and performance spaces. These facilities will continue to be available and can be fully utilised by the community, and the primary school facilities will complement and extend these, providing a wide range of activities, services and experiences for pupils, families and the wider community.
182. Early years and childcare facilities are already available within walking distance of the new school, and it is expected that wrap around care will be easier to facilitate due to the location.
183. Additionally Pontardawe has a rich cultural heritage, and is known for promoting and developing the arts both through the medium of Welsh as well as English. The close proximity of the new learning campus to the heart of Pontardawe town would ensure pupils and families are able to both benefit from and contribute to this heritage.
184. This proposal will help to deliver the Council's aim of improving the health and wellbeing of all people living in Neath Port Talbot and reducing the gap between the least and most healthy.
185. The CIA is attached to this report as Appendix F.

## **Consultation**

186. This school organisation proposal is being brought forward under the Council's Strategic School Improvement Programme. Formal consultation is required in line with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, November 2018, which specifies the procedures to be followed, including the content of the consultation document and those to be consulted.
187. Subject to approval, it is intended to consult on this proposal between 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022 – 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023. Responses to the consultation will be reported to Cabinet for consideration by Members in February 2023.
188. If, following consideration of the responses, Members decide to progress the proposal then a 28 day period will follow for the submission of objections.

Publication of consultation document	5 <sup>th</sup> December 2022
Period for submitting responses	5 <sup>th</sup> December 2022-24 <sup>th</sup> January 2023
Consultation report published	February 2023
Proposed implementation date	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2025

189. Information on the proposal and the consultation document will be available on line on the Council's website and also on the websites of the affected schools. Hard copies will also be available on request.

190. All consultees, as directed by the Code will be sent the Consultation document via email. The Council's social media channels will also contain information on how to access the consultation document.

191. Consultation responses can also be submitted using the Consultation Portal on the Council's web page, or by email to [SSIP@npt.gov.uk](mailto:SSIP@npt.gov.uk), or in writing.

## **Recommendation**

192. Having given due regard to the impact assessments in relation to equality, risk, community usage and Welsh language, and to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales 2015), together with the legal implications, it is recommended that, in line with Section 48 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, Members approve consultation on the proposal to establish an English-medium 3-11 school with a specialist learning support centre, in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwg primary, all of which will close on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025.

193. The proposed date of implementation to be 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025

## **Reasons for proposed decision**

194. This decision is necessary to comply with the formal consultation requirements imposed on the Council by the School Organisation Code.

195. Subject to the outcome of consultation, implementation of the proposal will enable the Council to promote high educational standards and the fulfilment of every child's potential. It will also

enable the Council to meet its duty to secure efficient education in its area.

## **Implementation of the decision**

196. The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Options Table

Appendix B: Integrated Impact Assessment

Appendix C: Legal Implications

Appendix D: Welsh Language Impact Assessment

Appendix E: Risk assessment

Appendix F: Community Impact Assessment

### **Appendix G: Consultation Document**

There are appendices that relate to Appendix G which are as follows:

Consultation Document – Appendix A – to follow

Consultation Document – Appendix B – attached

Consultation Document – Appendix C – attached

Consultation Document – Appendix D - attached

Consultation Document – Appendix E – to follow

## **List of background papers**

- a. Cabinet Report: October 2017  
<http://moderngov.npt.gov.uk/documents/s32731/CABINET%20report%20041017.pdf>
- b. Strategic School Improvement Programme Principles Paper: September 2008  
[https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20080924/Agenda/\\$CAB-240908-REP-EL-KN.doc.pdf](https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20080924/Agenda/$CAB-240908-REP-EL-KN.doc.pdf)
- c. Welsh Government - School Organisation Code: November 2018  
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-10/school-organisation-code-second-edition.pdf>
- d. School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013  
[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2013/1/pdfs/anaw\\_20130001\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2013/1/pdfs/anaw_20130001_en.pdf)
- e. Well-being of Future generations (Wales) Act 2015  
<https://gov.wales/well-being-future-generations-wales-act-2015-guidance>
- f. Learner Travel (Wales) Measure: 2008 & the Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance: 2014.  
[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2008/2/pdfs/mwa\\_20080002\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2008/2/pdfs/mwa_20080002_en.pdf)  
<http://gov.wales/docs/det/publications/140616-ltogg-en.pdf>
- g. Home to School Travel Policy: 2017



[https://www.npt.gov.uk/media/4231/npt\\_home\\_to\\_school\\_travel\\_policy\\_2017.pdf?v=20170627002146](https://www.npt.gov.uk/media/4231/npt_home_to_school_travel_policy_2017.pdf?v=20170627002146)

- h. **Corporate Plan 2022 -2027**  
[Corporate Plan 2022-27 - Recover, Reset, Renew \(npt.gov.uk\)](#)
- i. **Sustainable communities for learning Business Case Guidance**  
[Sustainable Communities for Learning: business case guidance | GOV.WALES](#)
- j. **Estyn**  
<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/search>

### **Officer Contact**

Mr Andrew Thomas  
Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning  
Email [a.d.thomas@npt.gov.uk](mailto:a.d.thomas@npt.gov.uk)

Mrs. Rhiannon Crowhurst  
Head of Support Services and Transformation  
Email: [r.crowhurst@npt.gov.uk](mailto:r.crowhurst@npt.gov.uk)