

SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (22 May 2019)

APPENDIX 9:

TRAVEL ANALYSIS

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9.1 Background

Transport exists to Rowdeford, St Nicholas and Larkrise Schools for 278 pupils. For St Nicholas and Rowdeford Schools this is provided through contracts between Wiltshire Council and external transport providers, and for Larkrise School the vehicles are owned by Wiltshire Council, the drivers employed by Larkrise School and the transport managed jointly between school and Wiltshire Council. The Larkrise model is historic and the only one of its kind in Wiltshire.

For St Nicholas and Larkrise Schools all transport is wheelchair accessible and for Rowdeford School there are a handful of wheelchair accessible vehicles, but predominately it is provided through taxis ranging from 4 to 8 seats.

To support many of the pupils on transport Wiltshire Council employs 54 Passenger Assistants (PA's). Some vehicles have more than 1 PA on board, dependent upon pupil needs.

A table outlining individual journey times for each pupil based upon their current and proposed transport arrangements can be found at the end of this report.

9.2 Current Transport Arrangements

The current transport times have been compiled using Google maps and applying additional loading time dependent upon need. So, for example if a wheelchair user is on a route a 5 minute boarding time has been assumed. This is, of course, not an exact science, but provides a very good indication of current journey times.

There are currently 11 pupils whose parents receive a Personal Transport Budget (PTB) to transport their own child to school. This will be because it is either more cost effective, or where the child's needs are so specific that they are best met by the parents providing transport.

Government guidance indicates that primary aged pupils should not be on transport any longer than 45 minutes and secondary aged pupils 75 minutes. For these three schools both primary and secondary school aged pupils are transported and to keep to a 45-minute time limit on transport would be impracticable, as the number of vehicles would need to increase significantly. There is currently no maximum time limit that Wiltshire Council uses, but it makes every effort not to exceed the 75-minute limit, where at all possible. Currently, 93.9% of pupil's journey times meet these targets. Of the 62 primary aged children currently on transport, 17 pupils' time exceeds 45 minutes and under the proposed new transport this reduces to 12 pupils. The DfE recognises that for children with SEN and/or disabilities, journeys may be more complex and a shorter journey time, although desirable, may not always be possible.

9.3 Proposed Transport Arrangements

Wiltshire Council's Passenger Transport Unit (PTU) has access to routing software, which it uses to optimise school transport across its network. The software is used by 22 other local authorities across the UK and is regarded as a market leader in its field.

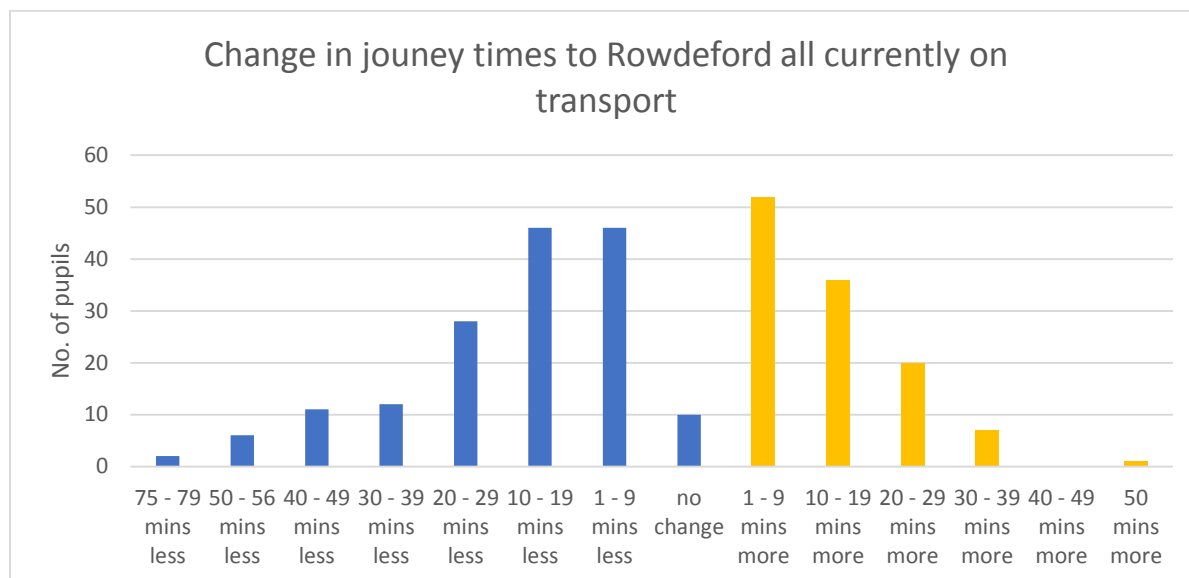
Proposed transport has been devised using the following assumptions:

- The figures represented in 1.11 of this report do not include the inevitable growth in pupil numbers when the proposed school might open. This is deliberate, as otherwise it would be impossible to compare like with like and it is unknown where growth would come from.
- That those pupils who are currently on a PTB will be included in shared transport.
- That the school will accept transport from 8.30am, but it is recognised that not all transport would arrive on site at this exact time.
- That no pupil would be on transport for more than 1 hour (there are two exceptions to this).
- It is assumed that all pupils the routing software has determined should travel together can do so. There are examples throughout the SEND transport network where pupils must be transported in different vehicles due to safeguarding issues.
- The return journey times have not been modelled, but it is likely that they would be slightly less than the inward journey, based upon a 2.45pm departure from school as traffic flows would be lighter at this time of day
- That the vehicles used would have sufficient spare capacity to accommodate those pupils currently not on transport.
- Officers have driven 16 of the 57 proposed routes to arrive at school for 8.30am. A range of route types and lengths were chosen, to determine if the software is performing as it should. There was no evidence to say that it was not.
- That this analysis is based on current pupils bearing in mind that while it is likely that pupils will come from similar locations in the future in higher numbers this picture gives a sense of what could be achieved in the future based on different locations.

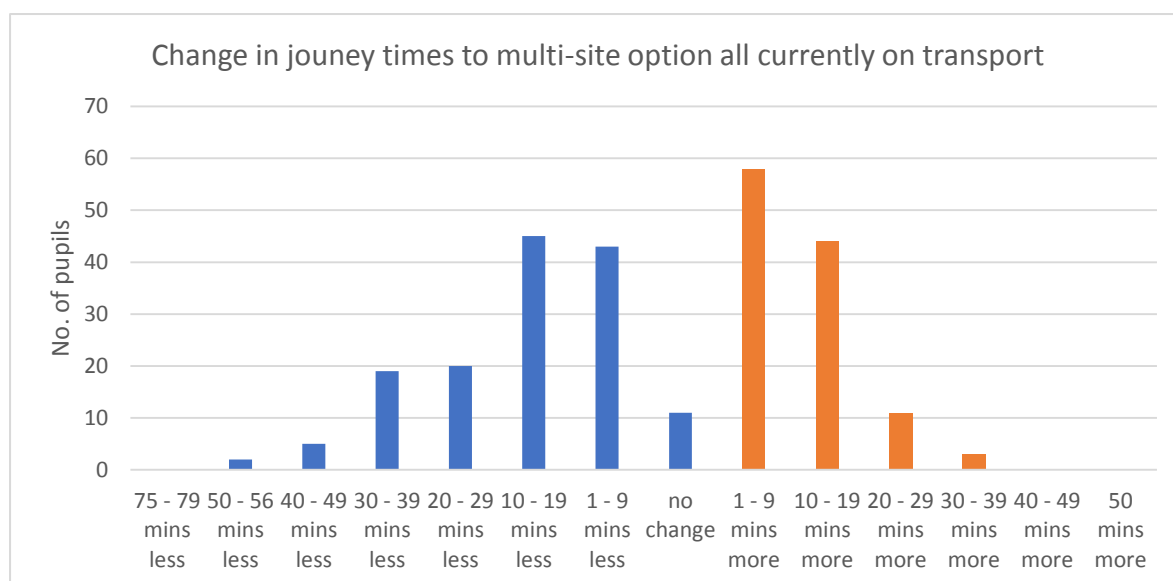
The table below provides a summary of the overall transport times when comparing current transport and proposed travel to the starting option that the team were asked to assess which is all pupils going to Rowdeford school (**table 1.11 at the end of this report** provides the detail):

	Current average journey time per passenger (minutes)	Proposed average journey time per passenger (minutes)	Total difference in journey times (minutes)
Larkrise	37	33	-297
Rowdeford	42	34	-986
St Nicholas	31	30	-85
Total	37	32	-1368

The charts below show the losses and gains in time for pupils for this model



The same graph can be shown for arranging transport for a multi-site proposal Primary in Larkrise and St Nicholas and Primary and secondary in Rowdeford. Assuming



further sites are included in Trowbridge and Chippenham, additional time would need to be added to all journeys in order to accommodate more diversity of routes, more vehicles and increased drop off time in the morning on multiple sites.

