

## **Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Community Impact Assessment**

### **Proposal to establish an English- Medium 3 -11 school to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg schools.**

#### **1. Context**

In preparing statutory proposals involving a school a Local Authority is required to assess the impact that the proposals may have on local families and the local community through the preparation of a Community Impact Assessment.

The Community Impact Assessment has been conducted in line with the guidance set out in Welsh Government's Circular No: 011/2018: 'School Organisation Code'.

#### **2. The Assessment Process**

The Community Impact Assessment has been informed by:-

- A review of existing school/community interaction <sup>1</sup>. –Those schools directly affected by the proposal and all other schools in the area including Welsh and English – medium Primary and Secondary schools.
- Evidence from earlier school consultation events <sup>6</sup>
- A composite audit of community facilities <sup>2, 8,9</sup>
- Dialogue with key anchor partner Organisations to better understand current gaps in provision and their work in the community <sup>1, 3, 9</sup>
- Desktop study of secondary data <sup>3, 4</sup>
- Interviews with personnel that are most closely aligned to the schools , non-statutory provision and the wider community <sup>1,7</sup>
- A Scoping Study embracing the whole of the Swansea Valley <sup>8</sup>
- A Mapping exercise extending from Ystalyfera to Trebanos and Pontardawe including Alltwen and the hamlets of Cilmaengwyn and Ynysmeudwy<sup>10</sup>

Interviews have been held with the Head teachers, Deputy Heads, Bursars, Clerks, Primary School Support Officers, Governors, members of the PTA and relevant senior staff within each of the schools concerned. The findings from the interviews have been used to interpret the extent, type, frequency and duration of community activity on each of the school sites.

### 3. **The proposal**

As from September 2024, the Council proposes 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 the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024.

It is proposed that the new school will be built at Parc Ynysderw, Pontardawe and will form part of a learning, health and well-being 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 to complement the current health and well-being offer for pupils and the wider community and to build upon the advantages of co-location.

### 4. **The Schools**

Alltwen Primary school is an English – medium community school serving boys and girls aged 3- 11 years. The school occupies a prominent elevated position on Alltwen Hill and operates between two separate buildings a short distance apart. There is a thriving wraparound and after school childcare provision within a demountable on the school site.

58% of pupils are drawn from the catchment. 17% of children are in receipt of free school meals (lower than the NPT average of 23%) and 37% of children have been identified as having additional learning needs (higher than the NPT average of 24%).

An Estyn inspection in October 2018 reported the school had many good features including an inclusive and caring ethos, skilled teaching assistants and a well-motivated leader.

Alltwen Primary school is approx. 0.7 miles from the possible site of the new school.

Godre'rgraig Primary school is an English – medium community School serving boys and girls aged 3 -11 years. The school is circa 100 years old and occupies an elevated position on Graig Road.

In July 2019 Godre'rgraig Primary School was relocated temporarily from Godre'rgraig to Parc Ynysderw, adjacent to Cwmtawe Community School after geological experts found there was a potential risk to the school's playground from slag heap quarry waste. The demountable classrooms that now house the Godre'rgraig school pupils are of a good standard, however they are not intended for permanent use in the longer term.

82% of pupils are drawn from the catchment. 21% of children are in receipt of free school meals (lower than the NPT average) and 35% have been identified as having additional learning needs (higher than the NPT average).

An Estyn inspection in June 2017 awarded a good for current standards and good for prospects for improvement as the caring support and guidance offered by staff ensured that pupils worked collaboratively and interdependently.

The school and the village of Godre'rgraig is approx. 3.2 miles from the possible site of the new school.

Llangiwg Primary school is an English– medium community school serving boys and girls aged 3 – 11 years. The school holds a prominent kerbside position on New Road, Ynysmeudwy and operates from two distinct sites, the Nursery Block and the Main Block, approx.100 metres apart along the same road.

66% of pupils are drawn from the catchment. 22% of children are in receipt of free school meals (lower than the NPT average) and 22% have been identified as having additional learning needs (lower than the NPT average).

An Estyn inspection in January 2019 awarded good judgements in four inspection areas and one adequate needing improvement. The curriculum was considered to be broad and balanced and the quality of teaching was judged good overall.

Llangiwg School in Ynysmeudwy is situated approx. 1.3 miles from the possible site of the new school.

**5. The degree to which the school buildings are used now as a community resource**

Alltwen Primary school has hired its main hall and demountable to various groups ('Tiny Toes' ballet and Judo classes) but does not wish to compete and possibly reduce the use of the local Community Centre at Dyffryn Road. There are few other areas within the school that lend themselves to hire but over a period of years the school has steadily invested in an underutilised classroom to create the 'Cwtch.' The room has been adapted and equipped to provide weekly parent & toddler sessions, a reading café, a parent Nurture Group and relationship based play activities. The room doubles as a safe venue for pre-school children ('Babbling Babies'), for visits by the Health Visitor and for the Credit Union Bank. The provision is now an integral part of the school's 'Families Connects' ethos.

