

INFORMAL CONSULTATION SUMMARY REPORT

**Area School Review
Brynford, Lixwm and Rhosesmor**

NOVEMBER 2016

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1. Summary

This document examines the responses to the Informal Consultation for the Area School Review which included Brynford CP, Lixwm CP and Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor. It analyses the preferred options, comments and feedback contained in response forms and correspondence received by the Council.

Consultation events held in the three communities were well attended, which is reflected by the high number of responses received. Naturally, in such consultation exercises there were some concerns expressed by stakeholders, in summary, potential loss of small school environment and the potential impact on communities, with issues such as community cohesion and loss of community facilities cited.

The Council received 605 response forms, 2 of which were spoilt. There were 2 letters received from individual Governing Bodies, 1 letter from a Community Council, 1 letter from a Head Teacher and 1 letter from a Local Member. In addition to the three specialist school based consultation exercises undertaken with children and young people at the three schools, the Children and Young People's survey generated 33 responses.

Overall, the preferred option for adult respondents was Option 3, which is to retain Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor as it is currently and to amalgamate Brynford C.P. and Lixwm C.P. Schools onto one site. However, when data is analysed on an individual school basis, both Brynford C.P School and Lixwm C.P. adult respondents preferred Option 1, to maintain the Status Quo. At Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor, adult respondents preferred Option 3.

The preferred option for children and young people respondents was Option 3, to retain Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor as it is currently and to amalgamate Brynford C.P. and Lixwm C.P. School's on to one site.

In terms of Option 3, it is clear that it is not universally popular within Brynford and Lixwm communities. However, this level of change does have some support within all communities and is more palatable to stakeholders than more radical change for the area.

Option 3 also has the support of the Governors of Brynford C.P and Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor as well as the Local Member for the Brynford Area.

What is clear from the consultation exercise is that there was very little support for Option 2 (Area school on one site).

All comments/feedback and additional correspondence can be viewed in the Appendices.

2. Introduction

Flintshire County Council has a responsibility to review and modernise all school provision, to ensure that we are providing the best possible opportunities for learners, so that they can achieve their full potential.

The Council needs to ensure there is a sufficient number of school places, of the right type, in the right locations. This is not straightforward in that there is a large number of surplus school places in some areas of the County, whilst other areas do not have enough places to meet the local demand. In other areas, school populations are sustained by children and young people from outside the local area through parental preference. The need to maintain a large number of ageing school buildings and the supporting infrastructure is unsustainable. Therefore, we need to review our school provision to:

- Ensure our education provision is both high quality and sustainable;
- Improve the quality of school buildings and facilities; and
- Provide the right number of school places, of the right type, in the right locations.

The task involves:

- Forecasting pupil numbers;
- Managing the supply of school places;
- Managing demand through admissions and appeals procedures;
- Ensuring that a framework is in place to secure improvement through school organisational change;
- Being prepared to take difficult decisions; and
- Monitoring and evaluating the impact of decisions.

We review and modernise the way education is delivered through a rolling programme of area reviews. We review schools on an area by area basis, to make sure that when we make changes to school organisation, we take into account any potential impact on other schools nearby.

When we carry out an area review, we always consult with children, young people, parents and carers connected with schools in that area. This is so that they can have their say and be involved in decisions made about our local schools.

The outcomes of an area review can include merging on one preferred site or the building of new area schools and the closure of schools that are no longer fit for purpose.

Achieving this can require substantial capital investment, in conjunction with the Welsh Government, to improve our school infrastructure and ensure that school buildings are suitable and provide an effective legacy for future generations.

3. Background

In June 2015 Cabinet determined that we enter into informal consultation for an area review for the following schools:

- Brynford C.P School
- Lixwm C.P. School
- Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor

The area school review assessed the education provision in the area of Brynford, Lixwm and Rhosesmor.

The options for the area, as agreed with the schools governing bodies are as follows:-

- Option 1: Status Quo
- Option 2: One Area School on One Site
- Option 3: Retain Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor and one Area School on one site (either Brynford C.P. or Lixwm C.P. School)

What do the options mean?

- **Option 1: Status Quo** - Each school remains as it is, retains its name, category, budget, governors, staff and remains in its community.
- **Option 2: Area school on one site** - Area school - one site, the school would retain its category but would have a new name, governing body, head and budget and would remain in one of the communities of Brynford, Lixwm or Rhosesmor.
- **Option 3: Area Schools on two sites** - Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor would remain as it is, retain its name, category, budget, governors, staff and would remain in its community. Brynford CP and Lixwm CP would amalgamate onto one site. The amalgamated school would retain its category but would have a new name, governing body, head teacher and budget and would remain in one of the communities, either Brynford or Lixwm.

Key information, including an Options Appraisal, Equality and Welsh Language Impact Assessment, Community Impact Assessment, Transport Impact Assessment and Building Appraisal, has been analysed in order to inform this report, all of which is available to view on the following link, www.flintshire.gov.uk/schoolmodernisation

4. Findings

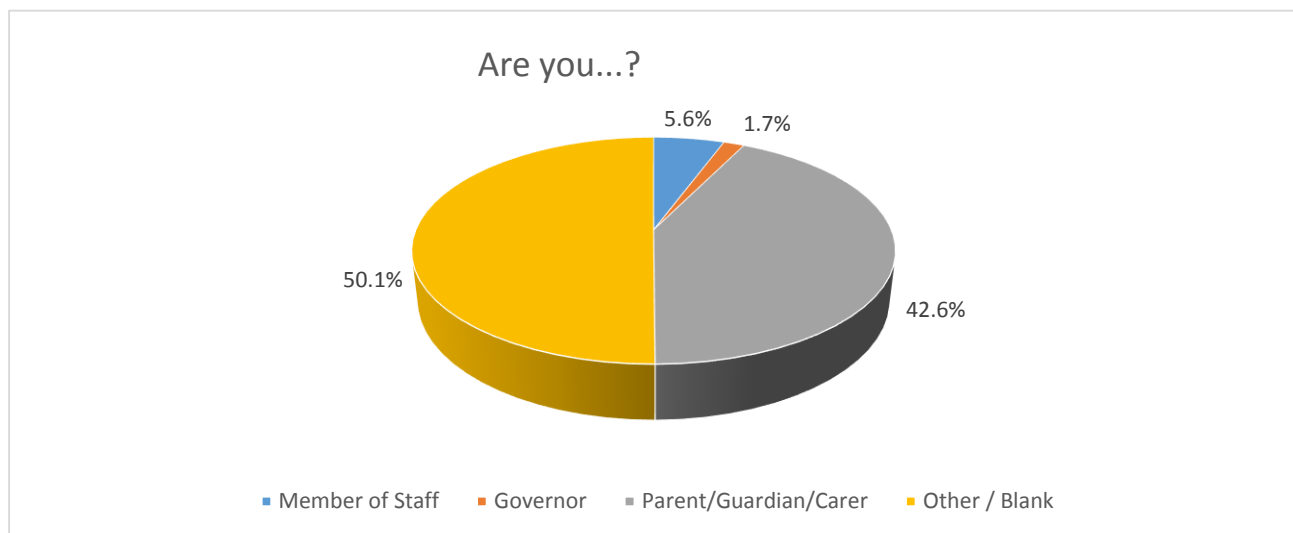
During the Informal Consultation period (which ran from 1 July 2016 to 26 August 2016) parents, carers, guardians, governors and members of staff associated with each school were invited to complete a survey regarding the potential options for the area. The wider community was also able to respond via the Council's website.

