

# AGENDA

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Meeting: **Cabinet**

Place: **Council Chamber - County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN**

Date: **Wednesday 22 May 2019**

Time: **9.30 am**

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Please direct any enquiries on this Agenda to Stuart Figini, of Democratic Services, County Hall, Trowbridge, direct line 01225 718221 or email [stuart.figini@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:stuart.figini@wiltshire.gov.uk)

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## Membership:

Cllr Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE	Leader of Council
Cllr John Thomson	Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for Communications, Communities, Leisure and Libraries (and interim - Adult Social Care, Public Health and Public Protection)
Cllr Pauline Church	Cabinet Member for Economic Development and South Wiltshire Recovery
Cllr Richard Clewer	Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Arts, Heritage and Tourism
Cllr Laura Mayes	Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills
Cllr Toby Sturgis	Cabinet Member for Spatial Planning, Development Management and Property
Cllr Bridget Wayman	Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste
Cllr Philip Whitehead	Cabinet Member for Finance, Procurement, ICT and Operational Assets
Cllr Jerry Wickham	

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## Part I

### Items to be considered while the meeting is open to the public

Key Decisions Matters defined as 'Key' Decisions and included in the Council's Forward Work Plan are shown as 

1 **Apologies**

2 **Minutes of the previous meeting** (*Pages 5 - 20*)

To confirm and sign the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 30 April 2019, previously circulated.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

To receive any declarations of disclosable interests or dispensations granted by the Standards Committee.

4 **Leader's announcements**

5 **Public participation and Questions from Councillors**

The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public. This meeting is open to the public, who may ask a question or make a statement. Questions may also be asked by members of the Council. Written notice of questions or statements should be given to Stuart Figini of Democratic Services [stuart.figini@wiltshire.gov.uk/](mailto:stuart.figini@wiltshire.gov.uk) 01225 718221 by 12.00 noon on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2019. Anyone wishing to ask a question or make a statement should contact the officer named above.

6 **Specials schools consultation** (*Pages 21 - 638*)

 Report by Executive Director Terence Herbert

7 **Urgent Items**

Any other items of business, which the Leader agrees to consider as a matter of urgency.

## Part II

Items during consideration of which it is recommended that the public

**should be excluded because of the likelihood that exempt information would be disclosed**

**NONE**

Our vision is to create stronger and more resilient communities. Our priorities are: To protect those who are most vulnerable; to boost the local economy - creating and safeguarding jobs; and to support and empower communities to do more themselves.



## **CABINET**

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### **MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 30 APRIL 2019 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.**

#### **Present:**

Cllr Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE (Chairman), Cllr John Thomson (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Pauline Church, Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Laura Mayes, Cllr Toby Sturgis, Cllr Bridget Wayman, Cllr Philip Whitehead and Cllr Jerry Wickham

#### **Also Present:**

Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Clare Cape, Cllr Anna Cuthbert, Cllr Gavin Grant, Cllr Russell Hawker, Cllr Ruth Hopkinson, Cllr Tony Jackson, Cllr Bob Jones MBE, Cllr Gordon King, Cllr Jerry Kunkler, Cllr Steve Oldrieve, Cllr Horace Prickett, Cllr John Smale, Cllr Ian Thorn, Cllr Christopher Williams, Cllr Graham Wright, Cllr Robert Yuill, Cllr Jonathon Seed and Cllr Brian Mathew

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#### **44 Apologies**

There were no apologies.

#### **45 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2019 were presented.

#### **Resolved:**

**To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2019.**

#### **46 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **47 Leader's announcements**

The Leader of the Council reported that the Children's Centres Building Consultation report would be considered earlier in the meeting due to the public attendance for the agenda item.

48 **Public participation and Questions from Councillors**

1. Philip Salaman, Vice-Chair of Governors of Five Lanes VC Primary School, spoke in support of the proposals for the closure of the Potterne site of Five Lanes primary School with effect from 31 August 2019.

The Leader thanked Mr Salaman for his comments.

2. A question from Adrian Brabazon was received in relation to agenda item 7 – Wiltshire Local plan Review Update, and the housing figures for Options CH-A and CH-C detailed in appendix 4 of the report.

A response from the Cabinet Member for Spatial Planning, Development Management and Property had been provided to Mr Brabazon prior to the Cabinet meeting and published on the Council's website.

3. The Cabinet received statements and questions from Nadine Crook, Hebe Mitchell, Lydia Wiltshire, Delcey Orchard-Smith and Cllr Ian Cunningham (Mayor of Westbury) in relation to the proposals detailed at agenda item 11 – Children's Centre Buildings Consultation.

Responses from the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills had been provided prior to the Cabinet meeting and published on the Council's website.

49 **Five Lanes VC Primary School - Proposed Discontinuance of the Potterne Site**

Cllr Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills presented the report which provided information about the proposed closure of the Potterne Site of Five lanes Primary School.

Cllr Mayes explained that since 2006 the School has run Key Stage 1 classes at its Potterne site and Key Stage 2 classes at its Worton site. Following informal consultation, the Governors of the school published a statutory Notice in January 2019 proposing to close the Potterne site from August 2019, with all pupils being taught at the Worton site. The majority of those responding supported the closure. The Cabinet noted that, due to declining numbers of pupils, the number of classes had reduced to three across the two sites, with only one class at the Potterne site.

The Leader of the Council welcomed Philip Salaman, Vice-Chair of Governors of Five Lanes VC Primary School, who spoke in support of the proposals to close the Potterne site.

The Cabinet heard from Cllr Anna Cuthbert, local member for Bromham, Rowde and Potterne, in support of the closure. Cllr Cuthbert explained that Five Lanes Primary School provided outstanding care and learning for all the children at both sites, however the needs of the children would be better served at one site.

The desire of the younger children, currently at the Potterne site is to be with the older children at the Worton site, which amongst other things, would provide suitable play or sports areas for all the children. Cllr Cuthbert indicated that one of her children had attended Five Lanes Primary School and the other one was a current pupil.

**Resolved: That the proposal to discontinue (close) the Potterne site of Five Lanes Primary School with effect from 31 August 2019 be approved, with all pupils being educated at the Worton site from 1 September 2019.**

*Reason for Decision:*

*There is insufficient demand for places at Five Lanes Primary School to sustain two school sites. Surplus places on the Potterne site will be over 50% from September 2019 and the school faces a rising deficit budget if it continues to try and maintain two sites, making the school financially unsustainable.*

## 50 **Wiltshire Local Plan Review Update - Strategy Development**

Cllr Toby Sturgis, Cabinet Member for Spatial Planning, Development Management and Property, presented the report which (i) set out the next stage of plan making in the light of the changes to national policy and the outcome of consultations; and (ii) sought agreement for the appropriate scale of housing growth to be tested for Wiltshire and the alternative development strategies to be considered through the plan-making process to inform a preferred strategy.

Cllr Sturgis commented on the consultation undertaken in relation to the Local Plan to date and referred to the previous update report considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 26 March 2019. He also referred to the alternative development strategies for each housing market area that had been developed, as an example he highlighted the figures for Westbury and the high need for affordable housing in that area. The Cabinet noted that: the figures and strategies would be tested and this may lead to a hybrid development strategy being created; wider work is continuing on reviewing Core Strategy policies, which would include climate change issues and subject to testing for their compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The Cabinet noted that maintaining an up-to-date Local Plan in accordance with the NPPF would support Plan led growth across the county to support sustainable and resilient communities, safeguarding the authority from speculative and unplanned development.

The Cabinet received a statement from Adrian Brabazon about the housing numbers for Option CH-C. Cllr Sturgis reported that in light of the issues raised by Mr Brabazon, an addendum had been published to update and clarify some of the figures detailed in the original report.

In response to a question from Cllr Thorn about (i) the potential for the Government to impose a further increase in the housing numbers for Wiltshire,

and the timing and methodology for this; and (ii) the possibility of repeating the workshops undertaken during the autumn of 2018, for communities (parish councils and neighbourhood planning groups) on the options detailed in the report, Cllr Sturgis explained that (i) the critical part related to the response from the Government on changes to the formula and updated figures, this was not anticipated any time soon. However, once the process was at the submission stage, the figures were fixed for two years, and (ii) that the responses from the earlier consultation with Parish Councils were included in the report. The report highlighted that further consultation would take place similar to that undertaken in the autumn 2018.