The school houses two demountable buildings in the school yard, one for Nursery and another for 'Hoots' childcare provision. The 'Hoots' childcare is run as a business venture and provides comprehensive wraparound care for up to 19 3 – 11 year olds, with up to 48 pupils attending at various times. There is also a daily play group/after school club which is operational until 5.15 p.m. The provision employs 8 part time staff who are fully qualified in all aspects of work leading to Foundation Phase including Nurture, 'Playworks' and Speech & Language. There are links with NPTCBC ALN team and Educational Psychologists due to its close proximity to the school.

Following 16 years of development, 'Hoots' regularly achieves the Gold standard with HSPSS (Heathy Sustainable Pre-school Services) and the 'Small Workplace & Health Award.' Parents see the on-site childcare as being essential to the health and well-being of the pupil, making transition natural and safe whilst instilling a sense of belonging.

Parents find 'Hoots' convenient as there are no transport issues with drop off and pick up, which would otherwise be the case with private Childcare providers in Herbert Street ('Lullaby's' and

‘Little Steps’) and the eight registered home – based child minders that operate within the Pontardawe area.

The Godre’rgraig Primary school pupils were relocated to Parc Ynysderw in July 2019 as a result of a perceived risk from slag heap waste shifting onto the school playground. Prior to being rehoused the Primary school was able to provide an After School club three days a week, a flourishing Mother & Toddler Group twice a week and a sports Club once a week. The Mother & Toddler Group was a useful transition and ‘outreach’ tool breaking the cycle of deprivation and creating a link between the school and its community. It was the intention, prior to being relocated, to further develop these school links to create numeracy & literacy classes for parents. The school would also stage its traditional summer and Christmas fetes.

Since relocation out of school hours activities have been trialled at the Parc Ynysderw site but have been unsuccessful as parents without cars have difficulty collecting the children that stay beyond the traditional school day. This can also apply to children that cannot get to school early enough for Breakfast Club. The relocated school is not currently functioning in terms of community benefit, as it was on the Graig Road site.

The Llangiwg Primary school has lost its playgroup, wraparound provision and Family Learning Group in recent times but still has an after school club for sport, art and the choir. The lack of wraparound care has affected transition to Early Years. The school continues to stage concerts and a Christmas market which have proven to be very popular and successful. The school donates and is a collection point for the ‘Pantry’ Food Bank. The school is involved with the ‘My Green Valley’ initiative (please see YGG Trebannws below). The school buildings are not used now as a community resource.

For the sake of completeness investigations have also been carried out with other Swansea valley schools that might offer community use of their school buildings and impact this proposal. The degree to which each school is used as a community resource has been reviewed with particular reference to Cwmtawe Community School, YGG Pontardawe, YGG Trebannws and Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera.

Cwmtawe Community School has an extensive range of extra-curricular activity. The school offers all year groups a varied and inclusive programme of extended school day sport, dance, choir, music and drama. The school and its Primary feeder pupils benefit from the extensive on-site provision (e.g. the Main Hall, the science and technology laboratories, performance spaces, outdoor tennis and netball courts, etc.) and also the considerable leisure facilities (6 full size playing fields, Leisure Centre & Studio and 3G synthetic pitch) within easy walking distance.

YGG Pontardawe is currently benefiting from a £1.6 million investment which includes extended and enhanced childcare and Foundation Phase facilities. Once the Main Hall is completed (in 2021) the school will be able to more easily segregate activities with a view to continuing to provide a rich mix of school based ventures, its Urdd sports programme, PTFA events, house the Cwmtawe Youth Band, the school discos and the very popular Cylch Meithrin and Holiday play scheme. The school hosts training sessions for University of Wales students and intends to develop a community room on completion of their extension.

YGG Trebannws work closely with YGG Pontardawe and the Urdd sports club (weekly on a Monday out of school hours). The school has hosted a 10 week parental care workshop and enjoys use of a local woodland for Forest School (Ysgol Goedwig) activities. School based ventures include the traditional Christmas and summer fayres/jamboree, sports days and celebration of St. David's Day. Pupils are heavily involved in the 'My Green Valley' initiative which is a litter picking/recycling/environmental programme being developed by a local voluntary organisation in association with Eco – schools and 'Keep Wales Tidy'. The school has limited space to house community use and will use Cwmtawe Community School or the Graig Chapel for some of its well-attended school concerts.

Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera is an 'all through' 3 -18, Welsh medium school boasting a range of on-site leisure and community facilities. Pupils enjoy a rich menu of Out of School Hours study in music, dance, drama, sport, Design & Technology and Duke of Edinburgh activities. Revision sessions are held after school hours for core curricular subjects and there is a vibrant school choir. All pupils enjoy use of the sports hall, the sports pitches and older age groups have use of the climbing wall (the swimming pool has been de-

commissioned). There are proposals for a new 100 x 60 m 2G pitch with changing facilities on the school fields that run parallel with the Afon Twrch tributary.

The school buildings and on-site facilities are currently not widely used by the community. There is limited public use of the sports hall and the playing fields. With the arrival of the synthetic 2G pitch the school will be looking to develop and increase the amenities for increased community use.

