



OBJECTION REPORT

Proposal to close Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain from 31st August 2016 with pupils transferring to nearby schools

This is the provisional draft response of the Council which is being provided to decision makers for discussion - a final view and objection report will be published before the end of 7 days beginning with the day of determination

MARCH 2016

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Flintshire County Council - Education & Youth

Objection Report

Proposal to close Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain from 31st August 2016 with pupils transferring to nearby schools

Purpose

The report is published in line with the requirements under section 49 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. This is a summary of the statutory objections, otherwise known as “the Objection Report”.

Publication of the Statutory Notice

Following the formal consultation period and the publication of a consultation report, Cabinet took the decision to proceed to publish the proposal by way of a statutory notice for 28 days from 29th January 2016 to 26th February 2016.

The statutory notice was published in line with the requirements of the School Organisation Code. The notice was published on the Flintshire County Council website and posted at the main entrance of Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain. Each school affected by the proposal received electronic copies of the notice and provided with details of how to obtain hard copies of the notice.

During the objection period, 42 objections were received in relation to the proposal to close Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain from 31st August 2016 with pupils transferring to nearby schools.

The correspondence received during the objection period was in a number of methods and included:

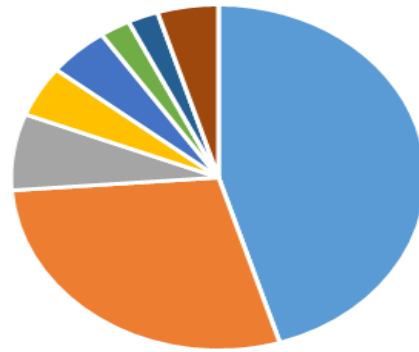
18 (42.86%) email,
24 (57.14%) letter and

Of the 42 objections received, 2 signed objections had no address.

What areas do the objectors reside?

Flint	19
Flint Mountain	12
Brynford	3
Oakenholt	2
Holywell	2
Pantymwyn	1
Alltami	1
Unknown	2
TOTAL	42

What areas do the objectors reside?



■ Flint ■ Flint Mountain ■ Brynford ■ Oakenholt
■ Holywell ■ Alltami ■ Pantymwyn ■ Unknown

In accordance with the School Organisation Code (2013) this Objection Report is made available via an email link and also published electronically on Flintshire County Council's website at:

www.flintshire.gov.uk/schoolmodernisation

To request a hard (paper) copy of this document please email 21stcenturyschools@flintshire.gov.uk, write to the School Modernisation Team, Flintshire County Council, County Hall, Mold, Flintshire, CH7 6ND, or contact the team on 01352 704134/704015.

	Point Raised	Council's Response	No of written responses raising the point	% of Responses raising the point
1	<p>Strengths of the school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in pupil numbers • Small class sizes • Pupils mix well together • Family atmosphere • Growth in pupil numbers • Successful clubs/trips • Good Estyn report • Education Standards • Happy children • Lots of pupils with Additional Learning Needs • Good staff and teachers • Amazing school 	<p>The positive responses from consultees regarding Ysgol Maes Edwin are noted.</p> <p>Reviewing the future of any school is controversial and emotive. Pupils, parents, carers and teachers, past and present, have strong ties to local schools as part of their own life-stories. The Council is challenged with balancing the sensitivities of community feeling on the one hand, with providing a high quality education offer which can be sustained and afforded. The Council cannot avoid making decisions for the future which are in the best interests of pupils and students.</p>	36	86%

2	<p>Parental Preference has been or is being taken away</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/Carers moved their children from other nearby school • I chose a small school for my child 	<p>The Council acknowledges that there is a number of factors that determine where parents/carers send their child/children.</p> <p>The Council will comply with statutory requirements and the Welsh Government School Admissions Code and will take account of the expression of parental preference in the context of its duty to ensure the provision of effective education and the efficient use of education resources. When considering applications, the Council will observe the provisions of the School Admissions Code which states that admission authorities should admit to the school's admission number and will rarely be able to prove prejudice as a ground for refusing an additional pupil while the numbers remain below the admission number.</p>	33	79%
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3	<p>Consultation Documents and Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document is biased • Doesn't consider housing development • Data is incorrect • Process caused stress and upset • Unfairly targeted • Decision Makers • Key drivers • Welsh Government school ratings not easy to understand • Consultation caused pupils to leave 	<p>The formal consultation period for Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain commenced on Wednesday, 21st October 2015 and ended on Wednesday, 2nd December 2015. The Council uses the latest verified data at the time of constructing the consultation documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •School pupil numbers and more detailed information around pupils (for example Additional Learning Needs, English as an Additional Language and School action/school action plus/statemented) are obtained from the schools own statistical returns (September or January) •Estyn data is obtained from the school's last Estyn inspection. Timing of inspections will depend on Estyn's own inspection cycle. •National Welsh Government categorisation data is based on the school returns. The Council uses the most up to date data at the time of document construction from the Welsh Government website. Welsh Government update their national database annually. 	33	79%
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Consultation Documents and Process (Continued)

