

Mr Kevin McDaniel
Head of Schools & Education Services
Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead
Town Hall
St. Ives Road
Maidenhead
Berkshire, SL6 1RF

31st March 2017

Dear Kevin,

Thank you for visiting Mr Rooney and Pauline Reid, our School Business Manager, on Wednesday and for your follow-up letter dated 29th March 2017. We're delighted to hear that RBWM is committed to the Lowbrook Academy expansion, recognising the important level of attainment and demand for places at Lowbrook.

The expansion project, the latest rounds of communication and offers from RBWM were once again discussed in depth by the Board of Governors today. In accordance with RBWM and as highlighted in your letter, we agree that there is a need for financial certainty to be achieved before this scheme can be progressed further. We are also in agreement that the expansion and development of the Academy is important.

However it is quite clear we are in disagreement with the RBWM over the facts of the actual amount of funding agreed despite repeated communications with yourself and the local authority, the need and size for a larger hall space, the sourcing of additional funding to cover the shortfall, and the recent increase in budget is not a real increase rather confirmation of a previously agreed contingency fund.

In summary, your collaboration and involvement in this expansion project dates to April 2016. As evidenced in correspondence and minutes of meetings which you attended, the design of the block and hall was developed in partnership with the RBWM and progressed to its current stage. We all remain committed to this expansion in line with national school building guidelines, as noted in your letter, and the recommendations to proceed to pre-application which you agreed to on 17th October 2017.

To reiterate, the hall must be suitable to accommodate 420 pupils along with the teaching and support staff. The proposal of a commitment to support a hall of 167m² falls well short of this. The continued referencing to 'combined hall space with a small number of local schools' is not representative of this site and its needs.

Furthermore, 167m² is well below the national recommendations you refer to, which are 250m² +/-30m². It is also recommended that halls have a storage capacity of 12.5%. The current design of our hall reflects this national Government guidance and



was agreed by you during the design stage. To be precise the existing scheme has a hall size of 290m², not 300m².

Education excellence is important to this Academy. Therefore, we are not able to compromise this by agreeing to a less than satisfactory solution. It is also important to reiterate that at no time during this development has the Academy been asked to value engineer any aspect of the hall as this indeed had already been done during our initial designs by: reducing storage areas; forfeiting changing areas and toilets; and developing an entrance and storage area beside the hall to further reduce costs to a bare minimum. These measures were undertaken with your knowledge and commitment.

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that our facilities are fit for purpose now and into the future. Hence, we are not in the position to agree to a hall that does not meet national government guidelines, the curriculum needs of this highly successful Academy or the future use of this site due to the predicted need for spaces as identified by yourself in sections 2.31 and 2.32 of your Report entitled, "Additional Capital for Lowbrook Academy":

"It is becoming clear that a significant amount of new primary school provision will be needed in Maidenhead to meet the demand arising from the expected new dwellings over the period 2010-2032....and it is likely that Lowbrook Academy will need to expand in the longer term."

I am pleased to note that after your discussion with Mr Rooney and Mrs Reid yesterday, you were in agreement that the current design is the best design for this expansion. I also refer back to Thomson Roddick & Laurie notes already circulated to yourself in the Academy's response to the report titled, "Additional Capital for Lowbrook Academy."

"Meeting 4 item 3.1 (bullet 2) discusses the hall capacity for the delivery of teaching and the argument against a smaller hall. Meeting 5 item 4.3 item discusses the robust case for a larger hall against pupil numbers and the requirement of BB103. Kevin was present at the meeting and noted this was not excessive." TLR, September 2016

The key issue however remains that the Academy is unable to progress further with the expansion of Phase II of this project due to a substantial shortfall in funding. Irrespective of the size of the hall, a significant funding shortfall would still remain. In essence this is the key obstacle that must be overcome.

In relation to your second offer, you have offered us the agreed £1.6m and the contingency of £200,000. To reiterate again, this is not an increase in budget, rather clarification of where the agreed funds for the original contingency budget will be sourced. Cllr Dudley 27th March 2017 confirms this issue, "On review, I believe there is sufficient uncertainty around the £150,000 and where it could be allocated, that we are going to increase the RBWM contribution to £200,000 from £50,000 giving you a budget of £1.85 million (including your £50,000)."

As already demonstrated by independent accountants, Macintyre Hudson, and sent to Cllr Dudley on 28th March 2017, Lowbrook Academy does not have the financial reserves or future forecast to support any loan. Therefore, we sadly remain in a

financial position that does not allow us to proceed with the preferred and agreed scheme developed in partnership with you and the RBWM this time last year.

We are in agreement with you that there is a need for financial certainty to be achieved before this scheme can be progressed and would welcome further dialogue as to how this can be reached.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'D du Pré'.

Ms Dominique Du Pré
Chair of Governors