

Cardiff Council

Objection Report

The redevelopment of Cantonian High School, Riverbank Special School and Woodlands High School

Background

1. In February 2019, the Council undertook a public consultation on proposals to:
 - Expand Cantonian High School from six forms of entry (6FE) to eight forms of entry (8FE) with sixth form places for up to 250 pupils including the replacement of the Cantonian High School buildings with larger new build school facilities on the same site.
 - Expand the Specialist Resource Base (SRB) for pupils with an Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) that is hosted at Cantonian High School from 20 to 30 places. The new Cantonian High School buildings would include enlarged purpose built accommodation for the SRB.
 - Expand Riverbank Special School from 70 to 140 places, which is to be achieved by relocating the school into new larger purpose built facilities on the Cantonian High School site.
 - Expand Woodlands High School from 140 places to 240 places, which is to be achieved by relocating the school into new larger purpose built facilities on the Cantonian High School site.
2. The consultation set out the Council's proposals and the reasons for the proposal (a copy of the consultation document can be seen at www.cardiff.gov.uk/cantoniansiteproposals). The consultation process followed Welsh Government guidelines and was an opportunity for stakeholders to learn about the proposals and for the Council to hear the views of all those with an interest.

Consultation Report

3. A consultation report was published following the consultation (A copy of the consultation report can be seen at www.cardiff.gov.uk).

Statutory Notices

4. At its meeting on 13 June the Council Cabinet agreed the publication of statutory notices to:
 - Increase the capacity of Cantonian High from 6 forms of entry (6FE) to eight forms of entry (8FE) with sixth form provision for up to 250 pupils in new build accommodation;

- Expand the Specialist Resource Base (SRB) for learners with an Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), hosted at Cantonian High School from 20 to 30 places in purpose built accommodation in the new school buildings;
 - Transfer Riverbank Special School to the Doyle Avenue site and increase the capacity from 70 to 112 places in new build accommodation.
 - Transfer Woodlands Special School to the Doyle Avenue site and increase the capacity from 140 places to 240 places in new build accommodation;
5. The statutory notices were published on 28 June 2019 for a period of 28 days to allow for objections. The statutory notice period expired on 25 July 2019 (Copies of the notices can be seen at Appendix1).
 6. The notices were published on the Cardiff Council website (www.cardiff.gov.uk/cantoniansiteproposals), posted at the entrances to the three schools (Cantonian High School, Riverbank Special School and Woodlands High School) and in the local areas.
 7. Copies of the notices were provided to the schools for distribution to pupils, parents, carers and guardians, governors and staff members. All other organisations and consultees required under the School Organisation Code 2018 were either provided a hard copy or e-mailed a link to the published notices on the Council website.
 8. Where objections are received to the statutory notices, an objection report must be published summarising the statutory objections and the proposer's response to those objections.

Objections to the proposals

9. The Council received one objection by the statutory notices closing date.
10. A summary of the objection and the Council's response can be seen below.
11. The points raised in the objection were:
 - The consultation document provided earlier this year did not give any consideration to the impact on the local community of the planned development;
 - Cantonian High School has extremely poor access - both the main and rear entrances are from narrow residential streets rather than main roads; the main entrance is on a street that has poor pavement provision and poor visibility close to the entrance; the rear entrance in Doyle Avenue opens directly onto a narrow blind corner with cars parked all along the bend hampering visibility even further;

- The proposed number of children at Cantonian with the additional 200 plus pupils from Riverbank and Woodlands will make the road safety issues considerably worse due to the high number of additional vehicles that will be needed to transfer students with special needs to and from school;
- The new housing development at Plasdwr is resulting in additional traffic through Fairwater, specifically St Fagan's Road and the situation can only get worse, particularly at peak times. Doyle Avenue is used as a short cut by many commuters who are trying to beat traffic and speed along the road;
- Riverbank and Woodlands students will undoubtedly be using taxis and minibuses to get to school at a time when the traffic is at its worst in the local area. It seems unlikely that being stuck in traffic as a result of poor access to school is likely to help in preparing these students for their school day. It would be unacceptable if financial planning was considered above the well-being of these students and the disruption this is likely to cause them;
- Reconsider the proposals or at least review the plans with a view to altering the current access arrangements to improve pupil and community safety;
- Reconsider the plans to move Riverbank and Woodlands Schools to the Cantonian High School site as access to the site is not currently fit for purpose for the transport requirements of special needs students;
- Riverbank and Woodlands Schools provide a service for students with special needs and these are the students who are most likely to suffer from any significant disruption to their routine or if they are taken out of a familiar environment.