- GwE (The Regional School Improvement Service) data is fed into the Welsh Government's national categorisation system.
- The Welsh Government's national Measuring Capacity of Schools in Wales forms are verified by Head teachers, this provides the School Capacity and Admission Number.
- Unfilled places are recorded by Welsh Government; the Council provides returns to Welsh Government annually; they are also based on official school returns.
- Birth Information by area is obtained from the Office of National Statistics
- Pupil projections are aligned with the methodology of neighbouring Council's within North Wales.
- Housing development information is based on actual current housing applications provided from the Planning Officers at Flintshire County Council.
- Potential pupil numbers which may be generated from new housing developments are calculated using a formula providing by a partnering Council (Conwy CBC) who derive the formula based on the latest census returns.
- Pupil teacher ratios are provided by publicly available statistics on a school (<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk>), provided by Welsh Government and is updated on an annual basis.
- Foundation Phase and Core Subject Outcomes are provided by publicly available statistics on a school (<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk>), provided by Welsh Government and updated on an annual basis.

Consultation Documents and Process (Continued)

- School building condition information is provided by an external company who compare the school building condition against the 'Building Bulletin' for Primary and Secondary schools.
- Backlog maintenance information is provided by independent consultants. Property Condition Surveys are undertaken on a 5 year cycle.

Priority Codes (definition) are as follows:-

Priority 1: Urgent work required to be undertaken within 1 year.

Priority 2: Essential work required to be undertaken within 2 years.

Priority 3: Desirable work (deemed as) required to be undertaken within 3 to 5 years.

Priority 4: Long term work (deemed as) required to be undertaken outside the 5 year (Cycle) period.

The element Total 1 – 3 defines a five year financial investment and element 4 defines a six – ten year financial investment.

Work items are costed by the Consultant and include for preliminaries, labour, plant and materials etc. These costs are based on the current building cost information service provided by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) as the leading provider of cost and price information within the construction and maintenance areas. These costs (Unit Rates) are present within the condition survey software to a default figure and amended

Consultation Documents and Process (Continued)

/updated as required by the Consultant. The budget costings are exclusive of VAT, updated annually (using inflation indices) and reviewed post completion of work.

- School suitability information is provided from Suitability surveys undertaken independently in line with DfE Asset Management guidance and reviewed by Flintshire County Council officers and amended if work has been completed at schools post initial survey.
- School budgetary work is conducted using agreed formula as per the School budget forum. Cost per pupil data is obtained from the Council's section 52 budget statements.
- Travel distances between school sites is provided by the Flintshire County Council mapping system Route Finder 3.41
- Transport costs are provided by the Councils integrated transport unit who administer home to school transport contracts.

The Consultation process follows regulatory guidance as set out in the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2013.

However, it is acknowledged that the process around school organisational change can be unsettling for pupils, staff and the school community.

The proposal was put forward on the basis of criteria laid down in the Council's School Modernisation Strategy, namely:

