

LLANDUDNO JUNCTION AREA – OPTIONS APPRAISAL PUBLIC MEETINGS

School:	Ysgol Maelgwn
Venue:	Conwy Business Centre, Llandudno Junction
Date:	29 th June 2011
Attendance:	13
Author:	Emma Bayliss
Officers in attendance:	Geraint James, Dilwyn Price, Derwyn Owen, Keith R. Evans, Damian Hughes, Steve Lea, Mark Dring, Danielle Edwards, Bethan Lewis, Gwyn Roberts
Translation:	Glain Jones
Local Members:	Cllr Mike Priestley, Cllr Meirion Hughes and Cllr Sue Shotter
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Wyn E. Jones

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Dilwyn Price welcomed all present to the meeting and explained the purpose of the meeting. All present were provided with a short overview of the progress made on the project since the Nominated Stakeholder meeting had been held in Llandudno Junction in September 2010.

It was advised that a presentation on the Options Appraisal for the Llandudno Junction area would be given during the meeting. The final decision on the option to be implemented for Llandudno Junction would be taken by the Cabinet at a meeting scheduled for the end of September 2011.

All present were informed that the various impact assessments in the options for the modernisation of the schools in Llandudno Junction would be shared with them and that questions could be asked during the presentation.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT & PROGRESS SO FAR

Geraint James provided the background to the Primary School Modernisation project and referred back to the four main drivers for the project. The most important driver for the modernisation of schools in Llandudno Junction was highlighted as 'Buildings being fit for purpose'.

All present were reminded of the progress made thus far on the project and the fact that the Strategy for the Modernisation of Conwy Primary Schools along with the Implementation Plan had been adopted by the Cabinet in October 2010.

3. FINDINGS OF THE LLANDUDNO JUNCTION OPTIONS APPRAISAL

All present had been given a copy of the Llandudno Junction Options Appraisal document. The four main options for the modernisation of the Llandudno Junction schools area were highlighted as:

- Option 1a & 2a - Area school on *Albini House* site
- Option 1b & 2b - Area school on *Esgyryn* site
- Option 3 - Maintain Current Schools
- Option 4 - Area school on existing 2 sites

(a = Driver-Led Option, b = Community preferred option)

It was advised that the meeting was not being held to decide on the most appropriate option but was rather an opportunity to share the impact assessments for all 4 options and obtain feedback and comment.

The analysis of the options had taken the form of 5 different impact assessments, children's workshops, a review of the costs of each option and the impact on pupil places.

In terms of the outcomes of the analysis, reference was made to the Children's Workshops that had been held with the Year 4 children in each school. The workshops were activity based to try and get the children involved and come up with their preferred option out of the 4 that had been put forward. The outcome of the Children's Workshops was that their preference was for '**Option 3 – Maintain the current schools**'.

The impact assessments that had been created and applied to each option were highlighted as: a Transport Impact Assessment, a Community Impact Assessment, a Language Impact Assessment, a Buildings Impact Assessment, an Equalities Impact Assessment and a Pupil Places Impact Assessment.

All present were requested to refer to page 20 within the Options Appraisal document which provided a summary of the options, their analysis and their final weighted scores. The weightings and scores given were explained in detail. The different costs relating to each option within the summary were also explained and the highest scoring option was noted as '**Option 1a & 2a – Area School on Albin House site**'.

4. TRANSPORT IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Geraint James reported on the factors that had been taken into consideration when developing and applying the Transport Impact Assessment. These included the impact on journey times and the impact on pupil numbers receiving transportation and the cost of this.

Having applied the Transport Impact Assessment to all of the options, Options 1a & 2b (Albin House), Option 3 and Option 4 would have the impact of no change and Option 1b & 2b would have a slightly worse impact on journey times particularly when walking. It was highlighted that the walking times to each of the proposed new sites had been measured by Officers from the Education Department alongside Local Members.