In response to questions from Cllr Wickham, Cllr Clewer and the Leader of the Council in relation to a previous resolution of the Cabinet on 12 September 2017 (minute 117 – Wiltshire Local Plan Development Scheme Update) and 10 October 2017 (minute 130 – Wiltshire Core Strategy Review – Regulation 18 Consultation) about the Cabinet being satisfied that plans are in place to maintain a deliverable 5 year housing land supply in both Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council areas before approving the plans, Cllr Sturgis confirmed that there was a duty to cooperate with Swindon Borough Council and agreed that Wiltshire Council land would be protected by ensuring there was a 5 year land supply as part of the plan making processes, and the resolution referred to above could be restated in the current resolution.

In response to an additional question from Cllr Wickham about the growth proposals for Westbury in relation to additional housing, the Hawkeridge Business Park and infrastructure, Cllr Sturgis commented that the main aim of the next stage of the process was to test strategies. He confirmed that there was a high need for affordable housing in Westbury and that any future proposals would not include reductions in employment land.

The Cabinet heard from Cllr Smale, Chairman of the Environment Select Committee. Cllr Smale confirmed that the Wiltshire Local Plan Review was already being heavily scrutinised through input with key stakeholders, and it was not pragmatic for the item to be added to the Select Committees Forward Work Programme.

**Resolved:**

- 1. Endorse a housing range of between 40,840 and 45,600 homes as the basis to test and then inform an appropriate local plan housing requirement for Wiltshire for the period 2016 to 2036.**
- 2. Agree that the alternative development strategies, as set out in Appendices 4 to 7, identified for the Chippenham Housing Market Area, Salisbury Housing Market Area, Swindon Housing Market Area (Wiltshire part) and Trowbridge Housing Market Area are an appropriate basis for further assessment for the purpose of testing the upper end of the proposed housing range and develop a preferred strategy for the plan.**

- 3. To reaffirm its commitment to joint working with Swindon Borough Council, however given the Council's responsibilities to support the interests of Wiltshire's communities, that Cabinet will need to be satisfied that plans are in place to maintain a deliverable 5 year housing land supply in both authority areas before approving the plans.**

*Reason for Decision:*

*To ensure that progress continues to be made on maintaining an up-to-date development plan for Wiltshire in line with revised national policy (NPPF, February 2019).*

*The NPPF requires local planning authorities to keep their Local Housing Need under review as new data becomes available and confirms that the local plan housing requirement is not set until the plan is submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination. It is therefore important to adopt a flexible approach to calculating the plan's housing requirement as part of the plan making process to respond to future data if necessary.*

## 51 **ICT and Digital Strategy**

Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Portfolio Holder for IT and Digitalisation, presented the report seeking approval for the Council's ICT and Digital Strategy to cover the period April 2019 to April 2022.

Cllr Blair-Pilling reported that Information Technology (IT) was fundamental to all the operations undertaken and services delivered by the Council. With technology constantly evolving, users expectations continue to change and appropriate investment in IT is required. The last ICT strategy was written to cover the period up to 2015. Since that time the infrastructure has become old, expensive to maintain and increasingly unfit for purpose, especially since the recent introduction of the Microsoft Digital Programme. He explained that the adoption of coherent ICT and Digital Strategy would ensure that the operational services in the Council are undertaken efficiently, through the provision of appropriate technology that is supportable and updated when needed, and users are assisted in making best use of it. The Cabinet noted that this approach would extend to users of Council services in the community.

Cllr Philip Whitehead referred to the addendum attached at supplement 2 to the Cabinet papers, detailing the costs associated with the ICT and Digital Strategy which had been refined since the publication of the main report. The addendum identified those budget elements already approved, and those seeking approval by Full Council.

The Cabinet heard from Cllr Graham Wright, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. Cllr Wright reported that the Digital Strategy and Implementation Task Group raised concerns at their February meeting about the pace of work within ICT and the Task Group felt that the Strategy did not

adequately detail how the Council would achieve its ambitions. It was confirmed that this was now identified in the most recent version of the Strategy. Following a meeting with Senior Management it was agreed that the task Group would help the Programme Office to shape Policy in this area.

In response to a question from Cllr Thorn about the identification of savings against investments for each scheme, Cllr Whitehead explained that the decisions already taken by Cabinet detailed the savings to be made. and future schemes would identify savings to be made. Financial implications of future schemes would be considered by Cabinet at the appropriate time.

In response to a question from Cllr Jones MBE about the recent internal ICT survey not being made available for Councillors to complete, Cllr Whitehead apologised that the survey had not been available for Councillors and that arrangements would be made for this to take place.

Cllr Blair-Pilling thanked the Interim Director, Digital Transformation & IT for his contributions in the preparation of the Strategy.

**Resolved: To recommend Full Council**

- 1. To approve the ICT & Digital Strategy, which covers the period April 2019 to April 2022.**
- 2. Approve an additional capital budget for Applications and Key IT of £11.100m for the period 2019/2020 to 2023/2024.**

*Reason for Decision:*

*The council has not had an ICT strategy since 2015, and it is vital that it has one to allow:*

- Proper planning of ICT investments to meet the council's strategic and operational needs*
- An understanding of key trends in technology of relevance to the council*
- An understanding of best practice in the sector*
- A clear view of current ICT provision, and its shortcomings*
- A definition of appropriate governance in the ICT & Digital area*
- The creation of an achievable vision for future ICT and Digital capabilities*
- A 'roadmap' of improvement activities to realise the vision*
- Quantification of the investments that will be required in the coming years to realise the strategy.*

52 **Procurement Plan 2019-20**

Cllr Philip Whitehead, Cabinet Member for Finance, Procurement, ICT and Operational Assets, presented the report which provided information about planned procurements in the financial year 2019/20 and seeking authority for named Directors to award the resulting contracts.

Cllr Whitehead explained that the report identified the contracts within the Procurement Plan for the year 2019-20 that are mainly limited to contracts considered Key Decisions. They are also considered low risk operational re-procurements of existing works, services or supplies contracts but fall in to the Key Decision category because of their value.

The Cabinet heard from Cllr Ian Thorn, Chairman of the Financial Planning Task Group. Cllr Thorn thanked the Director of Finance and Procurement for the recent briefing on the Procurement Plan and expressed support for the report.

**Resolved:**

- 1. To approve the planned contract awards for the financial year 2019-20 as detailed in appendix A to the report.**
- 2. To delegate authority for each contract to the alongside named Director to authorise officers to do all those things necessary to conduct a proper process, finalise the documentation, and execute the resulting contracts following consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member, plus, Director of Legal Services and Director of Finance.**

*Reason for Decision:*

*The reason for this report is to inform Cabinet of the Procurement Plan for the financial year 2019/20 and by providing this consolidated information in advance. This approach for the procurements listed will support the wider objective of being an efficient and effective council.*

53 **Extension of Streetscene and Amenity Contract**

Cllr Bridget Wayman, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste, presented the report seeking approval to extend the novated idVerde Grounds and Streetscene Maintenance Services contract from 30 November 2020 to 30 November 2022.

Cllr Wayman explained that the request to extend the contract to 2022 was due to a significant financial risk to the Council if a new contract was to be awarded in 2020, due to the unknown implications resulting from the Council's new Asset Transfer and Service Delegation Programme.

The Cabinet heard from Cllr John Smale, Chairman of the Environment Select Committee. Cllr Smale reported that the Select Committee had considered the proposed Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) for the proposed extended contract at their meeting on 12 March 2019. The Select Committee supported the proposed KPI's and requested that the colour scheme for the KPI's could be aligned with Wiltshire Council colours and listed in numerical form.

In response to a question from Cllr Ruth Hopkinson about the idVerde contract and asset transfers to town and parish councils, Cllr Wayman confirmed that the proposal did not tie the town or parish council into the proposed contract extension.

**Resolved: That the extension of the idVerde novated subcontract to 30 November 2022 be approved.**

*Reason for Decision:*

*Extending the current idVerde sub-contract to 30 November 2022 will mitigate the financial risk that tendering a new Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance Contract in 2020 would create due to the unknown changes in: volumes, processes and requirements caused by the Service Delegation Programme which will run until January 2022.*

#### 54 **Children's Centre Buildings Consultation**

Cllr Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills, presented the report which outlined proposals to move Children's Centre Services from buildings to community venues.

Cllr Mayes reported that Children's Centre Services are a vital resource for parents with very young children, they provide a one stop service of advice and support. Due to the rurality of Wiltshire it is not easy for all parents to access services in a building in a particular area of a community. It is more important to offer services in the places that are accessible to families and to ensure that the delivery of outreach services in the home to those who are most in need is available. Children's centre services are an important part of the early help offer in Wiltshire and they must be aligned with all partner services to ensure that there is a joined up streamlined service for families.