Separate consultation exercises were undertaken with children and young people at each school and their views were included in the consultation documentation. In addition, a children and young people's version of the response form was also made available.

Response forms could be completed online, at consultation events, by post, by email and in person.

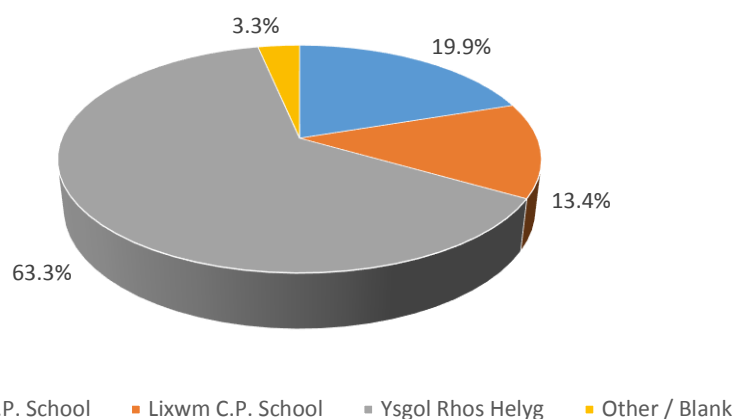
4.1. Adult Response Form Overall Outcomes and Themes

- 34 (5.6%) responses were from members of staff from the 3 schools;
- 10 (1.7%) responses were from individual school governors;
- 257 (42.6%) responses were received from parents, guardians and carers;
- 302 (50.1%) responses, which included members of the communities, past pupils and those who did not specify a relationship.



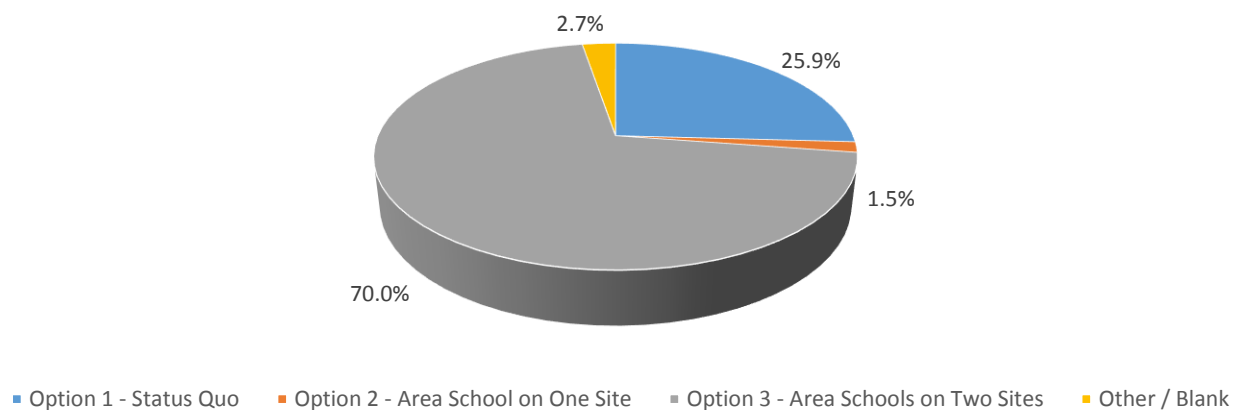
- 120 responses (19.9%) were associated with Brynford;
- 81 responses (13.4%) were associated with Lixwm;
- 382 responses (63.3%) were associated with Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor;
- 20 responses (3.3%) selected either "Other" or did not specify a school.

Which School are you Associated with?