## **6. Extent of community facilities within easy reach of the existing schools**

The area under investigation within the Swansea Valley stretches from Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera in the north east along the ribbon development of Godre'rgraig, Cilmaengwyn and Ynysmeudwy to Pontardawe (please refer to the separate mapping exercise which identifies all community-based facilities within the tract of land under scrutiny). It straddles the Swansea canal to Trebanos in the south west and is bounded by Alltwen in the south east.

The locality has a proud industrial history linked to coal, iron and tinsplate manufacture, but as a result of the streamlining of these industries in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the valley communities are placed within the 30–50% most deprived LSOA's in Wales.

The number and type of community facilities are both many and varied often concentrated around densities of population in Ystalyfera, but particularly Pontardawe.

The proposal to establish a learning campus with modern day health and leisure facilities at Parc Ynysderw will further channel amenities into the town of Pontardawe. Pupils that might be displaced from Godre'rgraig Primary school (3.2 miles distant), Llangiwg Primary (1.3 miles distant) and Alltwen Primary school (0.7 miles distant) would benefit from the rich mix of sporting, artistic, cultural and social activities within walking distance of their new teaching and learning environment.

The community facilities within easy reach of the three Primary schools in their present locations (i.e. Alltwen Primary at Alltwen Hill, Godre'rgraig Primary at Graig Road and Llangiwg Primary at New Road , Ynysmeudwy) include :-

In Alltwen –

- Parks & Play areas at Lon Tanyrallt, Gwynfryn and Bryn Morgrug (also ‘Harry’s Park’)
- Community Centre at Dyffryn Road – which hosts amongst many other hires, the wood turners, yoga, kickboxing, modern sequence dancing, Parent & Toddler Group, ‘Let’s Dance’ and ‘Fit Steps’. Some space capacity on a mid-week morning to accommodate further hires. Access and parking at the Centre is very difficult and can deter would- be hirers. The Centre is managed by Cilybebyll Community Council which has very good relationships with the school jointly providing Remembrance services and Christmas concerts. The Centre is used for the Year 6 school leaver’s concert.
- Open Spaces – which include Alltwen rugby field, the community garden at the ‘Triangle’ (which Alltwen school children help to maintain) and the Glantawe Riverside Centre. The latter operates an Education Academy where children, including those from Alltwen, partake in field studies, workshops, mini-beast hunts and outdoor discovery sessions. Children benefit from full day sessions, which might be scheduled for a term or the whole of the academic year, and help those that might be ‘disadvantaged’ to problem solve, to build confidence and have a more positive focus on life. The Academy is accredited with Agored Cymru and receives over 100 young people each week (those of secondary school age have achieved the Level 2 Agored Cymru Essential Skills qualification). Self – employed practitioners walk to the school and walk participants to the Centre (via the Sustrans National Cycleway 43 or St. Illtyd’s Way) and this is seen as part of the programme by building resilience.
- Various Churches, Chapels and Places of Worship – the school and St. John’s Church derive mutual benefit from each other sharing premises for school choir rehearsals and ‘Messy Church’ activities. The school will use St. Peter’s for the Harvest Festival. Pontardawe Chapel hosts Merched Y Wawr.



## In and within reach of Godre'rgraig-

- Parks & Play areas abound at Gnoll Road, Allt y Grug, Penywern Road, Hodgson's Road, Pen Yr Allt, Varteg Park, Maen Gwyn (Tai Tarian site), Parc y Darren (bowls and tennis) and at Ffordd Glandwr which also boasts a MUGA and skate park.
- The Band Room on the A4067 houses the Ystalyfera Public Band and kickboxing, whilst the Godre'rgraig Workingmen's Club at Glan Yr Avon serves 'Tiddlywinks2' (see later). Ynysmeudwy Boys and Girls Club is within walking distance and this hosts a range of martial arts classes but no Youth Club.
- Ystalyfera Community Centre managed by the Community Council and providing for a range of community hires including Line dancing, Sewing Group, Cylch Meithrin playgroup, 'WeightWatchers' and Dance class. There is capacity within the Centre for yet more hires and there are proposals for 'Age Cymru' OAP exercise classes and 'Clwb Cwtch' sessions that are currently being held On line (Welsh language taster classes focussing on speaking Welsh with children).
- 'Tiddlywinks' – as providers of enhanced learning, childcare and play opportunities for children aged 6 weeks to 13 years old, Monday to Friday 7a.m to 7 p.m. The facilities at the Centre comprise Baby and Toddler rooms, playground and log cabin. Able to cater for 11 children under the age of 2 years and 32 children aged 2 years and over. 'Tiddlywinks2' is the overflow and school holiday facility for up to 32 children aged 7 and over and this has been registered and developed within Godre'rgraig Workingmen's Club. Tiddlywinks serve the whole of the Swansea valley including parts of Powys.
- The Ystalyfera Development Trust (YDT) at the former HWB building in Commercial Street– the facilities now provide for computer classes (four times a week), yoga, and Tai Chi, pottery and Customer Services classes. The building is also home to the Art Club, the Sewing Club, 'Stitch R Us' and has a resident physiotherapist.