Cllr Mayes, in confirming the proposals for consideration by the Cabinet and in light of the statements and questions received from concerned parents, indicated that there was an additional proposal in relation to the Westbury Children's Centre, as detailed below:

'To delay the Westbury Children's Centre closure until September 2019 to allow advantage to be taken of Wiltshire Council's transfer of Old Westbury Youth Centre, Edenvale Road to the Westbury Community Project Trust (WCPT). Children Centre services can be run from this building when it is ready. Should the transfer not take place, then the services will be run from alternative venues in the town.'

The Cabinet noted that the report comments on the consultation and responses to consider the proposal to extend the activities of Children's Centres into more community venues. This would achieve savings and further develop the outreach work of Children's Centres, bringing services closer to families.



The Leader invited statements and questions as detailed below:

Nadine Crook read out a statement and asked for detailed evidence to show how, through the proposals put forward in Westbury, it will be meeting its statutory duties under the Childcare Act 2006. Ms Crook also presented a petition to Cllr Mayes in support of the retention of Westbury Children's Centre.

Lydia Wiltshire read out statements from herself and Hebe Mitchell and asked (i) if there were only 4 families in Westbury who receive outreach support that meet the intervention level or are targeting methods not finding other families; and (ii) the methods used to advertise the services that Westbury Children's Centre provides and the improvements needed to improve advertising in the future.

Delcey Orchard-Smith read out a statement and asked about the privacy required for people using the Centre and the need for a neutral location for the services run from the Centre.

Cllr Ian Cunningham (Mayor of Westbury) read out a statement and asked if the Cabinet agreed that deprivation, rather than specific need for services, should be the main factor for the receipt of support.

The Leader thanked the parents and Mayor of Westbury for their comments, questions and valuable contributions towards the debate on the Children's Centres and highlighting the concerns of residents in Westbury.

The Cabinet heard from Cllr Bob Jones MBE and Cllr Russell Hawker, members of the Rapid Scrutiny Exercise on the Children's Centres Consultation which took place on 15 April 2019. It was noted that the Rapid Scrutiny Exercise considered the results of the consultation, the proposed closures, plans for alternative venues and produced seven recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills. Cllr Hawker, member for Westbury West, asked for a plan for the continuation of early years help in Westbury, setting out the times and days that the Service would be available. He further commented that the Westbury Area Board would be monitoring the situation closely.

The Cabinet also heard from Cllr King, member for Westbury East, who expressed great pride in hearing the comments from the public. He welcomed the additional proposal, detailed above, but that his preference would be for the proposals to be withdrawn and reviewed. Recent vandalism at the Old Westbury Youth Centre would delay any proposal to use the Centre as it would need considerable investment to bring it up to standard and be ready to open in September 2019.

The Cabinet also received a number of comments from Cllr Thorn. Cllr Hopkinson, the Leader of the Council, Cllr Kunkler, Cllr Jackson, Cllr Cuthbert, Cllr Mathew about the following:

- The challenge to find alternative venues that provide a safe and private environment.
- Adoption of the rapid Scrutiny Exercise recommendations.
- The advantages and disadvantages of access and engagement with communities via the internet.
- The purpose of the Centres and the move towards the provision of targeted services.
- The ability to provide support for families in crisis through for drop-in facilities.
- Identification of the people needing to be signposted to the services.
- Provision and cost of public transport can be an inhibitor for people to use the Centres.
- Finance is a driver for the closure of Centres.
- Evidence confirms that alternative solutions need to be found to target those in need of the service.
- The challenge in Westbury to reach those in need.
- Consideration of how the service can be delivered to every family.
- Potential to use leisure centres as drop-in centres.
- The need for detailed plans in relation to staffing and opening times and days of the Centres.
- Alternative venues need to have a degree of privacy.
- Improved marketing of the services available.
- Potential for discussions with Westbury Town Council to ascertain their willingness to take over the Westbury Children's Centre building.
- No suitable premises for the Children's Centre to relocate to in Cricklade and the proposed use of the Library would not be appropriate.

In addition to the responses published in relation to the public questions, Cllr Mayes made the following comments:

- That the Council will continue to provide services that meet the Childcare Act 2016, through the delivery of appropriate services which parents will have advice and assistance on how to access.
- The future plan is to dovetail services with Health Visitors more effectively so that all targeted families are aware of the Children's Centres services offer.
- All Children's Centre services are advertised on social media and through e-mail to parents. They are also promoted to maternity services, Health Visitors, nurseries and pre-schools.
- Venues and locations of Centres will be appropriate for the specific requirements of families. There is no intention to make families feel uncomfortable. Other venues are currently being considered to make the service as friendly and accessible as possible.
- The proposals are for the new Centres facilities to be more local, to encourage accessibility for families.
- The recommendations from the rapid Scrutiny Exercise can be accommodated and appropriate action taken.

- The Early Support Hub offer help and advice to families that need specific help.
- Westbury Town Council are involved in the community project at the Old Youth Centre.

Cllr Mayes agreed to amend the additional proposal detailed above to take into account the comments about the potential use and need for refurbishment of the Old Westbury Youth Centre following the recent damage inflicted on the fabric of the building, and to review the venue for the Children's Centre in Cricklade.

**Resolved:**

- 1. To reduce the number of children's centre buildings by six and focus the work in the community, using space in libraries, leisure and health and well-being centres where possible and practical.**
- 2. To work closely with maternal health and community child care providers to support the choice of future community venues and keep and expand the scope of services to families in the most deprived areas of Wiltshire.**
- 3. To work closely with families to utilise social media and community networks to raise the profile of available provision.**
- 4. To delay the Westbury Children's Centre building closure until the autumn of 2019 to allow advantage to be taken of Wiltshire Council's transfer of Old Westbury Youth Centre, Edenvale Road to the Westbury Community Project Trust (WCPT). Children Centre services can be run from this building when it is ready. Should the transfer not take place, then the services will be run from alternative venues in the town.**
- 5. To review the venue to be used for the Children's Centre services in Cricklade, and in the event that there are any issues arising from this recommendation and the recommendation at (4) above, that the matters be referred back to a future Cabinet meeting.**

*Reason for Decision:*

*Children's centre services provide an important role in offering early help to families with young children. It is vital that this resource is maintained and spread wider into rural communities, particularly those in the most deprived areas. Reducing to 12 buildings will mean that finances can be concentrated on front line staff in priority geographical areas and work directly with families*

55 **Staff Engagement Survey Results 2018**

Cllr Richard Clewer, Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Arts, Heritage and Tourism, presented the report which provided an overview of the

results of the 2018 staff engagement survey, including a summary of the key themes from the survey results and an assessment of the results against the four “enablers” contained within the adopted engagement model. The report also contained the agreed corporate priorities following the results of the staff survey 2018.

Cllr Clewer was pleased to report that the staff engagement index score (which measures the extent that staff feel emotionally connected with their organisation i.e. that staff believe in the organisation’s goals and priorities and therefore care about doing the best job they can), had risen from 58% in 2016 to 70% in 2018.

The Cabinet noted that there were a number of issues in connection with ICT, in particular the intranet, and staff engagement would be key to the development of any revisions to the current format.

In response to a question from Cllr Clare Cape about recruitment and retention Cllr Clewer reported that the Staffing Policy Committee would be the most appropriate forum to consider issues of recruitment and retention of staff.

In response to a question from Cllr Ian Thorn about the visibility of Senior Management, Cllr Clewer reported that the figures from previous years indicated that staff considered improvements were needed in this area, and he was pleased to report that there had been a significant improvement in this area between 2016 – 30% positive response and 2018 – 76% positive response. It was suggested that the rise in positive responses were the result of changes within the Senior Management team over the last two years and a challenge from Cabinet to be more visible to staff.

**Resolved: To note the report.**

*Reason for Decision:*

*To update Cabinet on the results of the 2018 staff engagement survey and to highlight the agreed corporate priorities for corporate and service action planning.*

## 56 **Wiltshire Council's Housing Board Annual Report**

Cllr Richard Clewer, Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Arts, Heritage and Tourism, presented the report which provided an update of the Council’s Housing Board activities between December 2017 and November 2018, in compliance with its Terms of Reference to provide an update to Cabinet.

Cllr Clewer explained that throughout the period of the Annual report, the Board had engaged in a range of activities to shape the service offered to residents and their families, increased service quality via appropriate monitoring mechanisms, encourage resident engagement and protected the reputation of the council as a landlord by ensuring a robust Business Plan is implemented.