These graphs for time compare favourably, but involve more vehicles for the second multi-site option in order to keep within the target 1hr.

9.4 Extended Medical Needs

There are currently 40 pupils attending the three schools who have extended medical needs and/or have profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), 37 of which access transport. The 3 pupils who do not access transport have not been included

within any of the data sets, as a like for like comparison is required. However, adding these three pupils into the transport network would not pose any significant overall impact on journey times. For this entire group of pupils their overall travel time has decreased by 5 minutes, with some pupils now travelling significantly longer than previous and some considerably less. This group will continue to receive the additional support they already do on existing transport.

Section 1.12 (at the end of this report) shows in detail the travel time for this group of students.

When parents apply for school transport the SEND Transport Co-ordinator will determine the medical needs for transport based upon the information provided. If the student has a Medical Care Plan then a Risk Assessment is carried out for the student and the PTU then ensures that needs are met as per the Medical Care Plan.

All PAs are trained in basic first aid, safeguarding awareness and manual handling. For those PAs who support pupils with a care plan and intervention, or specific awareness is required, then bespoke training is required as dictated by the care plan. This could mean training in rescue medication such as buccal midazolam, or the safe use of EpiPen and may require a one to one PA. This level of support would continue

9.5 Staff Commute Time

The table below represents the difference in commute time for the 104 staff at St Nicholas School and 123 staff at Larkrise School. There has been a notable increase in commute time as a large proportion of staff are employed from the local area of each school.

	Current total commute time (minutes)	Current average commute time (minutes)	Proposed total commute time (minutes)	Proposed average commute time (minutes)
St Nicholas	1503	15	2328	22
Larkrise	1533	13	2931	24

9.6 Emerging Transport Models

There are very few schools of this size and nature across the UK, so gaining a perspective on what model operates best has been difficult. However, officers from the PTU visited Milestone Academy in Gloucestershire to see how their 350-pupil operation was managed. In this instance, all transport is contracted in by Gloucestershire County Council through single contracts with multiple suppliers. When viewed it worked well operationally, but this type of model requires a high degree of administration, as it will involve multiple contract changes, and does not provide a great deal of flexibility when moving pupils around.

There are currently 4 models to consider.

Model 1 – The transport and PA budget is divulged to the school and they are completely responsible for its management. This is a big undertaking for a school as 57 vehicles, 65 drivers (estimated number, considering cover) and 54 PAs would require at least 3 fte's to manage it appropriately. The risk to the local authority is that in law it is always responsible for school transport, so should the school wish to extricate itself from its provision, or pick and choose whether it wishes to transport some pupils, it could do so. Wiltshire Council would want to satisfy itself that transport was being provided appropriately and would need to regularly audit provision. Previous discussions with Headteachers and other transport bodies nationally, would suggest that schools are reluctant to assume responsibility as described, due to transport not being their core business.

Model 2 – Wiltshire Council provides the service through the lease / purchase of its own vehicles and employs the drivers. This model would require a significant investment and increased capacity within the current fleet team, or a contract with an external fleet provider to service and maintain the vehicles. It could, however, be used as an opportunity to partner with health's Non-Emergency Patient Transport (NEPTS) as there would be a significant number of vehicles available out of school hours and over the weekend and school holidays.

Model 3 – Wiltshire Council lease / purchase the vehicles and tenders for a private company to employ the drivers and manage the contract on its behalf. This model would appeal to some of our existing supplier base, as it does not require the significant investment in vehicles (which could be between £3.5 million - £4.0 million) which most, if not all the current supplier base, would find impossible to obtain. The issues stated in Model 2 would also apply.

Model 4 – The service is contracted in from the private sector. There are various iterations to this ranging from one supplier providing all, to individual contracts with multiple suppliers. Wiltshire has experience of all the iterations in this example and would favour one supplier providing all the transport.

The choice of model should ideally be determined at the point which the school is being designed. The reason being is that different models will require a different amount of space on the school site. For example, if the school were to operate the service, then more space on the school site may be required to park the buses, both in the day and overnight.