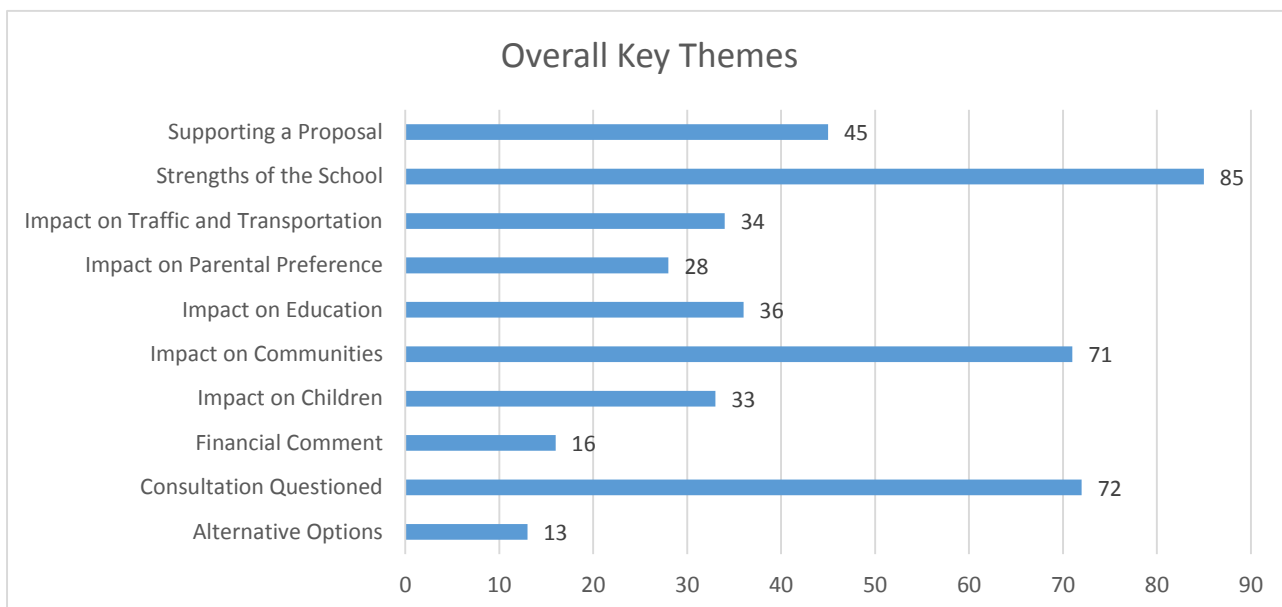


- Option 1 – Status Quo - 156 people (25.9%),
- Option 2 – One Area School on one site - 9 people (1.5%);
- Option 3 – Retain Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor and one Area School on one site - 422 respondents (70.0%);
- 16 people (2.7%) either did not specify a preference or offered an alternative of federation

What is your Preferred Option?



Out of the 603 people who submitted a response form, 246 (40.8%) wrote additional comments. These comments have been analysed and extracts selected to identify the following key themes:



4.2. Adult Comments and Responses

The following provides extracts contained within each key theme. In addition to the extracts, the School Modernisation Team have responded to clarify any issue, question or observation that has been raised.

- All Adult Response form additional comments can be found in full in Appendix 1
- Governing Body letters can be found in Appendix 2
- Community Council letter can be found in Appendix 3
- Head Teacher letter can be found in Appendix 4
- Local Member's letter can be found in Appendix 5
- Children and Young People's response form additional comments can be found in full in Appendix 6
- Area Review information Paper can be found in Appendix 7

4.2.1. Alternative Options

Points Raised	Local Authority Response
<p>Lixwm C.P. School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federation of Brynford and Lixwm schools and status quo for Rhos Helyg • I hope that federation with Brynford school will strengthen our communities and improve working relationships • Federation allows our two villages to start to move together as one 	<p>Federation was originally included as an option for the area and was presented to the governing bodies of each school. This option was discounted by the governors at the time and as a result federation was removed as an option and the Council proceeded to review the three options for the area as agreed.</p> <p>Federation of schools is a legal process which enables schools to work together through a formal structured process. The</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A federation model would be a much better option, keeping a school in both villages of Lixwm and Brynford <p>Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More should be done to make use of schools as community hubs 	<p>benefits of federation include improved teaching and learning as well as behaviour and pupil achievement. However, this can also be supported by collaboration between schools. There are already many examples of positive examples of collaboration between schools in the area in particular between Brynford and Lixwm.</p>
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4.2.2. Consultation Questioned

Points Raised	Local Authority Response
<p>Brynford</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is the parents responsibility to inform our children what is happening when we feel ready not the councils or the school governors • Brynford is an excellent achieving school whose intake is always at full /over capacity. This school is doing brilliantly and feel if somethings not broke don't fix it! <p>Lixwm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federation with Brynford School has been brought to the table very late in the day therefore full current parental knowledge of this was very limited. • Has the decision already been made? • Is there plans providing why Lixwm school is too small, it does have options to make it possible to enlarge <p>Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is Rhos Helyg included in this at all? 	<p>The Council cannot pre-determine a decision.</p> <p>The Council acknowledges that informal consultation around school organisation change will cause a level of uncertainty within the local school community.</p> <p>The challenge for the Council is to provide the right number of places in the right locations. In responding to this challenge, the Council needs to make the best educational provision for its area, taking into account current provision, community issues, demographic factors, the condition of school buildings, surplus places and the quality of the teaching and learning environment.</p> <p>Since funding for schools is largely driven by pupil numbers, surplus capacity means a disproportionate amount of funding is spent on infrastructure (such as buildings) and the “fixed costs” of running a school (such as leadership and administration).</p> <p>This funding could be better used to ensure that pupil teacher ratios are minimised to make a direct difference to learners. As public service funding reduces over forthcoming years the case for reprioritisation and change becomes even more compelling.</p> <p>The Council review schools on an area by area basis, to make sure that when we make changes to school organisation, we take into account any potential impact on other schools nearby.</p>

4.2.3. Financial Comment

Points Raised	Local Authority Response
<p>Brynford</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I believe Flintshire should be making cuts elsewhere before the education of our young people is attacked in this way. <p>Lixwm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perhaps we are spending our money on the wrong things such as this intrusive and irrelevant forms. <p>Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the saving your proposing you will make if we merge is not enough to warrant disrupting the young children's education for. there has been a lot of money spent on the school, with the park area, trim trail, chickens, woods, allotments, nature area, then we have the benefit of the wind turbine that gives the school free electric and the council also gains from this. 	<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.</p> <p>Any school proposals should contribute towards establishing a more equitable pattern of school funding. 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.</p> <p>(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>

4.2.4. Impact on Children

Points Raised	Local Authority Response
<p>Brynford</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The welfare of the children is being totally over looked. Disgraceful <p>Lixwm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> children thrive in a small school atmosphere, in a 'super school' that is proposed they would be just a number and be lost within all the other children My son and others would find any move away from this devastating and difficult to cope with. Disgrace you want to do this , stressing the children and parents Some of the children we have would not develop as well if they were in a large school, as they are shy and lack in confidence and self belief. <p>Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I do not believe this is either safe or healthy or conducive to better learning for any child 	<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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Should a decision be made to proceed with a school organisation change option (Option 2 or 3) then consultation would be required in line with the legal requirements of the School Organisation Code.</p> <p>Transition and wellbeing of pupils is a collective responsibility of the Local</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> diminishes the ability for parents to provide their child with a stable and consistent educational environment 	<p>Authority, Governors and staff. Consequently bespoke transition plans will be tailored to all pupils affected by change, particularly those in protected groups or with ALN.</p>
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4.2.5. Impact on Communities

