



Proposal to undertake Regulated Alterations at Monmouth Comprehensive School.

- **To reduce the school capacity from 1671 places to 1600**
- **To establish a 55 place Special Needs Resource Base (SNRB)**

OBJECTION REPORT

March 2016

Monmouthshire County Council
Children and Young People Directorate
Objection Report

**Proposal to make regulated alterations at Monmouth
Comprehensive School to reduce the schools capacity from 1671 to
1600 and to establish a Special Needs Resource Base (SNRB) with
effect from the 1st September 2017.**

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 ‘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 after the 20th January 2016 to 17th February 2016.

During the objection period two objections were received in relation to reducing the capacity of the school from 1671 to 1600.

No objections were received in relation to establishing the Special Needs Resource Base.

The two objections were in the form of an email. The objections received in full and the Local Authority response are included at Appendix A.

In accordance with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 this Objection Report is published electronically on the Council’s website at:

www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/strategicreview

To request a hard copy of this document please write to Cath Sheen,
Monmouthshire County Council, PO Box 106, Caldicot, NP26 9AN or by email
strategicreview@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Appendix A

Respondent	Objection	Local Authority Response
1.	<p>Figures given by MCC are misleading in terms of school numbers and demand on school places in Monmouth. The new school is being built to accommodate 1600 pupils; this is inadequate as there are already this number of pupils attending the school at present, making this figure even more inadequate in the future. It was proposed that the school is inadequate for the needs of Monmouthshire people.</p>	<p>The figures quoted in the Consultation document are a true reflection of the Numbers on roll at the school and the projected pupil numbers. Because of the popularity of the school it attracts pupils from outside of it catchment area. Therefore the projections include both in catchment and out of catchment pupils. An analysis of parental preference indicated that 31.1% of pupils allocated a Year 7 place for September 2015 were residing outside of the catchment area. Therefore out of the 265 pupils allocated only 68.3% or 181 pupils were residing within the catchment area. Therefore the reduction in capacity is more than adequate for the needs of Monmouthshire pupils residing within the catchment area.</p> <p>The reason for the reduction in capacity is because Welsh Government recommend that “where there are more than 10% surplus places in an area, local authorities should review their provision and should make proposals for school reorganisation if this will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of provision”</p> <p>The authority wide percentage of surplus places for all 4 secondary schools is currently 17.01%. If this proposal was to proceed and the capacity was reduced along with Caldicot School, the projected percentage of surplus places for January 2016 would decrease to 13.3% across Monmouthshire as a whole, an action that is required in order to meet the Welsh Government target.</p> <p>The Authority have to consider the surplus places position across</p>

		<p>Monmouthshire and how having a higher capacity at Monmouth could have an impact on neighbouring schools such as Chepstow School and King Henry VIII and whether there could be a detrimental impact on the viability of these schools.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>My objection is raised specifically on behalf of parents and children who live out of catchment but still in county, often living VERY close to the catchment boundary and whose children are attending welsh primary schools considered “feeder schools” for the comprehensive and where the Welsh language is part of the curriculum, with friends living nearby but in catchment. My objection is that.</p> <p>Combined with the unfair and inappropriate out of catchment admissions criteria, the reduction in intake numbers puts additional pressure and restrictions on the number of children in these circumstances who can be admitted to Monmouthshire Comprehensive, and gives an unfair advantage to other out of catchment children living outside the county (and Wales). The result is that many of these out of catchment but in county children may be separated from their friends they attended primary school with and forced to attend another secondary school.</p> <p>Let me give some specific examples and ask the council to confirm if my assumptions on out of catchment priority are correct and comment on if this reflects a fair way to prioritize</p>	<p>The new capacity for Monmouth Comprehensive School has been proposed in light of the forecasted projections for the School, ensuring that it is fit to serve the children residing within its catchment area (who submit applications prior to the published closing date). Monmouth Comprehensive School is a school that attracts a large volume of children from outside of its catchment area, and we forecast that the School’s proposed new capacity will be able to accommodate some of these requests in addition to those who reside within the catchment area that apply prior to the closing date. The Local Authority has been mindful that the proposed size of the new school should not have a detrimental impact on neighbouring Schools.</p> <p>During 2015, the Local Authority undertook a review of Secondary School catchment areas. The review included proposals that would ensure that all Monmouthshire residents fall within the catchment area for a Monmouthshire</p>

<p>intake in the light of the proposed reduction.</p> <p>The Monmouthshire schools admission criteria states that in event of oversubscription for children living outside catchment “priority will be based on closeness to the preferred school”. Closeness is then defined as “shortest safe working distance”</p> <p>Therefore assuming no other criteria apply around siblings, children in care or medical grounds.</p> <p>A child living in Gwehelog, less than one mile from the Monmouth Comprehensive catchment boundary but just over 11 miles from the school address would be given LESS priority than</p> <p>a) a child living in Coleford at 5 miles walking distance from the school b) a child living close to Cinderford at 11 miles walking distance from the school c) if the A40 is considered a safe walking route, a child living in Ross on Wye at 10 miles distance</p> <p>If the council wants to press ahead with the proposed reduction in intake it should be done in conjunction with a change to the out of catchment admission criteria to address this inequity.</p> <p>My proposals on how this could be changed simply and effectively include :- 1. For out of catchment children priority will be given to</p>	<p>secondary School. The Local Authority determined not to proceed with the proposals in light of the feedback received during the consultation process as well as the associated transport costs.</p> <p>Monmouth Comprehensive School faced a position of oversubscription for the September 2015 intake. Prior to this, the Local Authority has accommodated all parental preference applications for Monmouth Comprehensive School, regardless of the applicant’s residence. The School Admission policy is one that is reviewed annually and the suggestions made during this consultation process will be taken on board during future reviews. Regretfully, the Local Authority is not permitted to prioritise children solely on the basis of their residence in Monmouthshire.</p>
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	<p>children living in county or attending an in county primary school over children who are not.</p> <p>2. For the purposes of the decision criteria, closeness should be defined as safe walking distance to the boundary of the catchment at its nearest point rather than distance to the school</p> <p>There were many questions raised during statutory consultation and documented in the FAQs around out of catchment admissions and I believe this indicates the strength of feeling on this subject. So far I do not believe the council has directly addressed this question around unfairness of the out of catchment admissions criteria which clearly seems like common sense to so many.</p>	
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