The report set out the areas focused on by the Board during the year, with the primary focus of the Board being (i) the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan; and (ii) the Asset Management Strategy (AMS).

In response to a question from Cllr Jonathan Seed about the Chairmanship of the Housing Board and whether it was in accordance with the Governance review. Cllr Clewer reported that when the Housing Board was originally established, it was envisaged that the Cabinet Member or Portfolio Holder would take on the role of Chair. Currently, Cllr Clewer, as Cabinet Member was Chair. Cllr Clewer indicated that he would check the current arrangements were in accordance with the recommendations of the Governance review.

**Resolved: To note the Housing Board Annual Report.**

*Reason for Decision:*

*Wiltshire Council's Housing Board's Terms of Reference require an Annual Report to be presented to Cabinet.*

57 **Transfer of ownership of 2No Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Sites, together with the Transit site at Odstock**

Cllr Toby Sturgis, Cabinet Member for Spatial Planning, Development Management and Property, presented a report recommending the transfer of ownership of the two council-owned gypsy and traveller sites that remain undeveloped at Dairy House Bridge, Oak Tree Field and the transit site adjacent to Oak tree Field (Odstock transit site) to enable them to receive the much needed investment to remain in use as Gypsy, Roma and traveller (GRT) sites.

Cllr Sturgis reported that the Council owned a number of permanent gypsy and traveller sites and one transit site. Of these sites, those detailed above required investment to enable them to continue in use to provide gypsy and traveller accommodation.

The Cabinet noted that resident engagement continued throughout the marketing process, with the key concerns and issues raised by residents being addressed.

**Resolved:**

- 1. That Bidder B is selected as preferred purchaser of the Dairy House Bridge, the Oak Tree Field site and the Odstock transit site.**
- 2. To transfer the Dairy House Bridge, the Oak Tree Field site and the Odstock transit site to Bidder B, on the terms of the bid received.**

- 3. The Director of Housing & Commercial, in consultation with the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, be authorised to complete the necessary legal documentation for the transfer.**

*Reason for Decision:*

*Dairy House Bridge site, Oak Tree Field site and the Odstock transit site are in need of substantial investment. Transfer of ownership of the sites to a new owner will enable this investment to ensure the sites are able to remain in use as gypsy and traveller sites within Wiltshire.*

**58 Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

**59 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**Resolved:**

**To agree that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting for the business specified in Minute Number 60 and 61 because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.**

**60 Transfer of ownership of 2No Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Sites, together with the Transit site at Odstock**

Cllr Toby Sturgis, Cabinet Member for Spatial Planning, Development Management and Property, presented a report recommending the transfer of ownership of the two council-owned gypsy and traveller sites that remain undeveloped at Dairy House Bridge, Oak Tree Field and the transit site adjacent to Oak tree Field (Odstock transit site) to enable them to receive the needed investment to remain in use as Gypsy, Roma and traveller (GRT) sites.

**Resolved: That the recommendation in the report referring to the preferred bidder for the purchase of Dairy House Bridge site and the Oak tree Field site and the transit site at Odstock be agreed.**

*Reason for Decision:*

*Dairy House Bridge site, Oak Tree Field site and the Odstock transit site are in need of substantial investment. Transfer of ownership of the sites to a new owner will enable this investment to ensure the sites are able to remain in use as gypsy and traveller sites within Wiltshire.*

61 **Ashton Park - Housing Infrastructure Fund**

Cllr Toby Sturgis, Cabinet Member for Spatial Planning, Development Management and Property, presented a report seeking approval to enter into a contract with Homes England, consideration of the terms the Council is prepared to agree to secure the housing infrastructure funds for the Ashton park development.

**Resolved:**

- 1. To agree that the Council enters into a contract with Homes England to access £8.784m Housing Infrastructure Fund offered through the Marginal Viability Programme for the Ashton park development.**
- 2. Agree to delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Growth, Investment and Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Spatial Planning, Development Management and Property and Cabinet Member Finance, Procurement, IT and Operational Assets to undertake detailed contract negotiations to secure funding including those relating to meeting the conditions presented by Homes England associated with the drawdown of funding.**

*Reason for Decision:*

*Homes England have indicated that they are willing to provide £ 8.784m of Housing Infrastructure Fund but require a number of conditions to be met by the 30 April to secure the offer of funding. This report recommends entering into a contract with Homes England to secure the offer of funding.*

(Duration of meeting: 9.30 am - 12.30 pm)

These decisions were published, earlier, on the 2 May 2019 and will come into force on 10 May 2019.

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Stuart Figini of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 718221, e-mail [stuart.figini@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:stuart.figini@wiltshire.gov.uk)

Press enquiries to Communications, direct lines (01225) 713114/713115

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**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**22 May 2019**

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**Subject: Specials schools consultation**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Laura Mayes – Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills**

**Key Decision: Key**

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## **Executive Summary**

On the 9 January 2019, Wiltshire Council published proposals to close St Nicholas, Rowdeford and Larkrise special schools and open a new school at Rowde with the capital costs met by the Council. Following the issue of the notices, the Council began a seven-and-a-half-week period of consultation that ended on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019. The consultation sought to use a variety of means to ensure as many views as possible including:

- Meetings run by Wiltshire Council for governors, staff and parents in each of the three schools
- Surgeries run by Wiltshire Council Parent Council for parent and carers
- An online survey (2,400 responses)
- An additional meeting at Melksham for parents and carers
- An email address where letters and emails could be sent
- Work undertaken by the Voice and Influence team to enable pupils to have a voice

This phase of the consultation was intended to be statutory post publication. Following a case taken to court by a group of families about the process, the Council reached an agreement in order to foster good working relationships with families, prevent further delays and conserve public money and cost for both parties. This involved:

- Withdrawing the decision to approve the post publication notice about the closure of the three special schools and the related notice regarding opening of a new special school at Rowdeford
- Treating the consultation between 9 January and 1 March 2019 as part of a pre-publication consultation (Phase 1)
- Extending the pre-publication consultation over the period 25 March to 6 May 2019 (Phase 2)

All consultation responses in Phase 1 as well as those in Phase 2 are included in this report. Phase 2 consultation included:

- 3 consultation meetings in the north (Devizes, Trowbridge and Chippenham)
- 1 consultation meeting in the South
- On-line comments box

- An email address where letters and emails could be sent
- Meetings with the Friends of Larkrise and St Nicholas and subsequently the Wiltshire SEND Action Group

The Council consulted during both phases on a proposal to close St. Nicholas, Larkrise and Rowdeford and open a new school at Rowde. Alternative proposals were welcomed in both phases and are considered in this report.

This report highlights the outcome of the consultation and further analysis of travel, feasibility, cost etc. including that, on the Council's proposal for a single site school at Rowdeford;

- 45% supported the proposal against 55% who did not in the online survey
- Average journey times for pupils would decrease and fewer children would travel for more than an hour, although there would be an increase for some individual children
- The majority of pupils with medical plans would have shorter journeys
- Journey times would increase for staff, but not as much as some consultees feared
- Strong concerns were expressed against the proposals from a group of parents with children with PMLD and/or health needs
- There were concerns about the lack of post 16 provision
- Parents and some staff would prefer not to follow the academy route
- Representation from staff, parents and governors of Rowdeford argued that the school should be enlarged rather than closed
- Although concerns were expressed about the rural nature of Rowdeford, others were enthusiastic about the outdoor learning opportunities
- There was significant support for a Centre of Excellence and the potential for health and care specialists to be located on one site
- There were concerns about loss of community

At Cabinet in November 2018, a number of options were considered. During the consultation other alternative proposals were presented that are evaluated in this report. While there are various permutations on sites, numbers, designation and leadership, there were six broad options presented to officers:

- A new school at Rowdeford or at an alternative site (1 site)
- A new school at Rowdeford and a satellite at either St Nicholas or Larkrise (2 sites)
- A new school at Rowdeford and a new build in either Trowbridge or Chippenham as a satellite (2 sites)
- A new school at Rowdeford and satellites at St Nicholas and Larkrise (3 sites)
- A new school at Rowdeford and new builds as satellites in Trowbridge and Larkrise (3 sites)
- A new school at Rowdeford and expansion at Larkrise and St Nicholas onto new sites (5 sites)

### **Proposal(s)**

Having completed pre-publication consultation it is recommended that the Cabinet:

- Approves the establishment of a new maintained special school with a single leadership team for the existing St Nicholas, Rowdeford and Larkrise schools as soon as possible and no later than 1 September 2021
- Approves the closure of St Nicholas, Rowdeford and Larkrise school as a related proposal on the 31 August 2021
- Approves expansion on the existing Rowdeford site to accommodate up to 400 pupils as part of the new special school by September 2023
- Notes that, in the event of Cabinet approving the proposals that a final decision by Cabinet would be required following representations.
- Authorises the Executive Director of Children's Services, after consultation with the Cabinet member for Children, Education and Skills, the Director of Legal, Electoral and Registration Services and Chief Finance Officer/Section 151 Officer to take all necessary steps to implement Cabinet's decision.