Points Raised	Local Authority Response
<p>Brynford</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We do not want to merge schools and lose our sense of community through out of area attendees and oversized classes <p>Lixwm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you close the school, the village will end up being full of ageing residents as there will be nothing to attract people with families The future of Lixwm Village and community rests with the school. Otherwise our village will decline for future generations Maes yr Goron (26 houses, including starter homes and family houses) was only built recently and there is planning for another 11 homes behind Ffordd Walwen. <p>Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Losing Ysgol Rhos Helyg, will destroy our community Another example of stripping local communities of their lifeblood 	<p>The Council acknowledges that where a school closure is proposed it will have some impact on the local communities, although the community use of the schools is relatively low.</p> <p>The Council has completed a Community Impact Assessment to measure the impact and how the impact can be minimised or negated. It is recognised that the school plays an important role in the wider community.</p> <p>Should a proposal be implemented the Council will work with the schools and communities to mitigate issues where possible places.</p> <p>Housing developments have been fully considered by the council in its consultation documents.</p>

4.2.6. Impact on Education

Points Raised	Local Authority Response
<p>Brynford</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think the children learn more in a smaller village school and it is good to see so many parents walking their children to school through the village <p>Lixwm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surely if this school would close then standards of education would drop for the pupils The results of two recent studies indicate that small schools may be the remedy for lots of things that are wrong with public education, especially for the nation's poor children 	<p>Should a decision be made to proceed with a school organisation change options (Option 2 or 3) the Council will take all practicable steps to ease the transition for all pupils, especially for vulnerable groups of learners such as Additional Learning Needs (ALN).</p> <p>Should a proposal for school organisation change be implemented the Council will work alongside pupils, their parents and the relevant schools to make appropriate transition arrangements for pupils to familiarise themselves with their new</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We all chose small rural villages with small local schools to provide our children with small classes and intimate, nurturing settings for their education and development. <p>Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would hate to see local children pay the price by cutting the quality of their schooling 	environments (subject to parental preference).
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4.2.7. Impact on Parental Preference

Points Raised	Local Authority Response
<p>Brynford</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I also do not want my young children attending a big school! Far too overwhelming! <p>Lixwm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would only ever want my children to attend a smaller more rural primary school where they have excelled. removes any element of choice from future parents <p>Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I wish my grandchildren to remain in the catchment area for the Mold Alun School. If all schools are amalgamated I, as a parent, feel that the option to decide on or consider a local school for my children to attend will be taken away as three local school will be replaced with just one 	<p>The Council does not operate catchment areas.</p> <p>Parent/Carers will not lose the right to express a preference to a place at a school.</p> <p>Places at the school are determined by an Admissions policy which is a legal requirement.</p> <p>Advice and information about admissions is readily available to parents/carers on request. Any advice given is in accordance with the School Admissions Code and the Council's Admissions policy.</p> <p>The Admission's information is also available on the Council's website on the following link: http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/Resident/Schools/School-Admissions.aspx</p>

4.2.8. Impact on Traffic and Transportation

Points Raised	Local Authority Response
<p>Brynford</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It would not be fair to close both Brynford and Lixwm and expect the children to travel to Rhos Helyg. <p>Lixwm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I also worry about the safety of children regarding parking as I can already see this is an issue for the parents of Brynford. <p>Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The parking situation is already strained, the new extension to the car park being unusable in wet weather, & parents 	<p>A Transport Impact Assessment (TIA) has been carried out and is available to view at www.flintshire.gov.uk/schoolmodernisation</p> <p>Should the Cabinet determine change for the area then any new development on a school site will take into account car parking provision for staff and visitors and appropriate drop off facilities for parents/Carers. A further TIA would be normally commissioned as part of any Planning consent process.</p>

<p>having to park along the road & surrounding lanes, causing annoyance to local residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Furthermore I believe that the additional travel required for many pupils of Rhos Helyg is impractical, costly and will have an adverse effect on the environment 	
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4.2.9. Strengths of the school

Points Raised	Local Authority Response
<p>Brynford</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brynford primary school has been a great school for past and present students • All 3 of my children have thrived in Brynford school, gaining confidence and a high level of education they are growing into well balanced individuals <p>Lixwm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staff at Lixwm have worked hard to maintain the school as a part of the community • Lixwm is a great school now. Everyones reason of loving the school is the closeness the children have with pupils and teachers. <p>Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is an amazing school, the facilities are first rate, especially within the outdoor areas like the roundhouse, woodland area, greenhouse, trim trail etc • This site fulfils the needs and the space needed to accommodate all requirements for the future generations of children 	<p>The positive responses from consultees regarding the schools in the area 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.</p> <p>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 on the other. The Council cannot avoid making decisions for the future which are in the best interests of pupils and students.</p>

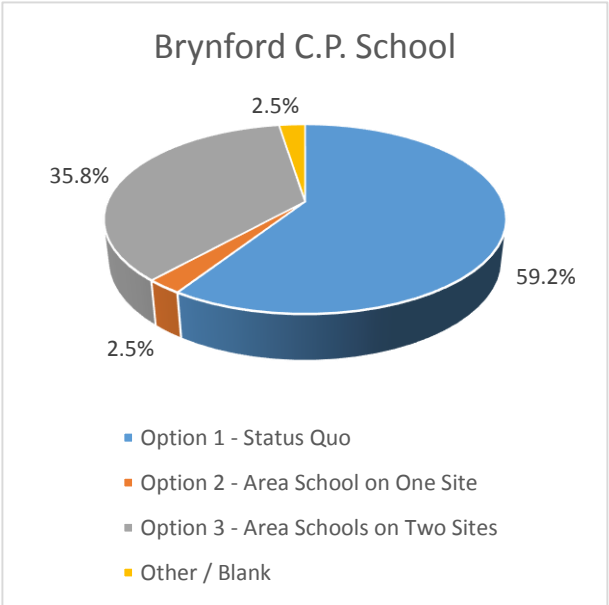
4.2.10. Supporting a Proposal

Points Raised	Local Authority Response
<p>Brynford</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option 3 is I think a decent compromise • I believe a larger school for Brynford & Lixwm students on Brynford site may bring some advantages such as better facilities with the advantage that it is still a small school. <p>Lixwm</p>	<p>The positive responses from consultees regarding the Area School Review are noted.</p>