- Open spaces – which include Godre’rgraig Public Park (the Community Council intend to develop this area with the school to provide Nature trails). Sports pitches at Godre’rgraig FC, Ynysmeudwy FC (plus MUGA), Ystalyfera RFC and on the school site at Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera. There is a growing junior section within Ynysmeudwy FC and Godre’rgraig Primary School uses the ground for its sports day.
- Various Churches, Chapels and Places of Worship – St. David’s Church Hall in Ystalyfera is used for school concerts but less so now given the capacity of the new hall in Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera. The Gurnos Independent Chapel is home to C.A.T.C.H. and the Food Bank which is managed jointly by Ystalyfera Development Trust.

It can be seen from the above that the area under review is well served by community facilities and if the Godre’rgraig Primary school pupils are relocated to Parc Ynysderw responders fear there will be a disconnect with these local amenities.

In Ynysmeudwy (Llangiwig) –

- Ynysmeudwy Park is within easy walking distance of the school. A group of parents have set up ‘The Friends’ of the Park with Pontardawe Town Council. The schoolchildren are heavily involved in tree planting and ‘Working with Nature’ in the park as part of the ‘green classroom’ initiative.
- Ynysmeudwy Community Centre, managed by Pontardawe Town Council is again within easy walking distance of the school. The Centre offers a vibrant mix of mid-week community based activities which includes Art classes, Rainbows & Brownies, Dance, and Tai Chi and on a Friday evening, a Youth Club for 10 – 16 year olds which is proving so popular that an additional 6.00 – 8.00 p.m. slot is being sought.
- Dan y Bryn Residential Care Home and the school have close links with the children staging concerts (Dewi Sant, etc.), gifting Easter eggs and selection boxes to residents, with many children being ‘pen pals’ to the elderly.

- Mount Elim Evangelical Church and Llangiwg Primary school have close links as the children attend lessons on Christenings, weddings and are involved in the Christmas Box Appeal. Church representatives come to the school to hold assemblies. The Elim Church is planning to develop a new community Church hall at Coed Cae which is dependent upon realising sufficient grant aid.
- Open Spaces – The Pontardawe Recreation Ground (managed by the Pontardawe Sport and Recreation Association) is within walking distance of the school. The Rec. has two rugby, two football and two cricket pitches. The school uses the Rec. for its sports day and the sports fields are used regularly by Pontardawe RFC, Trebanos RFC, Pontardawe United F.C., Pontardawe and Llandarcy Cricket Clubs, Air Cadets and is the home of the ‘Heart of the Valleys’ Show.

Glantawe Riverside Centre is accessible via the Swansea canal towpath and Llangiwg Primary school have previously used the Centre for environmental studies (in the same vein as Alltwn Primary school above) by investing the PDG (Pupil Deprivation Grant).

- Pontardawe Swimming Pool and Pontardawe Arts Centre also serve Ynysmeudwy and Llangiwg because of their proximity to the School site.

This report acknowledges the community facilities that are within easy reach of the three existing schools affected by this proposal. The proposal is to relocate school pupils to the town centre of Pontardawe and Parc Ynysderw. For the sake of perspective there follows a complete review of the amenities that the children would have access to if relocated to the Parc Ynysderw site (please also refer to the separate mapping exercise that locates each of these facilities).

- Parks and Play areas – at Gellideg in Rhydyfro (complete with a ball court) and Trebanos Park (also home to Trebanos RFC). King George V Park, Pontardawe complete with tennis courts and a bowling green.

- Alltycham Rhydyfro Community Hall (ARCH) managed by Pontardawe Town Council is fully booked in the evenings with Dance, Tai Chi, after school club, Gardening Club, Twinning committee, etc. It sees daytime use from Toddlers Group, 'Age Concern' and Craft Club.
- Trebanos Hall (also managed by the Town Council) is the focal point for the village. It has a busy schedule involving the Cylch, Coffee mornings, crochet and sewing, Senior Citizens, Tae Kwon Do, Kung Fu and Brownies.
- The Cross, Pontardawe is privately run but does cater for Third sector organisations such as the History Society, Arts Group, OAPs and the Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers. It is the central venue for 'Flying Start' courses, Child Protection meetings, Social Services and the Pontardawe Chamber of Trade & Commerce. In addition to the Gallery and the other rooms that are available for hire The Cross houses Business Units including a seamstress, two Care Companies, a Boiler/Economic Grants Enterprise, a vending company and a photographer.
- Pontardawe Arts Centre is the principle venue for drama, dance, music, craft and the performing arts in Pontardawe. There is a 'Friends of' organisation which works closely with local schools and they are currently running a volunteer scheme. The Centre, its rehearsal space and Gallery are to stage 'Little Boxes', a celebration of the Arts Centre's history from when it was a Miner's Institute.
- Pontardawe Library and Yr Hwb. The library has a good relationship with all schools, particularly Llangiwig. It provides for class visits, activity sessions, creative writing workshops and homework study. Yr Hwb houses the Welsh Language Centre ('Ty'r Gwrhyd') who work closely with Menter Iaith. There are Council Tax, Credit Union and Citizen Advice Bureau walk-in sessions. The 'Friends of' organisation assist with fund raising for author talks and historians.
- The Heritage Centre occupies a central location behind the Dillwyn Arms and acts as an exhibition centre and Visitor Information Point. It is voluntary run and, with the help of

young people from the local Primary and Comprehensive schools, celebrates the rich and diverse heritage, culture and history of the Swansea Valley.