Questions and Answers:

- Q:** There are a few children who actually cycle to school. Has this been taken into consideration in the Transport Impact Assessment as it will impact on 'Safer Routes to Schools' if a new school was to be built?
- A:** Thank you for putting this forward, cycle routes will be considered whichever option is taken forward and this point will be highlighted at the Cabinet meeting when all the information is presented to inform their decision.

5. COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Geraint James referred to the 5 key measures that had been considered within the Community Impact Assessment: Children living in the catchment area attending their local school; Services provided by the school for the community including extra curricular activities; Community facilities used regularly by the school; Community facilities provided by and activity undertaken within the school premises; and the Impact on local businesses and employment.

The Assessment also took into account that from the previous public consultation meetings, the feedback gained was that if there was to be an area school, Albini House would be the preferred site.

Having applied the Community Impact Assessment to each of the options, it was noted that Option 1a & 2a (Albini House) would create a slight improvement for the community. Option 1b & 2b (Esgyryn) and Option 4 would impact as being slightly worse and Option 3 would have no impact at all.

It was highlighted that the methodology behind each impact assessment and the detailed supporting evidence data were available on the website.

Questions and Answers:

- Q:** With regard to Albini House, there is a lot of residential housing around the site and traffic access into the site would not be that easy. It could cause congestion and a lot of noise for the residents. Has this issue been taken into consideration as part of the Community Impact Assessment?
- A:** This issue has been taken into consideration and can be further discussed under the Buildings Impact Assessment.

6. LANGUAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Gwyn Roberts presented the findings of the Language Impact Assessment. A new methodology had been created to assess the impact of each option on the language and had been approved by the Welsh Language Board. The Headteachers of both schools also approved the methodology. 12 key areas had been considered within this impact assessment.

Having applied the Language Impact Assessment to each of the options, it was highlighted that a new area school on one site would offer opportunities to further develop the Welsh language by bringing both schools together. It was reported that all current teachers in both schools could provide education bilingually.

All present were informed that Option 1a & 2a (Albini House) and Option 2a & 2b (Esgyryn) would have the impact of creating an improvement for the language. Options 3 and 4 would lead to no change.

There was one slightly negative issue noted in relation to having an area school on one site and that was the impact on the language used in the playground. There would however be activities put in place to counteract this issue.

Questions and Answers:

- Q:** In previous public meetings, it has been stated that if an area school on one site was moved forward, the community would still want to ensure that there was a Welsh education stream still being offered. Can you assure us that this would be put in place if there was an area school built on one site?
- A:** There would definitely be a Welsh education stream if there was an area school built on one site and this is supported by the fact that all teachers in both schools can teach bilingually.

7. BUILDINGS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Derwyn Owen presented the findings of the Buildings Impact Assessment and it was noted that from a large list of potential sites for an area school, the list had been cut down to Albini House and Esgyryn as these sites were the only ones large enough to accommodate a fit for purpose school. All present were reminded, however, that both these sites were not in the authority's ownership.

Reference was made to the costs of each option in the 'Options Appraisal' overall summary and it was noted that for each option the capital costs, the ongoing revenue costs and the net present value costs had been calculated. The costs detailed in the summary had been considered across a 30 year lifecycle. In terms of the non-financial criteria that would contribute to the impact assessment score of each option, it was noted that factors including Building Bulletin compliance, planning issues, site capacity, BREEAM compliance, future flexibility and expansion and site access had been taken into consideration.

Each option was discussed in relation to the Impact Assessment and it was reported that Maelgwn would be a difficult site to redevelop and equip with new facilities. If this site was maintained, a car park would have to be developed at Bryn Eglwys in order for it to be fit for purpose. Both Albini House and Esgyryn had good attributes in relation to the impact assessment. Both have good site capacity, future flexibility and as they would be new build schools could incorporate all aspects of sustainability leading to a reduced carbon footprint.