That this is achieved by:

- Subject to consent of the Secretary of State, approving the issue of a statutory notice and 4-week representation period on the proposal to discontinue St Nicholas, Larkrise and Rowdeford as three separate Special Schools with effect from no later than the 31 August 2021. The notice also to refer to the opening of one new special school from September 2021 under the Opening and Closing Maintained Schools Guidance November 2018
- Approving that the Council would present a proposal to the School's Adjudicator to open a new maintained special school, subject to conclusions of the representation process.
- Approving the use of the statutory processes, (under the 'Making Significant Changes (Prescribed Alterations) to Maintained Schools' Guidance November 2018, to transfer to the Rowdeford site the provision at St Nicholas and Larkrise. This statutory process would take place no later than 12 months before the opening of the new provision. This would result in the closure of the St Nicholas and Larkrise sites at an appropriate time after the new provision is built
- Approving that the new school will have primary, secondary and Post 16 provision on the Rowdeford site (early years not to be included due to sufficiency)
- Noting and approving the proposal for a parallel programme of work to create a cross county approach to Post 16 special education and transition to independent living.

### **Rationale for Proposals**

Wiltshire Council must ensure that:

- There is sufficiency of provision of special school places for children/young people with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD)/Complex Needs in the north. In addition, there is a need to reduce overcrowding in two of the special schools.

- Quality of provision is improved. The physical condition of two of our special schools (Larkrise and St Nicholas) is not suitable for expansion or long-term provision.
- Outcomes for all SEND pupils, including those in mainstream schools, are improved. There is an ambition to provide outreach to mainstream schools from a Centre of Excellence to support the inclusion and improved outcomes of pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD).
- Financial pressures are addressed, both on individual school budgets and on the High Needs Block (the special education funding element of the Local Authority's Dedicated School Grant (DSG) allocated from the DfE for school funding).

During the consultation officers heard very strong arguments both against and in support of the proposal for a single school at Rowdeford. Officers have taken particular note in this report of the concerns that were passionately articulated by parents who were opposed to the closure of St Nicholas and Larkrise. Officers have sought, wherever possible, to address the concerns they raised in detail and propose how these might be mitigated.

Terence Herbert  
**Executive Director**

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Analysis of the Consultation Meetings, Letters and Emails

- (i) One School
- (ii) Travel time and routes
- (iii) Medical and health support
- (iv) Post 16
- (v) Lack of community engagement/location
- (vi) Coproduction
- (vii) The Centre of Excellence
- (viii) Transition planning to a new school
- (ix) Status of a new school – a new academy
- (x) Early Years
- (xi) Staffing, recruitment and retention
- (xii) Costs and Feasibility
- (xiii) Balance of denominational provision, impact on rural primary schools and displaced pupils
- (xiv) Admissions
- (xv) Curriculum and Special Educational Needs

Analysis of Other Options

- Develop Trowbridge West Ashton Manor Farm - Planning consider this to be in remote countryside, and other issues, meaning there is likely to an objection in principle
- Develop Melksham Land at Woolmore Farm - it is considered that the designation of the site as Public Open Space, the severely restricted access rights and the proximity to a Listed building make it not suitable for development as a new special school
- Develop Wyke Road Trowbridge - concerns over access would limit options, alternate use for residential being proposed as part of larger scheme
- Develop Chippenham Magistrates Court - the site does not meet DfE's minimum recommended areas for a 350-place school, but could be used for a smaller school, however it would increase costs due to site purchase
- Develop land next to Rowde primary school - the Planning Officer considers this site to potentially be one of the better options – however it is outside the settlement boundary and is likely to require a right turning lane

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Procurement Implications

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Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

Financial Implications

- (i) Capital Programme
- (ii) Dedicated Schools Grant
- (iii) General Fund
- (iv) General

Legal Implications  
Conclusions  
Appendices  
Background Papers

**22 May 2019**

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**Subject: Specials schools consultation**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Laura Mayes – Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills**

**Key Decision: Key**

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## **Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of the report is to bring to Cabinet the responses from Phases 1 and 2 of the consultation on a proposal to close three special schools (Rowdeford, St Nicholas and Larkrise) and open a new school at Rowde (as an academy up to the age of 16). Consultees were invited to submit alternative proposals.



## **Relevance to the Council's Business Plan**

2. This report is relation to Wiltshire's Special School provision is relevant to the following Business Plan 2017-2022 priorities:
  - i) Priority: Growing the economy
    - High quality special educational provision in all schools; ensuring that all pupils achieve the best possible outcomes and go on to enjoy the best start to adult life
  - ii) Priority: Strong Communities
    - Focus on delivering the educational provision, in-county, that children and young people with special education needs and/ or disability (SEND) require – the right education provision, at the right time, in the right place
  - iii) Priority: Protecting those who are most vulnerable
    - Ensuring that children and young people with SEND can have the best education and support, provided in good quality estate
    - Ensuring that special education provision in Wiltshire is equitably provided, reducing the number of pupils who must travel excessive distances to school

- Special education provision that is better aligned with other related services (community health services, social care, and mental health for example) to improve access to, and provision of, required support
- iv) Priority: Innovative and effective council
- Doing things differently to ensure that the Council can meet its statutory duties to provide the right education provision in the face of a rising population and growing demand
  - Improving the focus on outcomes for all pupils with SEND

## Background

3. In November 2018 Cabinet agreed proposals to consult on closing Rowdeford, Larkrise and St Nicholas Special schools and on opening a new school in Rowde on the preferred site of Rowdeford school. These proposals had been drawn together over the past three years, as part of the SEND Strategy 2016 – 19, to create new and improved educational provision for children and young people with SEND.

In 2014 the Children and Families Act set out the need to develop the quality of engagement with families and children/young people with SEND. This has positively raised expectations about life outcomes for children with SEND and supported parent/carers, schools and community organisations to work with Local Authorities to develop and increase the quality of educational provision.

In 2018 Wiltshire was inspected through the SEND Local Area Inspection and the Council was endorsed in their vision and practice to the need of children with SEND.

However, in order to achieve excellence, the Council recognised that it needed to further develop provision in Special Schools in Wiltshire. In November 2018, the Council identified four drivers for change:



- i) Sufficiency of provision – an additional 220 special school places needed across the county by 2026, including a minimum growth of 50 places for Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD)/Complex Needs in the north. In addition, a need to reduce overcrowding in two of the special schools. It is widely accepted that both Larkrise and St Nicholas are accommodating



significantly more pupils than appropriate, based upon current DfE guidance.

- ii) Quality of provision – the physical condition of two of our special schools (Larkrise and St Nicholas) is not suitable for expansion or long-term provision. Additionally, there is no Outstanding special school provision in Wiltshire and there is an ambition to have a Centre of Excellence in a central location for the north and west of the County.
- iii) Pupil Outcomes – there is an ambition to provide *outreach* to mainstream schools from a Centre of Excellence to support the inclusion and improved outcomes of pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD). In-reach also offers similar pupils, based in mainstream, opportunities to learn at a Centre of Excellence. Additionally, there is a cohort of pupils at Rowdeford whose needs cannot currently be met within mainstream or SLD provision, but thrive in the dedicated provision
- iv) Financial pressures – both on individual school budgets and on the High Needs Block (the special education funding element of the Local Authority's Dedicated School Grant (DSG) allocated from the DfE for school funding). Over the next three years it is projected that the current three special schools will have a total budget deficit exceeding £1m. It is also estimated that if the Council does not secure sufficient in-house provision it will spend approximately £9.4m more by 2026 for the projected additional independent special school spaces required as an alternative. This expenditure is estimated to increase to £2.1m annually thereafter. This cost is driven by placing children in independent provision which is significantly more expensive, and because there are very few places, even in independent schools, within easy distance of the county. New placements are, therefore, highly likely to be more expensive residential placements rather than day placements. Such an approach would be contrary to Wiltshire Council's vision that children live and learn in the county. An increased reliance on distant residential placements would not only place additional financial pressure on the high needs block, translating into costly packages of care as children transition to adult services, but also reduce the likelihood of young people becoming members of their communities in Wiltshire.