- Open Spaces – in addition to the Swansea Canal (still very important to the area and maintained by the Canal Society) the main receiving centre for outdoor sporting/recreational activity is Parc Ynysderw (the proposed site for the new school).

Parc Ynysderw is currently laid out as 3 full size football pitches, one Academy (9 a side) pitch, various training grounds, 2 full size rugby pitches, a 3G floodlit synthetic pitch and an enclosed Welsh League pitch under the custodianship of Pontardawe Town FC. There are also changing rooms, two tennis courts and a small equipped children's play area.

The playing fields are maintained and hired out under a NPTCBC Lease with the Parc Ynysderw Sports Association and Pontardawe Town FC.

The pitches are used regularly by the West Glamorgan Junior League, Youth League and Ladies League, Pontardawe Town FC, Pontardawe RFC, Trebanos RFC, Rhos FC, Cwmtawe Community School, with occasional bookings being made by Glais, Clydach Sports and the Urdd.

There is a good working relationship between the Lessees, the school and the on-site Celtic Community Leisure Trust. The fields see use for mid-week training of Juniors (but there is no floodlighting), Youth and Senior fixtures on a Saturday and Minis/Junior rugby on a Sunday morning.

Trebanos RFC use Trebanos Park for the Senior XV but the Juniors (of which there are 600 registered with the Club) play at Parc Ynysderw. All five Pontardawe Town FC Senior Teams play at Parc Ynysderw (mixed Youth and Seniors totalling 60 – 80 players). The 220 Juniors, aged between 6 and 16 years, which are registered to Pontardawe Town FC also play at the venue. On a Saturday morning there will be approx. 300-350 players using Parc Ynysderw.

Clubs have indicated that they would like to see in the future the Changing rooms refurbished, some of the pitches equipped with floodlights, some of the pitches drained and improvements made to car parking.

The Pontardawe area also boasts extensive wooded valleys that follow the course of the Clydach River. Cwm Du Glen and Glanrhyd Plantation (part of the Arthur Gilbertson Estate, circa 1877) is steeped in history and has hosted many public and child centred activities sponsored by ‘Actif Woods Wales’ and Natural Resources Wales. The valley is rich in biodiversity and is considered locally to be an ideal venue for the advancement of education in conservation and environmental studies.

- Churches and Chapels – Apart from those that feature above, Graig Church in Trebanos is occasionally used for school concerts.
- Childcare provision – in addition to ‘Hoots’ at Alltwen Primary school, the Pontardawe area is very well served with childminders. There are two privately run Day Nurseries in Herbert Street (‘Lullaby’s’ and ‘Little Steps’) catering for up to 46 places aged between 0 months and 12 years. They offer Breakfast Club, Wraparound, after school Club and Holiday Care. ‘Little Steps Childcare Ltd’ is registered to deliver the Foundation Phase and can transport to and from local schools.

YGG Pontardawe provides Cylch Chwarae between 8 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. for 14 2 to 8 year olds.

Trebanos Hall runs a Cylch between 9.30 and 11.30 a.m. daily.

There are also eight home based childminders in the area offering between them 65 places.

- Leisure Facility providers. Celtic Community Leisure Trust (CCLT) operate the leisure facilities on behalf of the NPTCBC at Parc Ynysderw. In relocating to Parc Ynysderw the pupils of Alltwen, Godre’rgraig and Llangiwig would be closer to these amenities during the school day. CCLT

operate the Pontardawe Leisure Centre which comprises a four badminton court sports hall, a studio, a gym, spin bike room, an indoor bowls hall and fitness facilities. The NPTCBC PASS team run netball, badminton and tennis sessions at the Centre as part of the 'Active Young People' initiative. The Leisure Centre operates at full capacity and with innovative programming could respond to increased footfall from the affected Primary schools.

The Pontardawe Swimming Pool (set to relocate to Parc Ynysderw under this proposal) also operates at capacity with up to 850 children, including pupils from Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig, participating (80% of swimmers are drawn from a 5 mile radius). Junior Swimming Club is followed by Aqua Aerobics, then further school use from those out of County, then public use and Swimming Academy. The facility offers accreditation through the swimming pathway and has achieved excellent results with the STA, and is well regarded by 'Swim Wales' and Sport Wales.

Moving pupils from Alltwen Primary and Llangiwig Primary to the proposed campus will negate the need for the walking-bus that is currently employed to walk the pupils to the current swimming pool site.

The floodlit synthetic 3G pitch is fully booked during the winter evenings proving to be very popular for the training requirements of Pontardawe Town FC, Rhos FC, Trebanos RFC and Super Six Leisure Leagues. The Clubs would like to floodlight the natural turf pitches to generate more capacity to train on a mid-week when the daylight dictates otherwise.

