

To the parents, carers and guardians of pupils attending Heronsbridge School; headteacher, staff and governing body of Heronsbridge School, prescribed consultees

**Uned Cymorth Cyfarwyddiaeth Addysg a Chymorth i Deuluoedd (UCCACD)
Education and Family Support Directorate – Directorate Support Unit (EDSU)
Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line: (01656) 643643**

Ein cyf / Our ref: Heronsbridge School
Eich cyf / Your ref:

Dyddiad / Date: 19 October 2022

Dear consultee

Proposal to make a regulated alteration to Heronsbridge School to increase the number of pupils for whom the school makes provision to 300 and to relocate the school from its current location at Ewenny Road, Bridgend to Island Farm, Bridgend with effect from the beginning of autumn term 2025

In line with the requirements of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code 2018 (the Code), a consultation exercise with prescribed consultees and other interested parties was undertaken from 4 April and 18 May 2022. The aim of the consultation was to inform consultees about the above proposal and solicit views.

On 14 June 2022, the outcome of the consultation was reported to Cabinet and a Consultation Report was subsequently published on the Council's website. The report provided an overview of feedback received during the consultation period and outlined the local authority's response to the issues raised.

Also on 14 June, having conscientiously considered the outcome of the consultation process, Cabinet gave approval to publish a statutory notice in respect of the proposal. The statutory notice was published on 30 June 2022 for 28 days and consultees were advised of its availability.

The Code provides that anyone wishing to make objections to a school organisation proposal has the opportunity to do so. To be considered as statutory objections, objections must be made in writing or by email and sent to the proposer before the end of 28 days, beginning with the day on which the notice was published ("the objection period"). The statutory notice closed on 27 July 2022. No objections were received in respect of the proposal.

On 18 October 2022, the outcome of the statutory notice was reported to Cabinet. Cabinet was advised that, given the specialist nature of the school, meaningful consultation with a

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structured programme of engagement with stakeholders is required and following an in-depth review of the programme, it was recommended that the school opening date should be modified to allow sufficient time for the stakeholder consultation to take place.

Having considered this matter and the view of the governing body, Cabinet approval was received to implement the proposal with a modified **opening date of the beginning of the spring term 2026**.

Hard copies and alternative formats of the cabinet report are available on request from:

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The proposal will result in Heronsbridge School transferring to a new school building on Island Farm, Bridgend. The new building will be designed for 300 pupils, for learners with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), severe learning difficulties (SLD) and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) at primary, secondary and post-16. The school will have two residential houses for learners requiring 39-week residential provision. The replacement school will open at the beginning of the spring term 2026.

In determining the proposal, Cabinet were satisfied that the proposal will:

- enable the Council to comply with the legislative requirements in meeting its duty to secure efficient education in the area;
- increase provision for learners with complex needs;
- ensure learners and staff would benefit from a brand-new facility;
- provide a school which will be designed to provide the right learning environment and curriculum opportunities and align with Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme;
- address overcrowding and building condition issues; and
- provide innovative and creative learning environments which are adaptable to change and will support the pupils to reach their full potential.

The reasons for the decision in respect of the factors outlined in the Code are as follows:

Quality and standards in education

It is Estyn's opinion that the proposal is likely to at least maintain the current standard of education.

The replacement Heronsbridge School would be a facility fit for 21st century teaching and would provide suitable accommodation which could meet the needs of its pupils appropriately. The suitability of teaching and non-teaching spaces, storage and circulation space, outdoor

learning, outdoor play, personal hygiene, and toilet provision would be addressed to safeguard the wellbeing of pupils and staff.

The opportunity to deliver a sensory-rich curriculum with the provision of specially designed areas which will extend lesson delivery to pupils with PMLD, SLD and ASD across the school. The new provision would have a positive impact on pupil wellbeing, care support and guidance.

The school would also benefit from clear provision of facilities that impact on their 14 to 19 curriculum and provide vocational as well as educational teaching spaces.

The leadership and management at the school is excellent. The greatest positive from any new build is the clear designation of space across the school. These purpose-built areas of learning either within or outside of the classroom would allow the leadership team to plan for more systematic curriculum growth and prepare the school for future pupil needs. The leadership team have always been at the forefront of thinking within the sector on how classroom practice can be enhanced. This opportunity will allow them to deliver sector-leading practice across the county and ensure that Bridgend has an effective holistic education provision that meets the ever-changing needs of its most complex pupils.

Although school organisation proposals can cause some disruption and uncertainty, experience shows that this can be kept to a minimum by working closely with residents, the contractor, the headteacher, governing body and staff. The transition to the new building will be worked through in collaboration with the school.

The new sustainable, innovative school building and site will provide greater opportunities for linking the project (that is, the design development and construction) with the National Curriculum. It will also provide staff, pupils, parents and the wider community with an opportunity to positively engage in the development process and ensure that it meets the future needs of the school and the community it will serve.