All present were advised that, following application of the impact assessment, Option 1a & 2a (Albini House) and Options 1b & 2b (Esgyryn) would lead to an improvement in the school buildings. If Options 3 or 4 were implemented, there would still be a slight improvement in the school buildings as they would still be invested in. It was highlighted that the most expensive option was Option 3 and the lowest was Option 1b & 2b i.e. the Esgyryn site. The Albini House site was the second lowest in cost.

Geraint James raised an issue regarding rates for school buildings. It was noted that if the Authority invested in the improvement of a school building, the rates would increase. This is a national issue and is being taken up nationally.

Questions and Answers:

- Q:** If the Esgyryn site has the lowest cost, why is the cost per pupil lower for the Albini Site?
- A:** The cost per pupil is not based on the capital costs for the school or the NPV costs. It is based on the allocated budget to the school which in turn is based on the number of pupils.
- Q:** If you built an area school on Albini House or Esgyryn, what would happen to the existing sites at Maelgwn and Nant y Coed? Would the sale of those sites contribute to the development of a new site?
- A:** This would be something the Cabinet would need to consider as the income gained from the sale of an Education asset does not automatically get passed back to Education Services. This is something, however, that Cabinet could approve as part of any decision around schools in Llandudno Junction. Another way to part fund any new school build would be via prudential borrowing. On 15th July, the Welsh Government will inform all Local Authorities in Wales of the amount of capital funding available to support the 21st Century schools programme. It is thought that there is around £300 million pounds available but across Wales the bids actually amount to £1.5 billion pounds. Conwy therefore has to go through the options appraisal in various areas in order to be ready to bid for the funding.

Questions and Answers cont'd:

- Q:** If the Maelgwn and Nant y Coed sites were sold for housing, this would increase the number of pupils attending an area school. Have you taken this into consideration and what is the proposed capacity of an area school?
- A:** The proposed capacity of an area school either on the Albini House or Esgyryn site is 420 pupils. Housing projections have been taken into consideration when looking at the capacity of any new school in an area. Both sites also have ability to expand and take on more children if the need occurs in the future.
- Q:** If a new area school could take up to 420 pupils, this raises concern re class sizes. How many pupils would be in each class?
- A:** The maximum class size in any school is 30 and this is the uppermost limit.
- Q:** If there are two sites available for an area school, why can't we just have two new schools on the two new sites? Maelgwn could have a new site at Albini House and Nant y Coed could have a new site at Esgyryn. This would ensure that parents still had the choice of where to send their children and kids would remain within their communities.
- A:** This proposal isn't viable because of the financial implications. There would be a large cost associated with the acquisition of both sites and then would have to bid for funding to build two completely new fit for purpose schools at a large cost. The option to have two fit for purpose schools is still available under Option 3 but they will simply remain on the current sites.
- Q:** Surely the financial cost should not matter, this is about the children.
- A:** Your proposal has been taken down and will be put before the Cabinet when they are making their decision. There is the need within each to consider both the financial and non-financial benefits.
- Q:** Are the 4 options the only options available?
- A:** There was an initial list of potential options and these were investigated. The 4 options that have been presented to you are the only viable options that are available for the area.
- Q:** In terms of the financial costs for each option, does the costing take into account the land acquisition for the new sites?
- A:** Yes it does.
- Q:** With regard to BREEAM compliance, can an 'outstanding compliance' be achieved under any of the options?
- A:** The achievement of 'outstanding' is possible under Option 1a & 2a and Option 1b & 2b. The best that can be achieved on Option 3 is 'good'.
- Q:** The Option Appraisal document should highlight more clearly that an area school on a new site would still incorporate a Welsh medium education stream.
- A:** Thank you for this comment. A new school on a new site will definitely have both streams as they currently exist at Ysgol Maelgwn. There would still be 6 classes in each stream.
- Q:** What does 'Fit for Purpose' mean?
- A:** 'Fit for purpose' takes into account the standards set for schools within the various Buildings Bulletins.
- Q:** The fabric of the Ysgol Maelgwn building is not good and there has been very little repair and maintenance for a long time. If the old school building cannot be maintained, how can it be assured that you will maintain any new build?
- A:** The repair and maintenance costs on a new build will be significantly less than what is required for the old sites.
- Q:** Why weren't both Ysgol Maelgwn and Nant y Coed maintained to an acceptable standard?