## **7. Adverse impact of school closure upon the community**

Estyn reports (in 'Clever Classrooms' 2015, etc.) that attainment and academic achievement improves exponentially when pupils move to new or significantly refurbished buildings. With a new school comes more choices, improved opportunities, mobile technology, spacious classrooms and adaptable ICT facilities. At Parc Ynysderw these advantages will extend to social and sporting activities that are within easy walking distance. Conversely, and in

order to represent the local standpoint, the advantages of the proposal need to be considered against the following opinion (some being well- articulated and qualified, some circumstantial and others anecdotal).

Losses to the community would include:-

- ‘Hoots’ childcare and wraparound provision situated within the school grounds of Alltwen Primary (markedly impacts transition).
- The ‘Family Connect’ initiative and the services that have been developed in the Cwtsh in Alltwen Primary school.
- Possible downturn in the number of resident Godre’rgraig school children attending ‘Tiddlywinks’ as their new school is 3.2 miles from their former Primary school.
- Loss of equivalent of two football fields to the development at Parc Ynysderw (please see FIT {Fields in Trust} compensatory measure later in the Report).
- Godre’rgraig losing its one and only large meeting venue in the village.
- The Alltwen Primary schoolchildren not assisting the upkeep of the community garden within the Alltwen triangle.

Circumstantial evidence points to:-

- A likely reduction in passing trade affecting the livelihood and future of ‘Mark Wright’s Ynysmeudwy Stores’ and the ‘Welcome Shop’ in Alltwen.
- The intergenerational work currently being carried out by Llangiwig pupils for the residents of the Dan y Bryn Residential Care Home being lost or stifled. In Ynysmeudwy same would apply to the links between the school and the Mount Elim Evangelical Church.
- The continued involvement of the Llangiwig pupils with ‘The Friends of Ynysmeudwy Park’ will be hampered by them being more remote. (Same would apply for all community based initiatives when the schoolchildren are no longer resident in the village during school hours).
- Difficulty in building relationships between local children and Community Council civic events like fetes, Nature Walks, Remembrance service, etc. when the children are absent from their locale in the school day.



- Certain Godre'rgraig children and those living remotely from Parc Ynysderw would possibly not be able to participate in Breakfast Club or any Out of School Hours Club in their new school as with 18.5% car less in Godre'rgraig and 26.7% car less in Ystalyfera, some parents would not be able to get their children to and from school outside of the traditional school day. There is an acknowledgement that school transport will be provided for those living remotely from the new school, at least to facilitate the school day but not beyond (also, if the LEA subsidy for displaced Godre'rgraig Nursery provision is removed upon the arrival of the new school in September 2024, this will impact Early Years and transition as transport costs would revert directly to the parents and this might not be affordable).
- The relocation of the Pontardawe Swimming Pool to Parc Ynysderw distances it from Ynysmeudwy with the Pool currently being within easy walking distance. Parc Ynysderw is considered not to be central to Pontardawe.

Respondents were quick to remind the interviewers that, in their opinion, this proposal does not promote the 'Active Travel Agenda' nor the NPTCBC rationale for building 'Safe, Strong and Resilient Communities.'

The passion and heartfelt emotion that has been rekindled by this proposal has generated many anecdotal comments that revolve around a loss of community identity and a sense of place. The proposal is seen as diluting village life, its spirit, and its confidence. There would be less interaction as commuting on buses and cars to the new school would negate the opportunity for parents to mix whilst walking children to school. Also the proposal is considered to be detrimental to the efforts made thus far, in an economic down turn, to make communities more resilient and close knit (opinion based upon losing the school leads to losing the Post Office, the Petrol Station, etc. eventually translating into making the village less attractive to new families who do not then move to the area and the village ultimately dies).

There is a fear of disconnect with the three communities affected by this proposal and Pontardawe – they are 'communities within communities'. There is no affinity between Godre'rgraig and Pontardawe. The three schools affected by this proposal are

different, located in three different distinct, separate villages where children have had different up bringing's and it is felt they cannot be treated the same and put together in one new school.

Pontardawe is seen as the 'city', the villages affected by this proposal will become no more than 'suburbs.'

From an educational perspective the proposal was not seen as being in accord with Curriculum 2022 which is pupil-led and celebrates the individuals sense of belonging, where they grew up, their place, their habitat (in Welsh 'Cynefin'). Opinion revolved around keeping English- medium education within each village and in Godre'rgraig the possible loss of pupils to Ysgol Bro Tawe and Ysgol Golwg Y Cwm in Powys (1.1 miles away as opposed to 3.2 to Parc Ynysderw). The Welsh – medium Primary schools were concerned of the 'draw' that a new English – medium school would have and its resultant effect upon the Welsh Language, in what is a strong Welsh speaking spatial area.

Businesses and Leisure providers in Pontardawe generally would welcome the increased footfall and potential secondary spend associated with more families visiting the Cwmtawe area.