Since the Cabinet paper in November, however, there have been a number of changes and new issues presented:

- There is now limited demand for school-based nursery provision as we have sufficiency of good provision in the District Specialist Centres

- There is significant support for school-based provision for complex needs Post 16
- The work being led through the Whole Life Pathway has identified the need to improve Post-16 SEND provision across the county and opportunities for young people to develop independent living skills as they transition to adulthood
- There is support for any new school to be maintained rather than an academy
- There has been continued growth in the number of EHCPs and a unprecedented increase in placements for secondary pupils with MLD - this would require capacity to be larger than the 350 agreed by Cabinet in November. As a consequence, officers have worked options for a minimum of 400 places

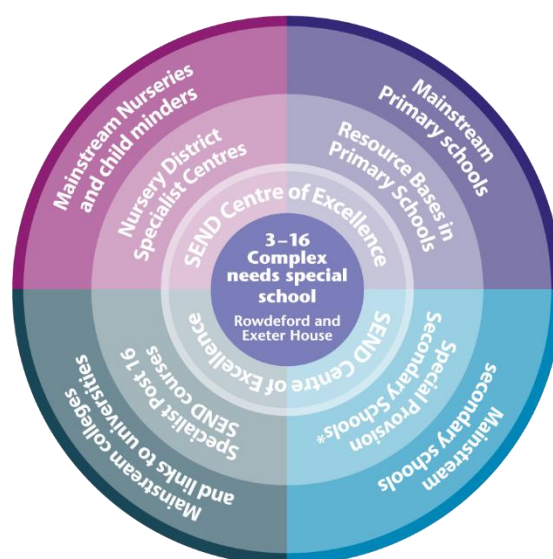
## THE VISION

Wiltshire Council's vision for a new Centre of Excellence for special education affords a once in a generation opportunity to reimagine and improve education provision for children with a range of complex needs, working closely with parents and carers, teachers, social and health care professionals and children themselves.

From a geographically central "hub" location, the vision is to transform the education system to meet the needs of our children and have their own hopes, dreams and aspirations realised.

The Council wants every child and young person with SEND to have a brilliant education, and for mainstream schools and the wider communities across Wiltshire to access expertise in inclusion from the Centre of Excellence. This means:

- Great teaching from well-trained, well-paid, caring, specialist and dedicated staff
- World class facilities and support: hydro-pools, sensory rooms, physio, open outdoor space, speech and language therapy, family care
- Strong and vibrant community links – with cafés, community gardens and public playing fields – with inclusive businesses and civic spaces and services that facilitate and advocate independent living for all
- Attractive, comfortable, child-scale buildings - safe, friendly, calm and engaging places with wide corridors and lots of natural light available for all
- Powerful and empowering links with mainstream schools, with a special outreach centre (or resource base) in at least one primary school in each key locality
- Improved inclusion and outcomes for children with SEND at secondary age



- Effective links with specialist nurseries, offering children with special needs seamless attention from the time they are tots to their teenage years
- Good transport routes and means of transport, central to the home locations of children and young people with SEND

We want children with SEND to be educated wherever possible in mainstream education, improving inclusion and reducing demand on special school places. The Centre of Excellence is pivotal to achieving this ambition.

A parent of a child who has just left St Nicholas 'As the parent of a severely disabled child in Wiltshire, I would like to make it clear that I give my whole support to Wiltshire Council in its review of special schools...'

*I'm sure there is a lovely community in Rowde village, but it is not OUR community, where we have friends and a support network, where we spend our leisure time, and the town in which my son will grow up and live as an adult.*  
Parent via email

## Main Considerations for the Council

4. On 9 January 2019 Wiltshire Council issued the following notice:

***Wiltshire Council Statutory Notice: Intention to Discontinue the following Special Schools:***

- ***St Nicholas School (Special), Malmesbury Road, Chippenham, Wiltshire, SN15 1QF***
- ***Rowdeford School (Special), Rowde, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 2QQ***
- ***Larkrise School (Special), Ashton St, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 7EB***

*Notice is hereby given in accordance with section 15(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (as amended by the Education Act 2011) and Regulation 12(1) of the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 that Wiltshire Council, County Hall, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 8JN intends to discontinue the above three schools with effect from 31 August 2023.*

*It is proposed that the three schools will be closed and replaced by a new special school which will be developed and established in accordance with Department for Education (DfE) Guidance "Opening and closing maintained schools: statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers" (November 2018). All capital costs will be met by Wiltshire Council.*

It was intended that the consultation between 9 January and 1 March 2019 would constitute post publication consultation on the published proposals. Following a case taken to court by a group of families about the process, the Council reached an agreement in order to foster good working relationships with families, prevent further delays and conserve public money and cost for both parties. This involved:

- Withdrawing the decision to approve the statutory notice about the closure of the three special schools and the related notice regarding the opening of a new special school in Rowdeford

- Treating the consultation between January and March as part of a pre-publication consultation (Phase 1)
- Extending the pre-publication consultation until 6 May 2019 (Phase 2)

All consultation responses in Phase 1 as well as those in Phase 2 are included in this report. The Council consulted during both phases on the same proposal to close the schools and open a new special school up to the age of 16 at Rowde. The council invited alternative proposals which are considered alongside this proposal in this report.

## **The Consultation Methodology**

5. In January 2019 Wiltshire Council, in partnership with Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC) began Phase 1 of the consultation. See Appendix 1 for the proposal and vision documents. This included:
  - Meetings run by Wiltshire council for:
    - Parent/carers with children/young people attending the three schools in each of the schools
    - Staff and governors of the three schools
    - The Voice and Influence Team offered the three schools support to enable pupils to give their views as part of the consultation (this was taken up by Rowdeford)
  - An Online survey (See Appendix 2) accompanied by:
    - The Proposal document
    - The Vision document
    - A video of Cllr Mayes in conversation with Stuart Hall from WPCC discussing key issues within the proposals
  - Surgeries run by WPCC for parent/carers across the county including parent/carers of younger children currently attending district specialist centres (Nursery settings for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities – SEND)
  - An email address where all longer comments and concerns could be sent
  - Officers meeting with representatives of the Friends of Larkrise and St Nicholas
  - Additional meeting for parents in Melksham
  - An opportunity for parents to see Exeter House school to envisage what a new school might look like

Links to the online documentation and consultation options were shared with<sup>1</sup>:

- All neighbouring Local Authorities
- Local Authorities other than Wiltshire maintaining or funding children's EHCPs who attend one of the special schools
- Local Area boards and parish councils
- The Voluntary Sector Forum
- Provider stakeholders e.g. Virgin Care and Oxford Health
- Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC)
- All parents/carers of children/young people with an EHCP
- All Wiltshire schools via Right choice and via direct email
- Special schools in neighbouring counties

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<sup>1</sup> These are the main consultees, wider engagements were also included

- District Specialist Centres and the Portage Service
- All registered early years and childcare provision in Wiltshire
- Wiltshire Ambulance and air ambulance services
- Hospitals (RUH, SFT, GWH)
- Post 16 education providers

The consultation was held over a 7½ weeks. A summary of the meetings follows:

Meeting hosted by	Where	Audience	When	Time
Council officers	St Nicholas	Staff and governors	21 Jan	1530-1700
Council officers	St Nicholas	Parents and carers	21 Jan	1700-1800
Council officers	St Nicholas	Staff and governors	12 Feb	1700-1845
Council officers	St Nicholas	Parents and carers	12 Feb	1845-1945
Council officers	Larkrise	Staff and governors	07 Feb	1530-1700
Council officers	Larkrise	Parents and carers	07 Feb	1500-1800
Council officers	Rowdeford	Staff and governors	26 Feb	1600-1700
Council officers	Rowdeford	Parents and carers	26 Feb	1700-1830
WPCC	Chippenham	District Specialist Centre	25 Feb	
WPCC	Devizes	District Specialist Centre	25 Feb	
WPCC	Salisbury	District Specialist Centre	25 Feb	
WPCC	Grasmere House, Salisbury	Parents and carers	15 Jan	1030-1230
WPCC	Springfield Campus, Corsham	Parents and carers	18 Jan	1030-1230
WPCC	Beverbrook Sport Facility, Calne	Parents and carers	28 Feb	1200-1400
Council officers	Trowbridge	Friends of Larkrise and St Nicholas	12 Feb	1100-1200
Council officers	Melksham Town Hall	Parents and carers	25 Feb	1100-1230