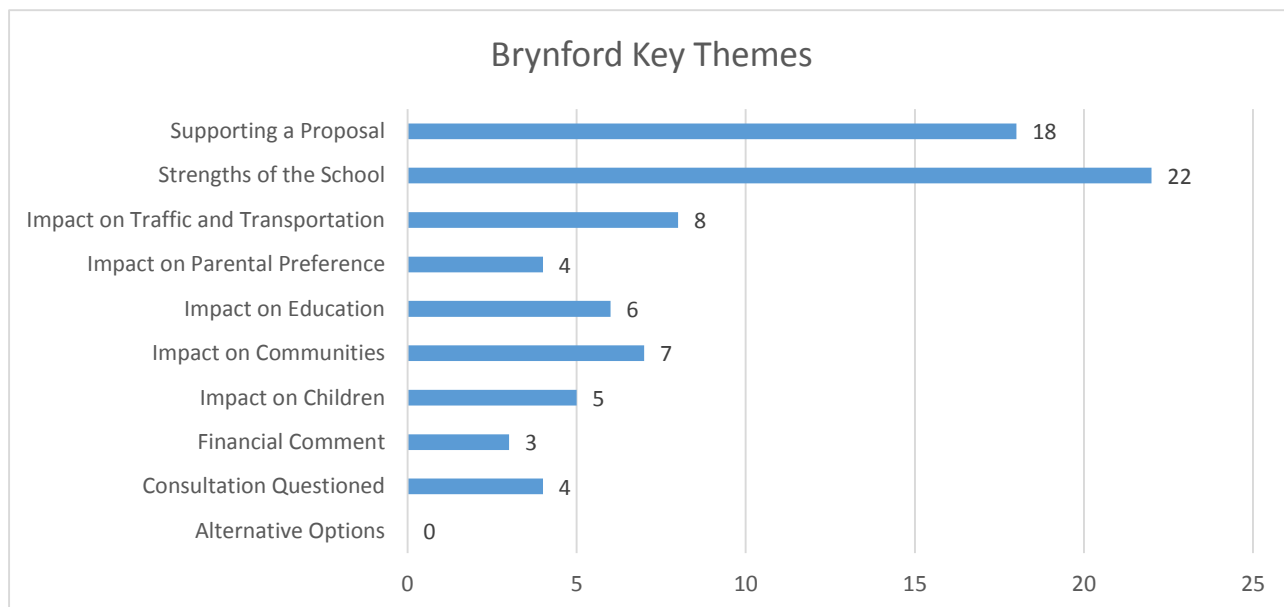
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel that this option gives pupils stability and therefore the best chance of achieving their potential. • I feel in the future my children would benefit from being educated in a sustainable school which is fit for purpose <p>Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option 3 is the most sensible solution • Two schools seems to be the best option, to help maximise the resources, rhos helyg serving two villages and another in Brynford to serve the other two villages. 	
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4.3. Brynford C.P School

- Option 1, Status Quo was the preferred option of 71 out of 120 (59.2%), associated with Brynford.
- Option 2, Area School on One Site was the preferred option of 3 people (2.5%);
- Option 3, Retain Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor and One Area School on One Site was the preferred option of 43 people (35.8%);
- Although 3 people (2.5%) selected “Other”, none of them offered an alternative but made a comment instead.

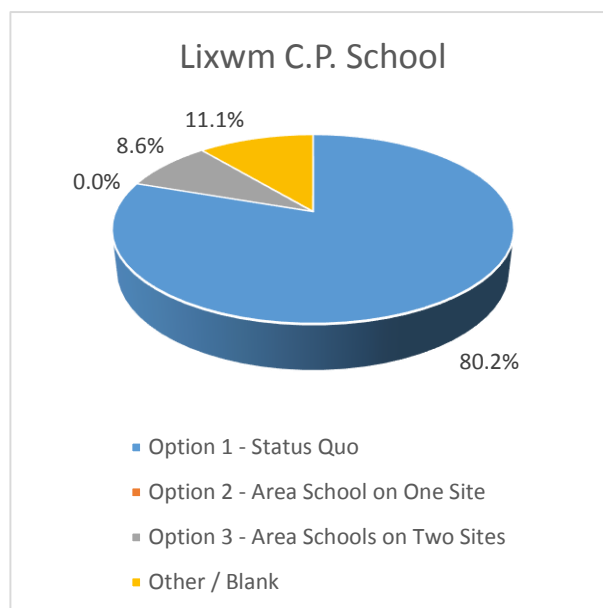


Out of the 120 people associated with Brynford, 51 (42.5%) wrote additional comments. These comments have been analysed and the following key themes have been identified:

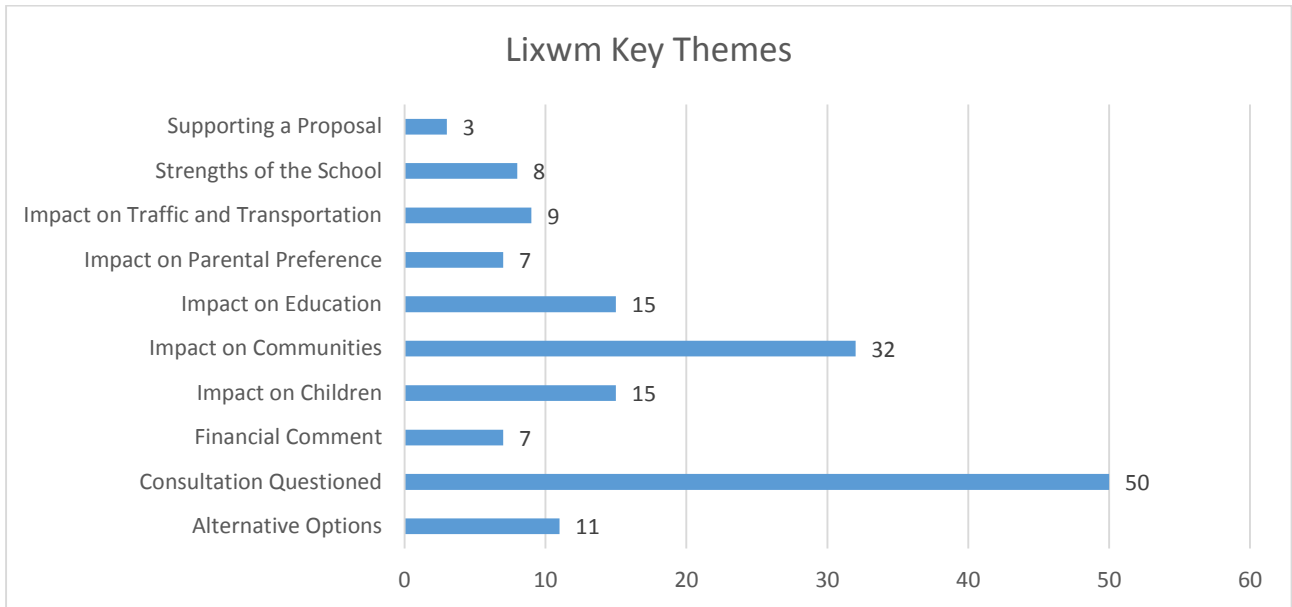


4.4. Lixwm C.P School

- Option 1, Status Quo was the preferred choice of 65 out of 81 (80.2%) people associated with Lixwm.
- Option 2, Area School on one Site was the preferred option of (0.0%).
- Option 3, Retain Ysgol Rhos Helyg Rhosesmor and have one Area School on One Site was the preferred option of 7 people (8.6%);
- Although 9 people (11.1%) selected “Other”, only 5 offered an alternative, all of whom suggested a federation between Lixwm and Brynford.

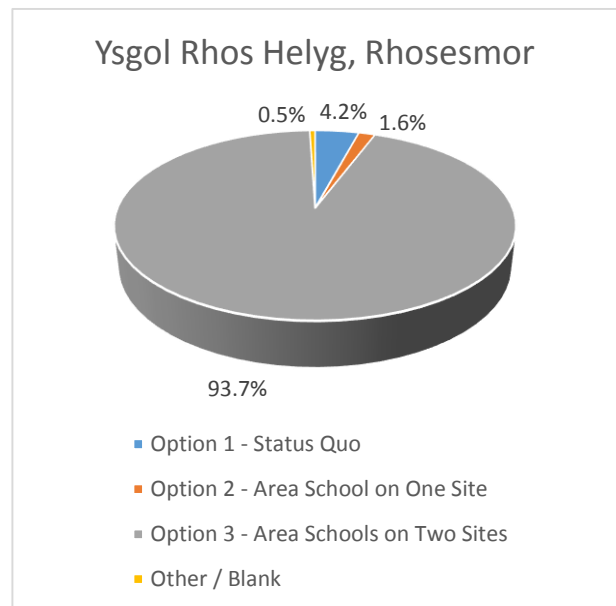


Out of the 81 people associated with Lixwm, 55 (67.9%) wrote additional comments. These comments have been analysed and the following key themes have been identified:

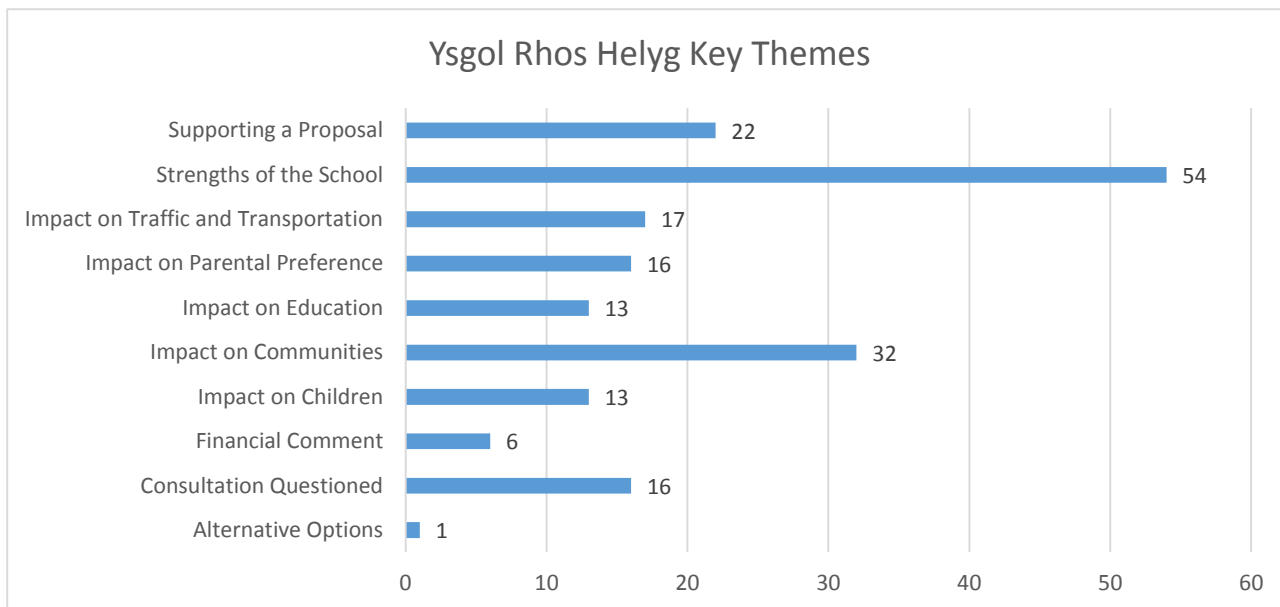


4.5. Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor

- Option 1, to maintain the status quo, was selected by 16 people (4.2%);
- Option 2, an area school on one site was the preferred option of 6 people (1.6%);
- Option 3, Retain Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor and One Area School on One Site was the preferred option 358 people (93.7%);
- 2 people (0.5%) selected “Other”, none of them offered an alternative, with 1 making a comment instead.

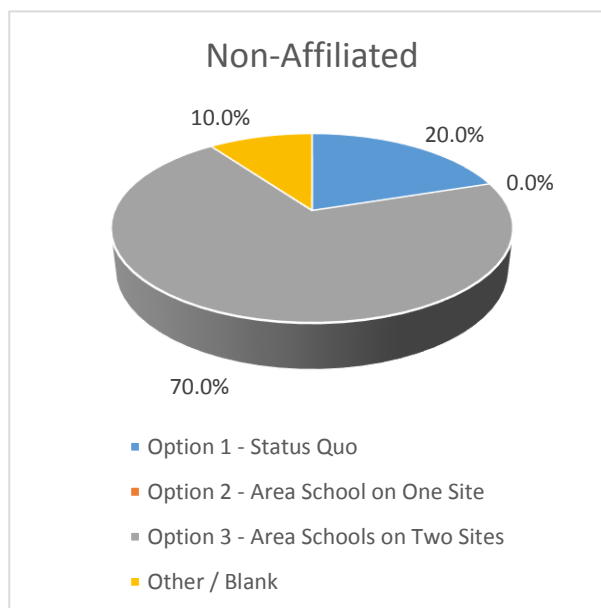


Out of the 382 people associated with Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor 132 (34.6%) wrote additional comments. These comments have been analysed and the following key themes have been identified:

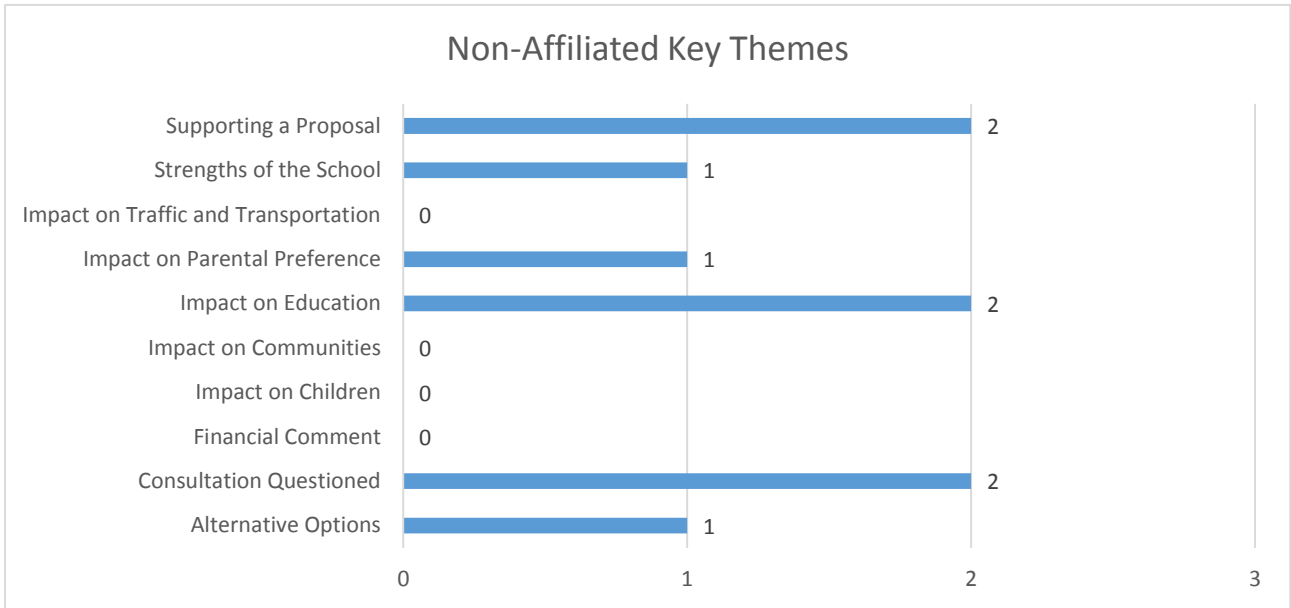


4.6. Non-Affiliated Responses

- Option 1, to maintain the status quo, was selected by 4 people (20.0%);
- Nobody (0%) preferred Option 2, an area school on one site;
- The majority of people who stated they are not affiliated with any of the schools, 14 out of 20 (70.0%), selected Option 3, to have area schools on two sites, as their preference
- Although 2 people (0.5%) selected “Other”, only 1 offered an alternative, suggesting “all schools federate and become CiW VCP schools”.



Out of the 20 people not affiliated with any of the schools, only 8 (40.0%) wrote additional comments. The key themes have been identified as follows:

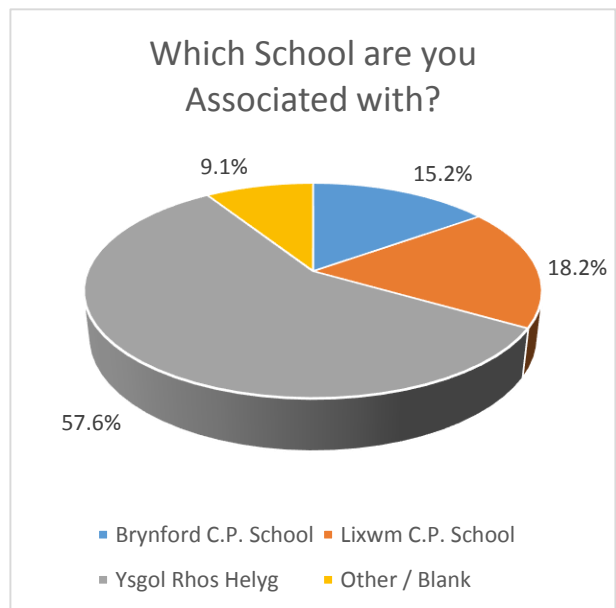


4.7. Children and Young People’s Response Form Summary

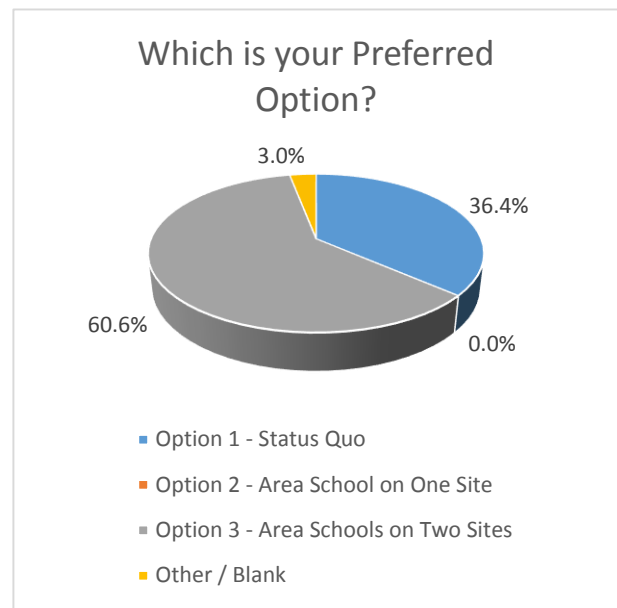
The language of the original Response Form was softened in order to allow children and young people who would be potentially impacted by any change to provide their opinions on the Area School Review.

However, it must be noted that 4 people who completed this version of the survey specified that they were parents of children who are either at one of the schools or waiting to join one.