Finally, interviewers were reminded that the people associated with the three schools were the facilitators and it is these people that have made things happen, not the buildings or the facilities.

## **8. Plans to mitigate impact if community provision is lost from the schools**

Under this proposal the new build school also includes the creation of a learning, health and wellbeing community campus. Modern, fit for purpose educational, health and leisure facilities will be concentrated at Parc Ynysderw to form a focal point or community hub.

All existing school based activity amidst the three schools will be preserved and protected to naturally transfer to the new campus. Admittedly, some community provision will be lost from the schools, in some cases this can be mitigated against, in others, not so:

- 'Hoots' Childcare at Alltwen Primary School – unless provision in the way of dedicated classrooms, an enclosed play area, a kitchen, toilet provision, sensory rooms, etc.

befitting the Care Inspectorate for Wales (CIS) standards, are provided within the new school build this business will be lost. There will be a loss of natural transition into a Primary School setting if the business was re-housed elsewhere. It could not relocate to the Dyffryn Road Community Centre in Alltwen as, even with costly conversion and adaptation works (to meet CIS standards), the venue is deemed unworkable because of restricted road access and limited car parking provision. Parents wishing childcare may be faced with seeking alternative provision at 'Lullaby's' or 'Little Steps Childcare Ltd.'

- Community buildings are in short supply in Godre'rgraig. There are not many alternatives to the school building as the Workingmen's Club and the Band Hall, without expensive modernisation, are unsuitable being on a busy bypass, and not on a safe walking route.
- The relocation of the three Primary schools affected under this proposal to Parc Ynysderw would mean in some cases they move closer to both the Glantawe Riverside Education Academy and the Recreation Ground which is considered a positive.
- The plan to develop a new Community Church Hall for Elim Mount Evangelical Church in Coed Cae, Ynysmeudwy would grow community provision in the village should Llangiwig Primary School be lost to this proposal.
- Innovative programming of the already busy Leisure Centre, Swimming Pool and 3G pitch will assist in meeting what will be a growing demand for leisure time pursuits should the parents and grandparents of the relocated pupils avail themselves of the on-site amenities.
- The proposal for the new school includes for the redevelopment of the changing rooms at Parc Ynysderw and the installation, following site investigation, of positive drainage on one of the football fields – this has been welcomed by the Cwmtawe Community School, CCLT, Parc Ynysderw Sports Association and Pontardawe Town FC.

- The footprint for the new school and new swimming pool will mean the sacrifice of an area currently laid out as two football fields. As the site was dedicated by King George V the Fields in Trust (FIT), as custodians, would wish compensatory commitments being made to offset the disposal of the playing fields. Negotiations with FIT indicate they are responsive to local change and alternative dedications are being explored (for either woodland in Glantawe or open space at the Recreation Ground). This arrangement would protect the new dedication and safeguard it from development in perpetuity.

Negotiations are also to be held with Parc Ynysderw Sports Association as with the loss of football pitches under this arrangement they would need to surrender 30% of their Lease on the site. They are conducive to this.

The management of the playing fields at Parc Ynysderw are comfortable with losing provision providing the fields are re-configured to make better use of available land, the second football field receives positive drainage so that it can receive more fixtures (as planned), the changing rooms are remodelled and the training displaced from the natural turf pitches (because of a loss of amenity) can be accommodated on the synthetic 3G pitch. There is a request also for an overflow car park.

There is a cautious welcome and general acceptance of the proposal within the sporting fraternity.

**9. Opportunities for enhancing existing community facilities to receive additional Out of School Hours activity.**

Under the proposal to establish a new 21<sup>st</sup> Century, 3-11 English - medium school on the Parc Ynysderw site, opportunities exist to create and enhance the new school based community activities and facilities, as a means of complementing existing provision in the Pontardawe area.

Existing community facilities at Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig will be retained and these can be added to and enhanced. The Third sector is very strong in the Pontardawe area and non – for – profit Organisations that promote sporting, recreational,

cultural, health, educational and environmental activities would qualify for a raft of external grants and extra voluntary contributions. This is particularly true of 'The Friends of' entities. Similarly the Town and Community Councils, as the layer of Local Government closest to the people, uniquely qualify for grants that can improve existing community facilities.

The Pontardawe area is within the geographic area of benefit that qualifies for support from:-

- Mynydd y Betws Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund
- Perthigwynion Wind Farm Fund
- The Coalfields Regeneration Trust
- Rural Development Plan (RDP) 'Leader' revenue funding
- 'All Wales Play Opportunities' Grant
- Welsh Rugby Union (WRU) Facilities Grant
- Football Association of Wales (FAW) Grant
- NPTCBC Minor Projects Grant (for Town/Community Councils)
- The National Lottery Community Fund

Best use can be made of existing facilities in order to receive additional Out of School Hours activity and this is particularly true of the Pontardawe Leisure Centre and the Swimming Pool where management have indicated that, with the advent of the new school, there will be a change to more innovative programming of classes, creative timetabling, inventive use of the staffing resource, etc. Those responsible for the management of outdoor sporting amenities at Parc Ynysderw have generally embraced the plans as opportunities exist for pitch drainage, new changing facilities, improved access, an overflow car park and reconfiguring the layout to gain extra playing space. They will then take it upon themselves to add to the site with floodlighting and to improve the infrastructure associated with consolidating Welsh League status. This can be achieved by utilising the grants that are peculiar and uniquely available in the Ward of Pontardawe.

