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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref Letter 06/08/21
Ein cyf/Our ref JMEWL/10882/21

[Redacted]

13 September 2021

Dear [Redacted]

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter of 6 August to the First Minister in which you express your concerns about the expansion of Cathays High School and the demolition of the Maindy Velodrome. I am happy to provide an educational perspective in my capacity as Minister for Education and Welsh Language.

I am aware that the project to expand Cathays High School is included in Cardiff's Strategic Outline Programme for investment under our 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme; however, the case for funding is currently at an early stage and my officials are currently awaiting a business case for consideration. As part of the Programme business case process the case for change will be rigorously assessed by policy officials, including those with responsibility for sports provision and school organisation, to ensure the proposed investment is fit for purpose and to ensure that all statutory obligations are met. Any offer of funding would be subject to the satisfactory completion of statutory proposals for school re-organisation.

The responsibility for planning school places rests with local authorities rather than the Welsh Government. Local authorities have to keep under review the extent to which their existing pattern of school provision meets current and forecast demand for school places and the requirements of delivering the modern curriculum. The Welsh Government does not normally get involved in the planning of school places.

The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 sets the legislative framework for school reorganisation and requires Welsh Ministers to publish a school organisation code. The Code imposes requirements on those bringing forward and determining proposals to reorganise schools. <https://gov.wales/school-organisation-code>

If a local authority proposes to make significant changes to a school it must follow statutory procedures. In the first instance, they must consult interested parties explaining the reasons for bringing forward the proposal, ensuring those consulted have sufficient information to allow them to form a considered view and make suitable arrangements for them to express those views in writing.

Restrictions imposed in response to Coronavirus do not mean statutory school reorganisation proposals are not able to proceed. Non statutory guidance issued by the

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Welsh Government advised local authorities and other proposers to take the implications of any restrictions into account and take all steps possible to ensure consultations are fair and inclusive recognising the unique circumstances in which they take place.

I am aware that between 29 January and 19 March 2021 Cardiff Council consulted on a proposal to expand and redevelop Cathays High School. Having considered consultation responses and published a consultation report the Council decided to proceed by publishing a statutory notice on 29 June providing a 28 day period ending 26 July in which anyone could object.

Under the 2013 Act most proposals which receive objections will be decided by the local authority. However, a proposal approved or rejected by a local authority can be referred to the Welsh Ministers for consideration if certain limited parties (listed below) decide to take this step within 28 days of the local authority's determination:

- another local authority affected by the proposals;
- the appropriate religious body for any school affected;
- the governing body of a voluntary or foundation school subject to the proposals;
- a trust holding property on behalf of a voluntary or foundation school subject to the proposals; or
- a further education institution affected by the proposals.

Given my potential involvement in the statutory process, I am unable to comment further on this proposal, but I trust the information I have provide proves useful.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
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