Need for places and the impact in accessibility of schools

There would be increased capacity to support our most complex learners within the local authority and reduce the need to seek out-of-authority placements. The proposal would reduce pressure on observation and assessment classes across the local authority which accommodate nursery pupils with complex needs until they can access Heronsbridge School at Reception.

As a school that is too big could dilute the quality of teaching and learning, a 300-place school is considered the limit whereby the quality of teaching, intervention, management and governance is not lost. The projected capacity of 300 is considered sustainable.

The site at Island Farm is approximately one mile from the existing school site and therefore it is anticipated that there would be very little, if any, impact on the transportation for the pupils.

Learners will be provided with free school transport in line with Bridgend County Borough Council's school transport policy. The Home to School/College Policy can be viewed via the following link:

<https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/media/5632/home-to-school-or-college-transport-policy v2.pdf>

The local authority is committed to taking forward plans to strategically grow the Welsh language and with effective strategic planning and significant investment, aims to significantly contribute to achieving Welsh Government's 'Cymraeg 2050' vision of one million Welsh speakers across Wales. In order to contribute to this there will be opportunity for Welsh language groups to meet or receive training at the school in the evenings and offer courses in the medium of Welsh.

The local authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) can be viewed via the following link:

Welsh Version:

<https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/cy/fy-nghyngor/cydraddoldeb-ac-ymgysylltu/y-gymraeg/>

English Version:

<https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/my-council/equalities-and-engagement/welsh-language>

The replacement school facilities will provide an opportunity for Welsh language courses to be offered to parents/carers thereby increasing Welsh language opportunities and supports the local authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 agenda.

The school building and external spaces will be suitably designed to ensure compliance with the Equalities Act 2010.

Resourcing of education and other financial implications

There is no surplus additional learning needs (ALN) provision within the local authority. There are currently waiting lists and additional bespoke packages utilised for some provisions including Heronsbridge School.

The opportunity to deliver a sensory-rich curriculum with the provision of specially designed areas will further extend the lesson delivery to the pupils with profound and multiple learning disability (PMLD) /specific learning difficulties (SLD) and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) pupils at the school

The provision of new facilities supports the Council's wider strategy to increase opportunities to deliver Welsh language courses.

Funding is provided through the school funding formula which allocates the majority of funding for schools based on pupil numbers. Revenue implications, including additional transport costs due to the enlargement of the school will not be known until the scheme is developed further. The staffing structure that would align to the additional school population is likely to increase over a period. The governing body would be responsible for the staffing structure which would be determined primarily by the educational needs of the school and the budget available.

This scheme results in a significant capital investment. The estimated total project cost is currently £34m. This will be part-funded by Welsh Government under Band B of the

Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme at a 75% intervention rate and the remainder of the capital funding would be contributed by the Council. The cost of the scheme will continue to be reviewed regularly throughout the course of the project and any changes will be reported back to Cabinet and Council as appropriate.

Any capital receipts for the old site are not ringfenced for the new site, but are to be made available to fund future capital schemes (as yet undetermined) for the Council.

Other general factors

An initial Equality Impact Assessment screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh language. Positive impacts have been identified, including disability and gender.

As Heronsbridge School will be constructed on the Island Farm site, which is located in the same geographical area as the existing school site, a negative impact on the community is not anticipated. Pupils would be attending a new 21st century school which will be designed with community use in mind. This could benefit families, pupils and local clubs. A positive impact is anticipated as a result of the provision of modern, accessible facilities.

A Welsh Impact Assessment has been undertaken and concluded that there would be a positive impact on the Welsh language provision the replacement school's facilities could be used for Welsh language courses.

Nursery classes

The increase in places would include provision for six full-time equivalent places for a multi-disciplinary assessment nursery class which would continue under existing packages. This will reduce existing costs and Early Years packages but focus on the Early Years pupils where the destination is Heronsbridge School. These pupils are included in the pupil projections. The provision of nursery places in Heronsbridge School would free-up other local Early Years providers (including Y Bont) to support more of the younger children waiting for pre-school opportunities with emerging complex additional learning needs (ALN). It would also further enable the graduated response required by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act 2018 and would assist in determining the most appropriate school placement.

Additional learning needs provision

The provision of a purpose-built, 21st century school with 300 places would have a positive impact on pupils with PMLD, SLD and ASD additional learning needs. The standard of accommodation would be improved, and sufficiency and suitability issues would be resolved. Safeguarding, health and safety, and welfare matters would be considered and addressed through the design.

Out-of-county placement issues would be addressed through the provision of additional places.

The Cabinet decision of 18 October 2022 is subject to the call-in procedures as set out in Part 4 Rules of Procedure in the Council's Constitution which allows decisions taken by Cabinet but yet to be implemented to be reviewed. Should a valid call-in notice from an Overview and Scrutiny Committee be received, all stakeholders would be informed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L Iorwerth Harvey', written in a cursive style.

Lindsay Iorwerth Harvey (Mr)
Corporate Director – Education and Family Support
Bridgend County Borough Council