There were high levels of engagement online with 2,400 responses:

About you	Total	In Support	Not in support	In Support	Not in support
A Wiltshire resident	1444	609	835	42%	58%
A parent carer of a child or young person with a SEND	752	316	436	42%	58%
A relative or friend of a child/young person with SEND	605	196	409	32%	68%
A parent carer of a child/young person currently in one of Wiltshire's Special schools	342	139	203	41%	59%
A professional with an interest in special school provision	554	251	303	45%	55%
Someone representing an organisation with an interest in special school provision	102	65	37	64%	36%

The range of people representing an organisation with an interest included:

- Jacob's Ladder
- Larkrise School
- Parent Governors
- Wiltshire Portage
- Neptune Aquatic Solutions
- Colerne CE Primary School
- School Governor Rowdeford
- Sheldon School
- Wiltshire parent/carer support group
- Rowdeford School
- Magna Learning Partnership
- Exeter House School
- Pewsey Primary School
- Studley Green Primary School
- St Nicholas School
- Chippenham Senior PHAB Club
- S6C
- Taxis
- Cobra
- Parents
- Devizes Lions Club
- Virgin Care
- Wiltshire Connect
- Chippenham Town Council
- HCC
- An ex-student of Rowdeford School
- Clubs that used the facilities in holidays for young children/ adults with disabilities
- Parent of a SEN professional
- Rowdeford Governor
- Rowdeford Charity Trust (Registered No 1088605)
- HM Forces
- Parents' group
- Wiltshire Music Centre
- Canon's House
- PDA/ Autistic/ anxiety support groups nationwide

*It has been really helpful to speak about the proposals and have a face to face discussion. I understand it a lot better now and I am a lot less worried. You can misunderstand what is written sometimes. Some of the information on social media is not helpful.*

Parent at a WPCC meeting

Wiltshire Council ran consultation meetings in each school with separate sessions for staff and governors and parents/carers. At the request of St Nicholas, extra meetings were held at the school. In response to the Friends of Larkrise and St Nicholas who expressed concerns about parents not being able to access evening sessions in the schools, an additional session was held at Melksham. The attendance to all meetings is below:

	St Nicholas	Rowdeford	Larkrise	Additional session in Melksham	Total
Parent/carers	16	24	14	3	57
Staff	26	23	16	0	65



Governors/Trustees	7	5	4	1	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>139</b>

The consultation meetings led by WPCCC were attended by 31 parent/carers as detailed below:

	Calne	Corsham	Salisbury	Total
Parent/carers	16	11	4	31

There were also emails from:

- Schools and Governors (34)
- Parent/Carers (47)
- Dr Murrison MP
- Other Local Authorities (1)
- Friends of schools (2)
- Town and Parish Councils (3) Chippenham, Westbury and St Paul, Malmesbury Without)
- Professional organisations (3) including
  - Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
  - Virgin Care
  - Wiltshire Music Centre

The Phase 2 consultation started on 25 March and ran until 6 May 2019 and included:

- 3 consultation meetings in the North (Devizes, Trowbridge and Chippenham)
- 1 consultation meeting in the South
- 1 meeting with the Friends of Larkrise and St Nicholas
- 1 meeting with the Wiltshire SEND Action group
- On-line comments box
- An email address where letters and emails could be sent

In order to publicise Phase 2 of the consultation an email was sent addressed individually to each Headteacher in Wiltshire. Headteachers were requested to share the news with parent and carers of children attending their schools and were provided a link to Right Choice to download a letter. A similar letter was sent to all registered early years and childcare providers. Devizes, Trowbridge and Chippenham Town Councils were also emailed to inform them of the extended period of consultation and inviting their feedback. Bath and North-East Somerset, Somerset and Swindon Borough Councils, the only other LAs maintaining EHCPs for children attending Larkrise, St Nicholas and Rowdeford were also contacted. WPCCC included the information in their weekly newsletter and on their website. The Council also communicated about the extension and consultation meetings via press releases and on its Facebook and Twitter pages and website.

A summary of the meetings is as follows:

Meeting Hosted by	Where	Audience	When	Time
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Council officers	Trowbridge-County Hall	Friends of Larkrise and St Nicholas	3 April 2019	10 – 11
Council officers	Hardenhuish School- Chippenham	Open	5 April 2019	10:30 – 12:00
Council officers	Diocesan Education Centre - Wilton	Open	1 May 2019	12:30 – 14:30
Council officers	Trowbridge – County Hall	Open	2 May 2019	18:30 – 20:00
Council officers	Devizes Sports Centre	Open	3 May 2019	11:00 – 12:30
Council officers	Trowbridge – County Hall	Wiltshire SEND Action Group	9 May 2019	11:00 – 12:00

The attendance to the formal consultation meetings was as follows:

Where	Number of attendees	When	Time
Hardenhuish School, Chippenham	16	5 April	10:30-12:00noon
County Hall, Trowbridge	52	2 May	6:30-8:30pm
Devizes Sports Club	26	3 May	11:00-12:30pm
Diocesan Education Centre in Wilton	32	1 May	12.20 – 2.00pm
Total	126		

In total, there were 66 responses to the on-line comments box.

There were also 27 emails from:

- A Speech and Language Therapist
- Ex-chair of Larkrise School
- A parent with a child in a unit in a mainstream school
- Six emails from a parent of a child attending St Nicholas
- Two collective responses from parents in the South of the County
- A collective response from parent governors at St Nicholas
- Four Larkrise parents
- Friends of Larkrise
- Keep Special Schools Local Campaign (and a number of associated emails)
- A resident and Speech and Language Therapist
- Two TAs from Rowdeford
- Two Wiltshire residents

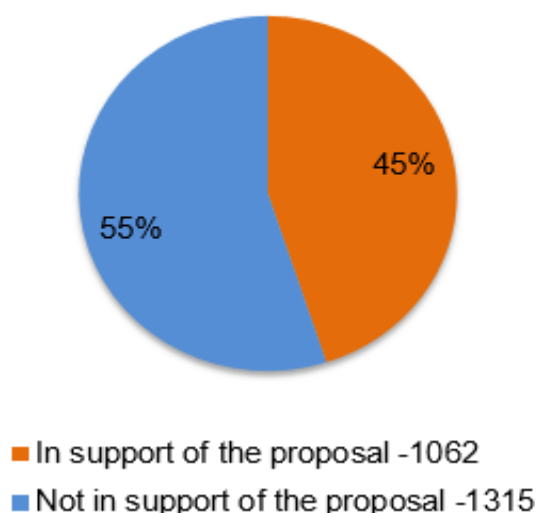


- St Nicholas Governors
- Grandparent of a child at Larkrise

## Analysis of the On-line Consultations

6. A report on the on-line Phase 1 consultation results is attached as Appendix 2. In summary, 45% supported the proposal to close the three schools and open a new school at Rowdeford and 55% did not:

On line consultation



In the consultation respondents were asked to indicate the three main reasons that they were for or against the proposal. The table below identifies their responses in rank order:

In support			Not in Support		
19%	518	The proposal is about giving the best provision for children and young people with SEND	22%	804	Increased travel time
17%	465	Having a rural location but close to a town with good community links	21%	767	The disruption to pupils who will have to move
14%	387	The idea that a Centre of Excellence will be created	20%	711	Closure of existing schools
14%	382	The proposal would provide improved facilities	13%	462	Concern about the size of the new school
13%	348	Other reason	12%	427	Being too remote
12%	317	There would be access to therapies all at one site	9%	342	Worries about inclusion
10%	279	Keeping the best of the schools	3%	104	Other
	2696			3617	

In the Phase 2 consultation, there were 66 on-line comments and an analysis is attached as Appendix 7. 12 were supportive of a single site at Rowdeford. 2 were concerned about provision in the south and a number wanted more support in mainstream schools to include children with SEND. The remaining were against

the idea of a single school although a few suggested split site provision under a single leadership team.

## **Analysis of the Consultation Meetings, Letters and Emails**

7. This section only contains an analysis of the proposal to close the three schools and open a new school as a single site at Rowdeford. This section proposes what the Council could do to mitigate the concerns, especially those articulated by parents, about this proposal. An analysis of other options for Cabinet's consideration are included further down in this report. A copy of the transcripts and notes of staff and governor meetings in Phase 1 are attached as Appendix 3. Transcripts and notes of parent meetings are attached as Appendix 4. Notes from the meetings held by WPCCC are attached as Appendix 5. A copy of the letters and emails received is attached as Appendix 6. Notes from the Phase 2 consultation meetings are attached as Appendix 8. Letters that specifically refer to individual children or the respondent has asked not to share are not being made publicly available but have been shared with Cabinet Members. The audio tapes of all meetings have been listened to by the Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Skills.