The above emerging models are by no means exhaustive and further model consideration will be established through an options appraisal process. It should however be noted that at least 20 months' notice is required to execute an undertaking of this size to ensure the correct markets are engaged successfully. An indicative procurement timetable is shown below:

Estimated procurement timetable	
Date	Activity
Jan-23	Supplier meetings
Feb-23	Options Appraisal
May-23	Option Agreed
Jun-23	Devise Specification
Sep-23	Finalise Specification & Terms & Conditions
Nov-23	Tenders Despatched
Dec-23	Tenders received
Feb-24	Contract awarded
Sep-24	Day 1 delivery

Dependent upon the model chosen the activity column may change, but the timescales would likely remain the same. There is a 7-month lead time from the award of contract to its enactment, as it will require careful planning to ensure drivers and vehicles are sourced appropriately.

9.7 Cost

The cost of transport, as at February 2019, to the three schools is represented in the table below:

Current transport costs to all schools

	Current annual cost of transport	Current annual PA costs	Total annual cost of current transport provision
St Nicholas	£358,000	£102,000	£460,000
Rowdeford	£656,870	£164,000	£820,870
Larkrise *	£394,030	£114,000	£508,030
		Total	£1,788,900

**It should be noted that the transport costs for Larkrise are artificially low as the vehicles provided through Wiltshire Council have been paid for. To replace this vehicle type over a 5-year period would cost around a further £135k per annum.*

Single Site	Annual transport cost	Annual PA cost	Total cost
One School at Rowde	£1,841,100	£380,000	£2,221,100

Multi-site option	Annual transport cost	Annual PA cost	Total cost
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Larkrise (primary)	£355,000	£77,000	£432,000
St Nicholas (primary)	£355,000	£77,000	£432,000
Rowdeford (primary and all secondary)	£1,389,000	£301,000	£1,690,000
Sub Total	£2,099,000	£455,000	£2,554,000

Costings and routes have also been carried out for Abbeyfield and Melksham for a one site option. Abbeyfield is both more costly and longer time for significantly higher number of pupils than Rowdeford. Melksham is similar to Rowdeford in both cost and travel time. All costing are based on keeping the average time at 1 hr or below as an average and wherever possible within the 45 minute guideline for primary pupils.

The table below shows the costs to achieve similar levels of travel time on the current arrangement:

Current multi-site option	Annual transport cost	Annual PA cost	Total cost
Larkrise (primary/secondary)	£448,000	£98,000	£546,000
St Nicholas (primary/secondary)	£416,000	£91,000	£507,000
Rowdeford (all secondary)	£1,152,000	£252,000	£1,404,000
Sub Total	£2,016,000	£441,000	£2,457,000

Costings for the proposed school or schools are based upon Model 4, as this provides a more like for like comparison due to much of transport being provided in this way. The other models may return a different costing, which can be explored at a more suitable time.

The reason that the transport is more expensive for the proposed models is because it uses more vehicles than the current network to achieve the higher standard of shorter journey times and all the vehicles are priced on a minibus type option, whereas currently Rowdeford School, except for 2 wheelchair accessible vehicles, is provided by taxis up to 8 passenger seats. Taxis up to 8 passenger seats will not suit the needs of pupils attending St Nicholas and Larkrise Schools as these vehicles will not cope well with child seats, harnesses and the access and egress will be limiting. Exacting vehicle requirements can be determined nearer the time of procurement and may depend upon what pupil types are accepted at each School in the interim period before the new school opens.

Times are particularly reduced where shared routes can be used to shared destinations, where specific vehicles are deployed for pupils in outlying areas, more vehicles are used, routes avoid congested urban areas at peak times and pick-ups are managed swiftly with the support of PAs. Times increase where vehicles are reduced,

where there are multiple pick-ups to diverse locations and where drop of locations (schools or homes) have limited, congested or poor access.

9.8 Emergency Transport Provision

It is appreciated that there is some concern that moving provision away from its current location will, for some parents, make it more difficult to access the proposed new school. Where pupils are taken ill during the day and are required to be at home, then a call off contract can be arranged with taxi companies throughout the strategic and market towns of Wiltshire to collect parents who do not have any other means of transport, take them to the school and return them home. This could also be included within the transport models previously referred to.

9.9 Emergency Services

The table below indicates the estimated time it takes to get from the three school sites to each of the acute hospitals that serve Wiltshire.

	Royal United, Bath (minutes)	District Hospital, Salisbury (minutes)	Great Western, Swindon (minutes)
St Nicholas	28	57	25
Larkrise	31	51	45
Rowdeford and new school	38	45	40

9.10 Traffic Accident Data

Drawing upon Wiltshire Council's traffic accident data, there has been one accident along the road immediately outside the Rowdeford entrance in the past 5 years. This stretch of road is considered low risk in terms of vehicle accidents.