Council's response to the objections

Site justification

12. The consultation document outlines a proposal to locate Cantonian High School, Riverbank and Woodlands Special Schools on the existing Cantonian High School site due to the demand for pupil places in the area.
13. The Cantonian High School site has been considered because its location within the catchment and the size of the site. It is one of the largest school sites in Cardiff and assessments indicate there is not enough room on the current special school sites for the required increased provision.
14. The Council has also considered the condition of the existing school facilities and the need for re-development. The Welsh Government informed all councils in Wales that school buildings rated as D for

condition were to be replaced/ upgraded if capital funding investment was to be provided through the Band B 21st Century Schools programme. Cantonian High School is rated D for condition (end of life), with both Riverbank Special School and Woodlands High School rated D for suitability (very poor).

15. Whilst the Council acknowledges the concerns raised, following further design detail, it is anticipated that the proposal would contribute towards achieving a better balance of demand and supply of school places in Cardiff and address the acute condition need.

Travel, Transport and access to the site

16. The Cantonian High School site is large with space for Riverbank Special School and Woodlands High School as well as Cantonian High School. There are a number of benefits for the site, including it being close to the Ty Gwyn Special School (1.1 miles to 1.5 miles), travel time between the two sites would be short (approximately 5 – 10 minutes by car or 10 – 20 minutes by bicycle), there is space for buses and pupil taxis on site, the site is relatively central, has good transport links and is close to main arterial routes.
17. It is acknowledged that these proposals will increase educational activity on the Cantonian High School site and this will result in additional trips to the site which have the potential to add/alter existing pressures on the local highway network.
18. A significant number of pupils currently accessing Riverbank Special School and Woodlands High School would normally travel by car or minibus and the number of vehicles accessing the shared school site would be expected to increase.
19. However, as stated within the consultation document, transport matters have been considered in developing the proposal and further detail would be considered. This could include altering plans, such as access points, as part of the planning proposal which would be fully consulted upon in due course.
20. As part of the further design detail, the increase in the number of people who would be travelling to the site requires a range of measures to offset the potential for increased impact on the local highway network. Council policy means that a primary target for new developments is to make a positive contribution to city-wide improvements in the use of sustainable modes of transport (by foot, cycle and/or use of public transport). This will be achieved by ensuring that the development is fully integrated with infrastructure to mitigate potential transport impact. We acknowledge the concerns raised and appreciate the risks, so a Transport Assessment will be undertaken to fully assess the transport implications associated with the development and to identify mitigating measures and opportunities to improve active travel. Mitigating measures would be presented and consulted upon as the project progresses.

21. The Council is committed to ensuring all schools in Cardiff have an Active Travel Plan by 2020. This will set out actions identified by the school to reduce car use and encourage active travel. There are a range of measures available which would help support pupils, parents and staff to travel more actively for the journey to school. The Council will work with the schools to promote and implement as many schemes as possible so that all pupils, parents and staff are encouraged to travel actively to school wherever possible. The schools' involvement in the Active Travel Plan development in advance of the proposed opening will also help to raise road safety awareness, may include options for cycle training, and is aimed at increasing active travel take-up.
22. The transport assessment work (incorporating a travel plan for the site) will progress to include recommended highway measures to reduce the overall proportion of vehicular traffic accessing the site. Increased levels of active travel will be encouraged through the improvements to key walking and cycling routes from the surrounding area directly to the school site, including appropriate crossing facilities. The school site will have direct and convenient walking and cycling accesses and secure storage facilities for cycles and scooters. Implementation of the Active Travel Plan will reduce the number of vehicles accessing the site and infrastructure improvements will be made to crossing facilities, footway provision and new cycle route facilities. The Transport Assessment will propose any highway measures required for safe, convenient, comfortable and efficient facilities to accommodate the particular access needs of all three schools, both for vehicles and for active travel. The transport assessment work will also include information on construction traffic for the site. The Council will look to assess and address the concerns raised following the Transport Assessment and further design detail.
23. Whilst the Council acknowledges there could be increased volumes of traffic, existing traffic and congestion will be considered through measures designed to accommodate efficient access and egress of authorised vehicles to the school site, particularly focussing on school peak arrival and departure times to minimise any delays. Measures will also be identified to reduce existing issues with parking and short cuts being taken on local roads, to both improve the existing situation and to supplement the measures which encourage a modal shift towards active travel.
24. These measures may include the following:
 - only allowing essential vehicle access to the school site and local residential properties;
 - removing all other non-essential vehicle movements in vicinity of the school entrance;
 - restricting parking at the start and end times of the school day, and potentially restricting access so that the road cannot be used as a short cut.