	<p>Consultation Documents and Process (Continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Unfilled places across the primary school portfolio – Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain as at January 2015 (PLASC) had 66 full time pupils with unfilled places of 13.16%. As of September 2015 the school has 55 full time pupils with unfilled places at 27.63% •Diminishing resource criteria (i.e. schools supported by pupils not from their local community and/or small numbers within the community raise concern regarding sustainability within the school’s portfolio) – 83.63% of pupils attending Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain are not attending their local school; •Small School Criteria – The School population and capacity of Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain is lower than national designation of a small school, additionally school numbers do not meet the minimum requirements of primary school models as noted in the Council’s School Modernisation Strategy, and •Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain is currently (July 2015) in Welsh Government categorisation 4, on a scale of 1 – 4, with 4 being the lowest for educational standards. 		
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4	<p>Children's emotional welfare (how the move will affect my child)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils already transferred from other schools • Bullying • Unable to get into other nearby schools because they are full • Increased travel times to school • Don't want to attend larger schools • Loss of friendship • Won't get the further support they require • Overcrowded classrooms 	<p>Reviewing the future of any school is controversial and emotive. The Council is challenged with balancing the sensitivities of community feeling on the one hand, with providing a high quality education offer which can be sustained and afforded. The Council cannot avoid making decisions for the future which are in the best interests of pupils and students. When proposing changes to school organisation it is acknowledged that there will be some changes for pupils. Should the proposal be implemented and Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain be closed it would result in changes for the existing pupils such as :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shorter journey time to school for pupils who reside in the Flint area • A marginally longer route to school for fewer than 10 pupils who live in the Flint Mountain area • A new school uniform • New teachers and support staff • New learning environment • Friendship groups may be affected, however new friendships may be formed. 	31	74%
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<p>5</p>	<p>Impact on the Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central hub of the village • School land should only be used for a school • School/Community must do more to attract more pupils • School used for clubs/night classes • Essential to the community • Authority going to sell the land for housing • Rumours the school is going to be a Pupil Referral Unit 	<p>A Community Impact Assessment has been carried out and the Council acknowledges that where a school closure is proposed it will have some impact on the local community, although the community use of the school is relatively low.</p> <p>However, the Council will work with schools and community to mitigate issues where possible.</p> <p>The Council has no plans for the site, and will not consider the future of the site until such time as the school's future is determined.</p> <p>Legal Land ownership issues are still being investigated, it has been noted that some of the site at Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain is part of the Bryn Edwin Trust. Dependant on the formalisation of such matters, the Council could consider transferring the asset or part of the asset to a constituted community group where it can demonstrate a need and ability to take over the running of the site.</p>	<p>31</p>	<p>74%</p>
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6	<p>Recent spend on building works</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent spend on Disability Adaptations and maintenance • Waste of Tax payers money • Unnecessary items purchased 	<p>The Council cannot predetermine an outcome to the proposal and therefore work on the principle of spending today's money on today's pupils.</p> <p>The condition surveys are carried out by independent surveyors, commissioned by the Council. They survey schools on a five year cycle in line with national guidance and provide the Council with maintenance priorities. The work to repair the roof was identified as a priority, therefore urgent repair work was programmed accordingly.</p> <p>The Council has a legal duty to consider the Equalities Act, therefore work was completed at the school to facilitate the needs of a pupil.</p>	31	67%
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7	<p>Housing developments not been taken into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential new housing in area • Application to change use of land in the area from agricultural to building • Croes Atti development • Expanding residential area • New housing has created younger families • Expected rise in number of school pupil due to housing development • Authority have approved new housing developments in the area 	<p>The Council has fully considered school capacity in the area together with potential housing development yield within its consultation documents.</p> <p>Data regarding potential pupils which could be generated from new housing developments is calculated using a housing yield formula. The housing yield formula has been derived from research work based on national census data from a partnering Council. This was applied to all current housing development planning applications approved by the planning authority.</p> <p>The housing yield figures produced are a maximum figure and do not take into account parental choice and/or pupil movement i.e. pupils moving into the new homes but who are already in the local education system.</p> <p>The pace of housing developments will be constrained by the plans of the site owners/developers, the housing market, current economic climate and other factors which are unpredictable.</p> <p>It is the Council's view that there is sufficient capacity within the local school network to accommodate pupils from Ysgol Maes Edwin should it close. Estyn have commented that: <i>'The local authority has given a clear rationale for the proposed expected benefits when compared with the status quo in relation to finance, surplus places and the continuity and progression in pupils' learning.'</i></p>	31	67%
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<p>8</p>	<p>Federation of the school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not given enough time to explore Federation • No support from Flintshire County Council • Interested schools declined to participate in Federation following discussions with Flintshire County Council 	<p>The federation of schools is a legal process which enables schools to work together through a formal structured process by sharing a governing body that will make decisions in the best interest of all the schools, staff and pupils in that federation.</p> <p>The Welsh Government have brought in new regulations around federation of maintained schools in Wales. The Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014 which came into force on 22 May 2014 give effect to Council's powers to federate schools. (School governors already have powers to federate by choice under provisions introduced in 2010). These powers have now been consolidated into the 2014 Regulations.</p> <p>An alternative suggestion of federation had been suggested by a number of consultees, notably the governing body. The Governing body of Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain has not been able to identify a willing partnering school or schools with which to pursue a federation. The prospect of developing a successful federation without a willing partner or partners is minimal. Neighbouring schools have confirmed that they have not and will not be bringing forward a federation proposal with Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain.</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>67%</p>
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<p>9</p>	<p>Transition of pupils with Additional Learning Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the additional needs of the children 	<p>The Council will take all practicable steps to ease the transition for all pupils, most especially for vulnerable groups of learners such as Additional Learning Needs (ALN). Should the proposal be implemented the Council would work alongside pupils, their parents, and the relevant schools to make appropriate transition arrangements for pupils to familiarise themselves with their new environments (subject to parental preference).</p> <p>Where pupils have specific ALN needs the resource and support they require would be replicated in their new learning environments.</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>67%</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>Admissions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearby schools are full to capacity • Lack of support from Flintshire County Council 	<p>It is the Council's view that there is sufficient capacity within the local school network to accommodate pupils from Ysgol Maes Edwin should it close</p> <p>Advice and information about admissions was readily provided to parents on request. Any advice given was in accordance with the School Admissions Code and the Council's admissions policy. The Council have responded to many requests from parents for advice in order to provide parents with as much information as possible. In individual cases all options have been explored and appropriate advice given. Where applications have been received, alternative places have been allocated in accordance with the admissions policy.</p> <p>A mini admissions process will be administered to assist families in transition to other school should cabinet determine closure.</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>14%</p>