## 10. **Conclusion**

The Community Impact Assessment recognises the importance of Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary School in providing a venue for school based events, extra curricular activity and community use. Following evaluation, it has been demonstrated

that under this proposal that 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.

There is general apprehension, even an anxiety and a concern amongst consultees that this proposal will greatly undermine village identity as they know it. There are many misgivings, in some cases trepidation, about the proposal to establish the new 21<sup>st</sup> Century 3-11, English- medium school at Parc Ynysderw. There is a view that the proposal may be detrimental or damaging to the three communities under review.

The process of completing the Community Impact Assessment has helped to engender a better understanding of how best to mitigate the impact of school reorganisation on a community, which is right and proper. The deciding factor in determining the school organisation proposal should be one of securing the best educational offer for pupils.

Impact assessments are important as they ensure that the Council has due regard to its responsibilities to its communities and in addition it has considered the opinions of its stakeholders. These assessments assist the decision making process as they provide information to inform officers and Members of any likely impact (negative or positive) any decisions will have on communities.

### **Sources/References:-**

(1)Interviews (conducted face to face or via ‘Microsoft Teams’):-

- Head and Deputy Head, Bursar , School Clerk, Governors and members of the PTFA of YGG Trebannws (12.11.20)
- Head and Deputy Head, PA, Governors and members of the PTA of Cwmtawe Community School (18.11.20)
- Head and Deputy Head, Bursar, Primary School Support Officer, Governors, Urdd Sports Development Officer and members of the Cylch Meithrin of YGG Pontardawe (19.11.20)
- Head and Governor of Alltwen Primary School (20.11.20)
- Head and Governor of Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera (20.11.20)

- Head and Deputy Head and Chair of Governors of Godre'rgraig Primary School (25.11.20)
- Head of Llangiwg Primary School (2.12.20)
- County Councillors for the Wards of Trebanos and Alltwn (16.11.20)
- County Councillor for the Ward of Godre'rgraig and Trustee of Ystalyfera Development Trust (19.11.20)
- County Councillor for the Ward of Ystalyfera (19.11.20)
- County Councillors for the Ward of Pontardawe (24.11.20)
- Clerk and Town Mayor of the Pontardawe Town Council (10.11.20)
- Clerk and three Community Councillors of Cilybebyll Community Council (7.12.20)
- Clerk and three Community Councillors of Ystalyfera Community Council (11.12.20)
- Committee members of the Pontardawe Sport and Recreation Association (24.11.20)
- Committee member of the Trebanos RFC (3.12.20)
- Secretary and Trustee of the Parc Ynysderw Sports Association (8.12.20)
- Club Secretary and officials of the Pontardawe Town F.C (15.12.20)
- Facility Manager for the Pontardawe Leisure Centre and Pontardawe Swimming Pool ('Celtic Community Leisure Trust') 12.11.20
- Manager and practitioner of Glantawe Riverside Centre and Outdoor Education Academy (8.12.20)
- Proprietors of the 'Hoots' Childcare provision at Alltwn Primary School (9.12.20).
- Proprietor of 'The Cross' Community Centre, High Street, Pontardawe (16.12.20).

(2)NPTCBC Local Development Plan (2011-2026) identifying all community provision within the spatial areas.

(3)Audit of Town & Community Council provision in Pontardawe, Alltwn (Cilybebyll) and Ystalyfera.

(4)NPTCBC Neighbourhood Profile and data provided by the Office of National Statistics and Nomis (2011) for Pontardawe, Alltwn, Ystalyfera and Godre'rgraig.

(5) Welsh Government School Organisation Code: Circular No: 011/2018.

(6) Earlier school consultations -SSIP CIA 21<sup>ST</sup> Century schools – Godre’rgraig/Llangiwg: June 2010 and Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera/Y Wern: July 2014.

(7) Dialogue with NPTCBC Lead Officers with expertise in the field of Youth Service provision, Play, Artistic Development, Early Years & ‘Flying Start’, Library provision, Sport Development and the ‘Active Young People’ initiative.

(8) Desktop Scoping Study (18.12.20) including a review of Childminding provision, Early Years and Wraparound provision at ‘Tiddlywinks’ in Ystalyfera, social housing in Craig Newydd, Godre’rgraig and Dan y Bryn Residential Care Home in Llangiwg.

(9) Primary research to establish an inventory of all Third Sector providers in the area under scrutiny. Inventory contains background information on non- for- profit organisations that promote sport, art & crafts, heritage & culture, recreation and environmental improvement throughout the Swansea Valley.

(10) Mapping Exercise (proximity of public buildings to Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera, Godre’rgraig Primary school, Llangiwg Primary school, YGG Pontardawe, Cwmtawe Community School, Alltwn Primary school and YGG Trebannws).