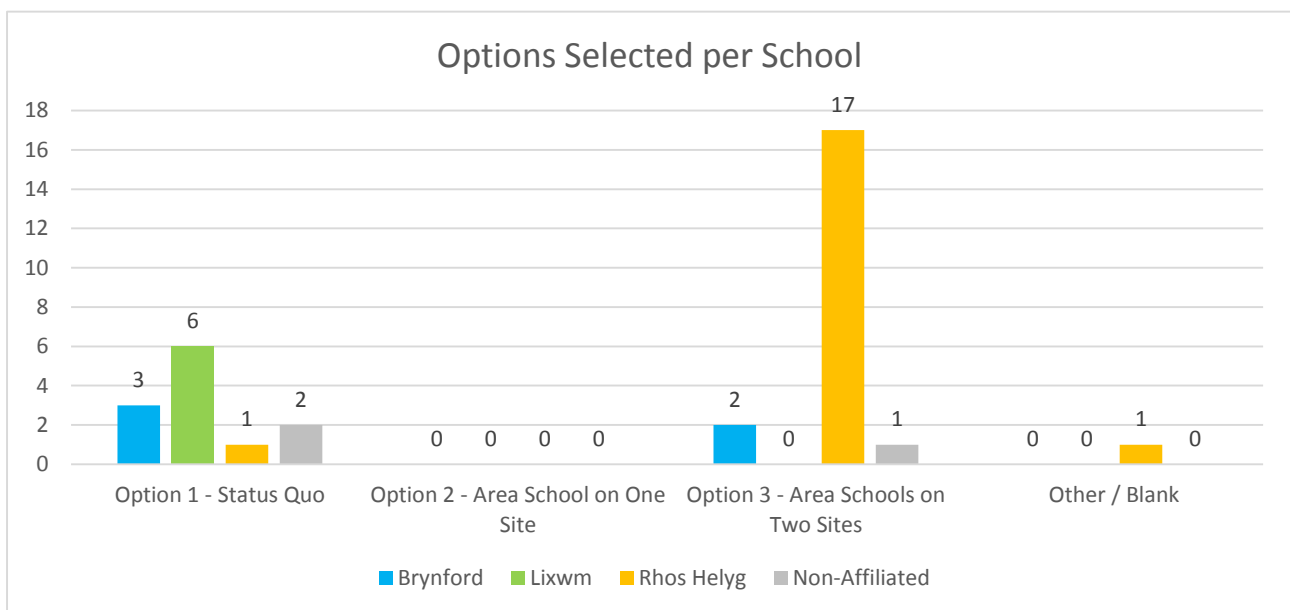
- 15.2% (5 respondents) were associated with Brynford;
- 18.2% (6 respondents) were associated with Lixwm
- 57.6% (19 respondents) were associated with Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor;
- 9.1% (2 respondents) either selected “Other” or did not specify a school.



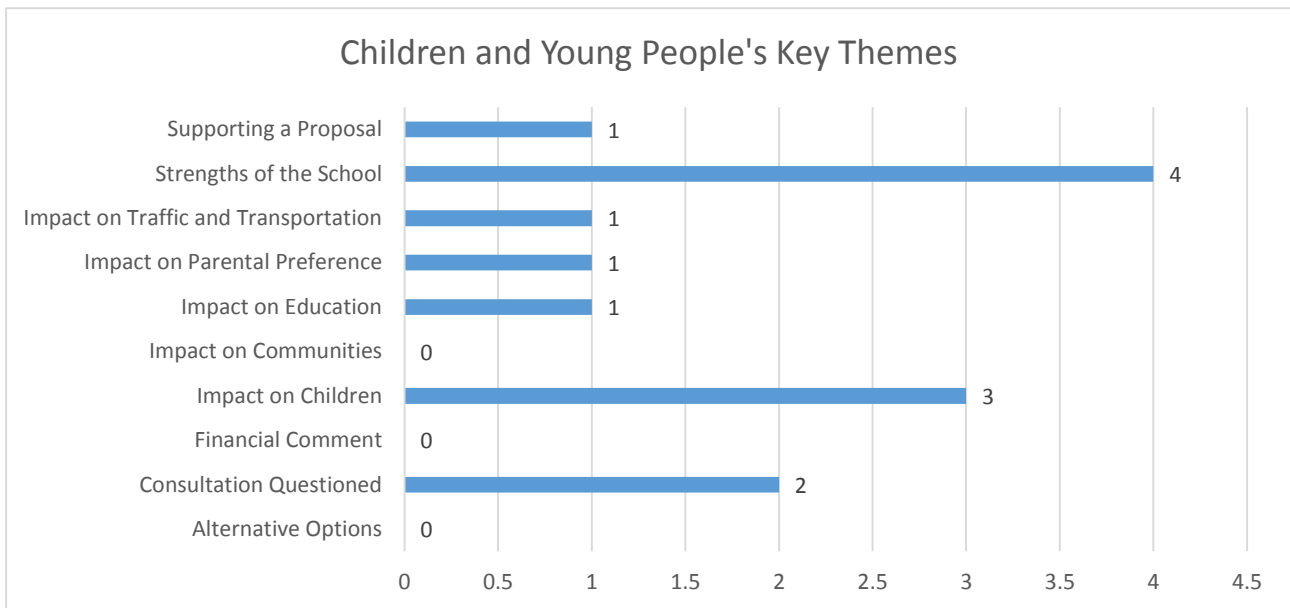
- Option 1, Status Quo, was the preferred option of 12 (36.4%) respondents;
- Option 2, One Area School on One Site was the preferred option by (0.0%)
- Option 3, Retain Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor and one Area School on One Site, was the preferred option of 20 (60.6%) respondents;
- 1 child (3.0%) selected “Other” but did not offer an alternative, instead just leaving a comment.



The options selected by respondents show that the preferred option for Brynford and Lixwm was Option 1 for Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor Option 3 and for children not affiliated with any of the three schools, Option 3.



Out of the 33 respondents who submitted a survey, 10 (30.3%) wrote additional comments. These comments have been analysed and extracts selected to identify the following key themes:



5. Next Steps

As outlined in the consultation documents, a report will be presented to Cabinet (the Council's decision making body) who will be asked to determine which option to proceed with in the area. Cabinet Members will also be in receipt of consultation documentation, and all information obtained from the consultation, in the form of the summary report. All individual responses will also be available to decision makers.