

Alun Cairns AM

Conservative Member for South Wales West



Cynulliad National
Cenedlaethol Assembly for
Cymru Wales

**Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1NA
Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1NA**

Eich cyf / Your ref:
Ein cyf / Our ref: **AC/EK/ LC/0028/001**
Monday, 29 June 2009

**Ffôn/Tel: 029 20 898733
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Alun.Cairns@wales.gov.uk**

Mr Christopher Moseley
Metrix UK
Second Floor
10 Great George Street
London SW1P 3AE

Dear Chris,

RE: planning application for defence training college

My purpose in writing is to draw your attention and to seek responses on issues relating to the recent planning application submitted that have been raised by a number of local residents. It is important to underline that there is general support for the project, although there is concern over the impact of the Aerospace Park and the cumulative effect of both initiatives.

Therefore, I should be grateful if you would respond to the following points.

1. Aerospace Park – Why has the application for the Metrix project been tied into the application for the aerospace park?
2. Noise Concerns –It is noted that there is a plan for firing range, together with ambush training on the site, which naturally raises questions amongst the local communities. It is accepted that there is currently a firing range on the West Camp, although it should be noted that the current operation is intermittent and amounts to no more than 4 hours per week. The documents show that the proposal would allow for the firing range to start operations at 7am, through the day to stop at 11pm, “if possible”. The guns used would also have a much higher decibel rating than in current operations.

Therefore it would be helpful if you were able to state:

- a) What consideration has been given to siting such operations indoors?

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- b) Could the ambush training be conducted in Brecon or elsewhere off site in order to minimise the impact on any community?

It should be noted that Picketston is only 200 yards away from the focus of the noise and a map drafted shows that they will be well within a 65 decibel range.

- c) What impact will this have on the wildlife and horses that are ridden nearby?

The engine testing facility of the aerospace park will also create significant amount of noise and the cumulative effect of all these, together with the aircraft taxiing will be detrimental to the community.

3. Castleton – We note that this site has been acquired, although the plan does not include any form of detail as to what operations could take place in this area. Any information on this would be helpful.
4. Layout –The Northern Access Road forms the Western perimeter of the proposed development. This has been the subject of considerable discussion and it is argued that building such a highway on a green field site is not sustainable, when other options seem more attractive.
 - a) What consideration has been given to establish the access road off the B4265 to the East of the current West camp entrance? This would allow the access road to be tied in with the proposed central spine road that skirts the West side of the Aerospace Park? If this is possible it could also remove the need for the current Southern access road. It has been suggested that a roundabout could be construction on the B4265 to reduce congestion.

It is believe that people travelling from the East are unlikely to use the Northern Access Road. They are far more likely to want to travel through St Athan or Eglwys Brewis Road to gain access through the main entrance. Even if turning restrictions were imposed, policing and monitoring offenders is always difficult.

When this suggestion was made in the various consultation meetings, it was argued that security could be an issue. Surely the demolition of the Officers' Mess to provide greater distance from the runway would be a cheaper and more sustainable alternative. In addition, could a security lodge be erected very close to the B4265 on this suggested alternative entrance? Furthermore, when the West Camp entrance was used by constructors for the resurfacing of the runway, there were no security issues at that time, which would suggest an inconsistency?

Finally, there is significant concern over the proposed height of the Northern Access Road, as well as the impact of separating a small number of properties from the rest of Llanmaes village.

5. Housing – Concerns have been expressed over the proposal for the Service Family Accommodation. As stated, this would give rise to the Military and locals mixing, which gives rise to questions over the potential for conflict?

Previously, the St Athan development brief identified seven options on a priority list for housing in relation to the development of the St Athan area. In this regard, what consideration has been given in pursuant of these alternatives?

The site of the proposed playing field is a brown field site and what consideration has been given to siting housing in this area and relocating the playing fields on the area proposed for housing or Castleton? It is believed that the siting of playing fields in these greener areas would be more sustainable and reduce impact on the communities.

6. Lighting – Should the northern access road go ahead concern has been expressed that the road will be lit at all times, which will extend the light pollution in the area from the Academy site to cover a considerable distance? When the combined effect of the height of the road is considered the cumulative effect of the impact of lighting should be taken into account.

Thank you very much for your considerations and I appreciate that a number of points have been made during this letter. However, I should be grateful if you would kindly respond to them at your earliest convenience in order that the local people involved are better informed in order to respond to the planning consultation.

Yours sincerely,

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Shadow Minister for Heritage and Opposition Chief Whip
Conservative Member for South Wales West

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Monday, 24 August 2009

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Mr Christopher Moseley
Metrix UK
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Dear Chris,

RE: planning application for defence training college

Thank you for your response to my letter of 29 June, regarding concerns of local residents over the planning application for the Defence Training College. I passed your letter to the residents who have raised further queries which I hope you might be able to answer.

1. Firing range. The residents have spoken to one of the senior officers at MOD St. Athan and it appears that the Military are using computer simulation equipment as a significant part of their training; this does not bear out with the planning application requirement for 6 - 8 hrs a day for a 'live' firing range. They have been told the hours and times were necessary should a trainees 'green card' be found not to be up to date the evening before deployment; please could you confirm whether or not this is likely to happen and whether a 'protocol' or agreement on use with the local community could be sought?

2. According to a letter sent by Jane Hutt to one of the residents from Ieuan Wyn Jones AM; the 'West Camp entrance was not initially considered' and the proposal for access through West Camp arose during public consultation in March 2009. The main issue with using West Camp that has been stated is security, but it might be reasonably assumed that the security to a DTC and ABP would be of a high enough level to be acceptable to the Army - especially bearing in mind the equipment to be stored there.

4. The height of the northern access road (see attached) has also caused concern for the residents. During the workshops the consultants stated that the road would be elevated over the brook and would allow the farmer whose fields are to be dissected by the road to obtain access by driving 'under' the bridge. The residents are concerned that the height for the road in the plans does not realistically reflect this and that it

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would, in fact, need to be much higher.

5. The residents are also concerned that the SFA housing will not be linked to the local population as the housing is mostly on green field sites away from other homes. The SFA housing at the back of East Vale is only causing issues, because currently the residents of East Vale are responsible for maintenance of paths etc and are obviously not happy that they will be paying for the ware and tare caused by the military personal walking through.

Thank you for your consideration of these points and I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Alun Cairns AM
Shadow Minister for Heritage and Opposition Chief Whip
Conservative Member for South Wales West