11	<p>Savings/Budget/Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council unable to manage budget • Save money on consultations used to advise to close the school • Welsh Government announced additional funding for schools 	<p>Inefficient school organisation can result in uneven and unfair funding patterns where some schools receive a disproportionate share of funding at the expense of pupils attending other schools in the area, this is mostly the case of schools that are classified as small schools. Any school proposals should contribute towards establishing a more equitable pattern of school funding.</p> <p>In line with regulatory requirements Flintshire County Council has a schools' funding formula which is the methodology by which the budget share for each school in the County is determined. Each year the formula is reviewed and in consultation with relevant stakeholders amendments are made to reflect changes in funding and policy. (The detailed methodology and the budget shares are sent to all schools and a summary is published in what is referred to as the section 52 budget statement).</p> <p>Schools receive a budget for a financial year from April to March and this is based on the pupils in each school in the September preceding the financial year. The 2015/16 section 52 budget statement has been used as the basis of analysis.</p>	3	7%
12	<p>Traffic and Transport Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to walk children to school • Parents/carers do not drive • Pupils being forced to travel further to attend their 2nd choice school 	<p>Under current transport policy fewer than ten pupils would be entitled to free home to school transport based on the assumption they transfer to their nearest school, Ysgol Owen Jones, Northop. This would be on the basis that the route to the alternative school from Flint Mountain would be considered to be hazardous due to its rural location which has limited footpaths in and out of the village.</p> <p>The Council will provide transport in accordance with its</p>	2	5%

		<p>Transport Policy. http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/PDFFiles/Lifelong-Learning/Schools/SchoolTransport/Transport-Eligibility-Criteria-.pdf In summary, the Council provides free transport for children of compulsory school age, where a child receiving primary education lives over two miles from the nearest appropriate school.</p> <p>The Council also provides free transport for pupils of statutory school age:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• where the route to school is considered to be hazardous by the Council;• where transport to a named school is identified in a pupil's Statement of Special Educational Needs. This would normally be on medical or educational grounds and would be deemed essential in the context of other criteria identified in this policy• where a child requires transport on medical grounds and no suitable public transport exists; Free transport is also provided for pupils of statutory school age:• where a child whose parents are in receipt of Income Support or Working Tax Credit resides more than 2.5 miles from the nearest appropriate school;• to the nearest Welsh medium school under the criteria identified above;• to the nearest voluntary aided school where the admission to the school is on denominational grounds, subject to the distance criteria. Consultation with individual schools will take place to confirm the admission criteria under which pupils are admitted. Suitable evidence of adherence to the faith of the school such as a baptismal certificate or a letter from a priest may be requested.		
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Conclusion

As outlined during the consultation process, the proposal to close Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain from 31st August 2016 with pupils transferring to nearby schools requires the approval of the Local Authority Cabinet Members. This Objection Report alongside a copy of all the Objections, a copy of the consultation document; a copy of the consultation report; and a copy of the published notice will be forwarded to Cabinet Members for determination.

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