25. New Traffic Regulation Orders for these restrictions will be subject to a consultation process.
26. As further transport assessment work is progressed in conjunction with the detailed design of the schools' layout, access and buildings, emerging options for transport proposals would be a matter for further engagement with stakeholders including local residents.
27. When detailed plans are developed, more detailed Traffic Regulation Orders and transport plans will be publicised to obtain views from stakeholders, including local residents. Travel safety for pedestrians, residents and pupils will be essential before any plans are progressed.

Increased traffic in the wider area as a result of the Plasdwr housing development

28. The Council resolved to grant Outline Planning permission for the Plasdwr development in North West Cardiff (Application No. 14/02733/MJR) in March 2017. Consent was given to significant highways improvements throughout the wider area of Creigiau/ St Fagans, Fairwater, Llandaff, and Radyr/ Morganstown to mitigate the potential impact of the development on the local highway network.
29. Improvements planned in this area will help to ease traffic pressures and improve public transport provision along the A4119 Llantrisant Road Corridor to benefit residents of existing communities as well as the occupiers of the new developments, enabling the use of sustainable travel options.
30. The Council acknowledges the concerns raised and would fully consider the planned wider highways implications as part of the planning application for the Doyle Avenue site.

Impact on Riverbank and Woodlands pupils

31. The Council is committed to ensure that the proposal does not have any negative impact on the quality of standards of education, the delivery of the Foundation Phase or each key stage of education at any of the three schools nor the SRB based at Cantonian High School. The Council will consider options to minimise disruption throughout any transition from the old buildings to the new facilities and expects that 21st Century School facilities will better support the delivery of high quality education.
32. The proposed changes would be planned carefully so that school leaders and governance are not disrupted, which could have a negative impact on educational outcomes. The Council is experienced in managing similar change projects and will build on lessons learnt from elsewhere, working closely with the schools concerned to ensure a smooth transition for all pupils.

Community impact

33. The following are taken into account when considering a proposal: Public Open Space, parkland, noise and traffic congestion. Should the project progress, officers will work with schools and any community group to make sure that the proposal avoids negative impacts if possible.
34. With significant sports and wider leisure provision being developed a key objective would be to enable third party to access the sports facilities at the school, on a sustainable financial basis. This supports Welsh Government's aim for shared facilities in community-focussed schools. It is envisaged that the development will:
- Provide opportunities for the local community and sports organisations to participate in sport and physical activity for health improvement and development of their skills, particularly amongst low participant groups;
 - Operate in line with the national agenda for sport taking into account nationally adopted strategies;
 - Generate positive attitudes in sport and physical activity by young people and reducing the dropout rate in sports participation with age;
 - Increase the number of people of all ages and abilities participating in sport and physical activity including people with disabilities;
 - Use the facilities to encourage the range, quality and number of school sports club links and to stimulate competition that is inclusive of young people and adults;
 - Provide affordable access to the facilities and to be self-financing and cost neutral in the first instance, generating sustainable income for the school in the future.
35. Throughout the project the Council will engage and consult with the community to ensure that opportunities that meet the needs of the local community are achieved.
36. The positive community intention was also highlighted by the Cantonian High School Governing Body response to the consultation, *'the school wants to build stronger links to the community and encourage use of the school for evenings and other times when not in use and see the new school as a great opportunity to develop the school's role within the Fairwater Community and surrounding areas'*.

NICK BATCHELAR

Director

August 2019

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Statutory Notices