Questions and Answers cont'd:

- A:** We have a good record for repair and maintenance on our schools in Conwy in comparison with other Authorities. Ysgol Maelgwn and Nant y Coed are currently our highest priority in terms of needing capital investment and that is why the Llandudno Junction area has been prioritised within the PSMP and the Authority's 21st Century Schools Programme.
- Q:** Would a new school be built under the PFI model?
- A:** No, the PFI model would not be used. We would bid for funding from the Welsh Government to build or invest in the school and we would own it. Many thanks for all the questions, this feedback will be presented to Cabinet.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Geraint James noted that the outcome of the Equalities Impact Assessment was not included in the Options Appraisal summary as it encompassed the outcomes of the other Impact Assessments. This assessment was used to ensure that none of the options adversely affected one group over another. Once Cabinet had made the decision on the option to be implemented, this Impact Assessment would be re-completed.

9. PUPIL PLACES

An overview of each options impact on pupil places was provided. It was noted that implementing any of the 4 options in Llandudno Junction would not have a significant impact on pupil places and unfilled places.

10. OVERVIEW AND NEXT STEPS

All present were referred to the Options Appraisal summary on page 20 of the document. In terms of the overall weighted score for each option, Option 1a & 2a (Albini House) scored the highest and would therefore be the Option that would be recommended to Cabinet.

Questions and Answers:

- Q:** Although there is a Buildings Impact Assessment available, more information needs to be included on access to each of the new sites.
- A:** Thank you for this point. There's further detail on the web that demonstrates the methodology and supporting data for the Buildings Impact Assessment and show how site access was taken into consideration for each option.
- Q:** How long will it be until a new school is built if that is chosen option to be implemented?
- A:** It is difficult to provide an answer to this at this moment in time. It will depend whether the bid for the funding of the chosen option is successful and whether the capital is available from the Welsh Government. Repair and maintenance of the existing schools will continue until funding becomes available. Cabinet will have to take this into consideration when deciding on the option.
- C:** Cllr M. Priestley – I was concerned about holding these public events as they could raise expectations and create some anxiety. However, it was important to hold them as we need to go through this process and have a chosen option in order to bid for any funding available. I'm glad we've discussed finance and it's understood how long it could take to obtain the funding to make any changes. It's also good to know that the repair and maintenance programme will continue in the meantime.

Questions and Answers cont'd:

- A:** Thanks to Cllr Priestley for those comments. In terms of repair and maintenance, we have a duty to the schools as they currently stand.
- Q:** If this process continues to take a long time and eventually you bid for funding to build a new school on an area school on one of the sites, what guarantee do you have the either of the sites will still be available for you to purchase? Housing is currently being built on the Albini House site.
- A:** There is still space available on the Albini House site for an area school. We are going through this option appraisal now to ensure we are ready to bid for any funding that becomes available. You are right in saying however that these sites will not remain available for purchase in perpetuity.
- Q:** I still have concerns about the repair and maintenance of the current schools and funding must be found to undertake this work until funding can be secured for the chosen option. Can you guarantee that this will continue?
- A:** It is unfortunate that both school buildings are not of a high standard. The repair and maintenance programme will continue until funding becomes available to build a new school or invest in the current sites to make them fit for purpose. Llandudno Junction has been prioritised in order to obtain funding as soon as it's available.

Dilwyn Price noted that there would be continued opportunities to 'have your say' up until the Options Appraisal document went to Cabinet at the end of September 2011. The e-mail address was available on the back of the Options Appraisal document as was the link to the website.

The next steps in the process were highlighted in terms of the document going to Cabinet for them to make a decision on the option to take forward. Once this decision was made, a bid document would be produced and submitted to the Welsh Government for funding.

All present were thanked for their time and were reminded that this was the beginning of the process and the Officers from the Authority were always available to answer questions.