



Andrew Adonis

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools and Learners

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Cllr Paul Carter
Leader
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26 July 2007

Dear Paul,

Sheppey Academy

Following our request to Maurice Smith to conduct an independent review of the proposals for the Isle of Sheppey Academy, I intend to publish his report on 26 July under cover of this letter outlining the Government's response. I am grateful to you and to Graham Badman and his team for KCC's support throughout this inevitably complex process.

I have noted Maurice's recommendations and, subject to the conditions set out below, the Government is willing to implement his key recommendations for an Academy on two sites at Minster and Cheyne. There will be a single governance structure and an integrated 11-18 curriculum, but parents should be able to express a site preference at the age of 11 and 16, with appropriate flexibility also (reflecting the different specialisms and pupil curriculum choices) for pupils to transfer between sites for Key Stage 4 programmes. Decisions on the specialisms and the precise admission arrangements will need further consideration, and I look forward to advice from the project team, in consultation with you and the local community.

It is vital in my view that we provide the local community with a clear plan to move the project forward; one that will deliver an exciting and effective two-site Academy to serve the whole Sheppey community, adequately funded and delivered to a firm timetable. I believe this new plan, if properly implemented, will accomplish this. I have also spoken to Derek Wyatt MP who is fully supportive of the proposed way forward.

The Government's approval for this Academy plan to proceed to feasibility stage is subject to the following conditions:

1. Capital costs. In order to support this vision, I am increasing the Government's capped capital investment to £46m, and I welcome KCC's commitment to provide a further £3m, raising its contribution to £4m. This will provide a total capital budget of £50m. I am also asking KCC to confirm that it will underwrite any significant cost above and beyond that figure, and to fully apply the capital assets at its disposal that this proposal makes available. I should stress that the Government cannot increase its funding beyond £46m in any circumstances.

2. Sponsorship and project leadership. It is important that there be a credible non-local authority lead sponsor to take responsibility for driving the academy project forward, and I am delighted that Dulwich College has agreed to your proposal that they become the lead sponsor and accordingly be responsible for the appointment of the academy's governing body. Dulwich College has made a significant contribution to the project – particularly in the work of Ralph Mainard – and I believe they have the capacity to make a real success of this academy in partnership with the local community. I am grateful to the De Haan Charitable Trust for its £1m donation to the Academy to establish its endowment. I also welcome the continued engagement of the Church of England and local stakeholders as partners in the new Academy.

Subject to receiving your formal agreement to the terms of this letter, the project will now resume its feasibility phase so that the timeline to reach Funding Agreement to identify a definite opening date can be reviewed and agreed with the Government and the County Council in September.

I am copying this letter to Lord George at Dulwich College, to the Bishop of Dover, to Roger de Haan, to Derek Wyatt MP, and to Ronnie Norman, Chair of the Academy Project Steering Group.

Yours ever,



ANDREW ADONIS



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26 July 2007

Dear *Andrew,*

Thank you for your letter. I am delighted that it would appear we now have a way forward to build a new secondary education system for the Isle of Sheppey and resume the feasibility stage.

I see little point in a detailed critique of former HMI Maurice Smith's report. Like you, I accept that with the additional capital you have made available, a two site option is now possible. In that regard, I am pleased to confirm that KCC will increase its sponsorship to £4m, making a total capital amount of £50m. As sponsor, on behalf of Kent County Council, I accept the responsibility to value engineer the project, control capital expenditure and therefore take financial responsibility for cost over-runs above that amount.

We shall, of course, seek to maximise the benefits of current assets not required for the academy project either to defray such expenditure or add to the total value of the project.

I am pleased that Dulwich College is assuming a more prominent role and agree the need to offer the Sheppey community greater surety about the development of this project and the enormous opportunity offered by the creation of the academy.

Finally, may I in turn thank you both for your own personal interest and the exemplary work of your officers within the Department.

Yours sincerely

Paul Carter