Whilst this report will detail the concerns raised through the consultation, it is important to remember that 45% did support the proposals. The reasons for this were varied:

- Being outside town means Rowdeford avoids the congestion problem of so many other sites
- The central location in the northern part of the county
- The learning outside the classroom opportunities uniquely available at Rowdeford
- Current and former Rowdeford pupils who articulated how the environment had developed them
- The potential to expand on the Rowdeford site
- The opportunity to bring community health and other specialists in one place rather than spread out across three locations (particularly from health professionals as well as parents)
- Support for a Centre of Excellence
- Larger school size would enable better groupings according to need and ability
- A larger school can offer more curriculum choice
- Travel can develop independence for pupils
- Offers opportunities for integration between MLD and PMLD/SLD as well as between special and mainstream schools through outreach and dual registration

*“The Rowdeford site has unsurpassed LOTC (learning outside the classroom) facilities that engage the students and provide varied opportunities that are not available at any of the other sites. It also provides opportunities for SEN students from mainstream to undertake the plus programme and help keep them engaged in learning”. Online survey response from a professional with an interest in special school provision.*

There were some consistent themes amongst the concerns raised through the consultation which are outlined below.

### (i) One School

Following the consultation in the summer of 2018, the majority of respondents felt that there should be more than one school in the north of Wiltshire for pupils with complex needs. During the consultation from January 2019, the consultees who are opposed to the proposal reiterated this concern due to the following perceived factors:

- Reduces choice
- Segregates children/young people with SEND in one location
- Deprives other communities of inclusive activity with children/young people with SEND
- Is a decision based primarily on cost
- Creates a 'super school' which will be too large and intimidating, particularly for children with more complex needs (some respondents described it as an 'institution')

The Wiltshire SEND Action Group stated that their criteria for any new provision were:

- Location-local
- Size-small
- Choice-more
- Quality-community based curriculum, outreach and training

Respondents did note that one school would:

- Draw together resources and knowledge, particularly around specialisms
- Create efficiencies
- Create a school that was comparable in size to mainstream schools (primary) while also retaining intimate and manageable engagements and spaces
- Create a community in its own right

**Reduction in choice** - It is acknowledged that with a single school option, choice in Wiltshire for children with complex needs would be Exeter House or the school based at Rowdeford. However, Wiltshire children and young people living near the county borders would also continue to have the option of special schools in Bath, Swindon and Frome. Indeed, children with MLD in the whole of the county for whom full-time mainstream education is not an option currently only have the choice of Rowdeford. One concern expressed by parents was also that if their child did not have a positive relationship with their teacher there would be nowhere else they could go.

*"There could be any number of reasons why a parent would not wish to send their child to this school and you, as their local authority would be offering them no alternative whatsoever. This is blatant discrimination against children with disabilities and their families". Parent via email*

The advantage of a larger school is that there would be more choice within the school itself e.g. there would be more than one class for an age group and, therefore, a change of teacher and class could be requested. The design would be a campus style rather than a single block building, allowing considerable flexibility within a single site. A larger school would also enable greater curriculum choice, particularly at Key Stage 3 onwards. Wiltshire is also maintaining choice by significantly investing in resource bases in primary schools and Enhanced Learning Provision (ELP) in secondary school. Wiltshire has significantly more of

this integrated provision than other counties, ensuring that significant numbers of children are educated in their local area. However, the demand for special school places at secondary suggests that more needs to be done to support inclusion at that stage to ensure parents and professionals have confidence that children will achieve the best outcomes.

An option with more than one site would give parents greater choice in terms of location but could narrow curriculum choice and the opportunity to bring together specialist support and facilities.

**Segregates children** - By nature of the complexity of their need, the children currently attending the three schools are not integrated full time in mainstream education. Children with PMLD/SLD would have the opportunity to mix with their peers with MLD at the new site. Rowdeford School's Plus Programme currently offers over 40 places to mainstream school pupils to have some of their curriculum delivered at the school. Rowdeford also has excellent links with the local primary school and also enjoys links with Trinity School in Devizes. The aim of a Centre of Excellence is that it would provide in-reach to support inclusion in mainstream schools as well as out-reach into the school itself to build on the success of the Plus programme, thus increasing inclusion with mainstream schools. Continued use could be made of local links in Trowbridge and Chippenham.

*"We hear awful stories in the news about vulnerable young people being bullied by other young people, both emotionally and physically, and I fear that if we isolate and prevent typical children from interacting with our SEND children, these crimes will only be set to rise as Wiltshire will move away from acceptance, tolerance and understanding".* Parent, email response

Alternate proposals using multiple sites could also benefit from in-reach and outreach and would maintain the current links with local schools and facilities.

**Deprives other communities of inclusive engagement with children/young people with SEND** - Some parents felt that if children with SEND, particularly those with PMLD/SLD are not visible in the communities in which they live, communities would be less inclusive. Parents spoke of the prejudice that PMLD children already experience with examples of their child being pointed and laughed at. At the current time, only 26% of children in the three schools go to school in the communities in which they live<sup>[1]</sup>. 51% of pupils at Larkrise and 66% St Nicholas come from communities outside of Trowbridge and Chippenham. In addition, 70% of children with an EHCP are educated in a school in their local primary or secondary school, ensuring that all communities continue to interact with children with special educational needs.

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<sup>[1]</sup> This is based on living within the postcode of the town

Families themselves are ensuring that any barriers are broken down in their everyday lives by going to the shops, the pool or the cinema with their children. The Council also funds a wide range of out of school/short break activities for children with SEND in the communities in which they live. Recently, Wiltshire Council awarded Barnardo's a £570,000 contract to run the Wiltshire Short Breaks & Positive Activities Service which aims to increase opportunities for

*"The communities of Trowbridge and Chippenham will suffer if they lose their special schools. Having SEND children visible breaks down prejudice". Parent at a WPCC event*

An 8-year-old girl wrote a letter about her sister *'I do not approve of her going to Rowd (sic.) because 1. I won't see her that much 2. She needs to be local 3. Local people need to see children in wheelchairs as people STILL stare at her. Its (sic.) not good! 4. She needs to be safe as she is far from her hospital'*

eligible children and young people aged from six to 18-years-old. The new contract began on 1 April 2019, providing thousands of hours of support each year. Activities enjoyed at short breaks activity clubs include swimming, trampolining, cooking, sports, music and trips to the cinema, as well as arts and crafts. The Barnardo's charity also provides youth clubs for young people aged 13 to 18-years-old with additional needs, and social clubs for children and young people on the autistic spectrum. Barnardo's currently uses venues including Marlborough, Chippenham, Devizes, Trowbridge and Bradford-on-Avon.

Clearly, a school with multiple sites would have the advantage of a physical visibility in the communities in which they are located.

**A decision based on cost** - It is acknowledged that pressures and escalating costs within the high needs budget are factors in the decision-making process, however, the need to improve inclusion, outcomes and standards of education for children with SEND is the Council's key priority. There is clearly a need to do things differently to ensure that education can be afforded. However, whilst a factor, cost is not the only one. We currently have 36 children with SEND (complex needs pre and post 16) educated in independent schools, 54 in maintained schools in bordering counties and pressure to find places for children this September. This figure does not include those whose primary SEND is ASD/ SEMH or hearing impairment as alternate provision is being made for pupils with SEMH/ASD via the Council's successful free school application. Some of the children educated out of county, both now and in the future, will appropriately, continue to need highly specialist school places provided by the independent sector. However, we are increasingly having to look to the independent sector simply because of lack of local places. It is imperative that we ensure that there are more special school places in the north of the county to reduce the number of children being educated out of county.



**Creates a 'super' school** - The Local Authority's proposal was to create a school for children with complex needs. This school was not intended for those children/young people whose primary SEND is Social Emotional and Mental Health Needs (SEMH) or ASD (Autism spectrum) although a significant number of children/young people with complex needs also have ASD. It is recognised that the school would be larger than many schools for children with SEND across the country. However, those schools which are of a similar size, are currently good or outstanding. It is recognised that this is, as such, a relatively new approach to Special Schools, but with a dynamic and forward-thinking approach and strong leadership, a new school creates an environment that offers a diverse curriculum with good care and health support on site and which would be sustainable financially in a way that small schools cannot. Good design, which moves away from a large, single building design, suggested by the feasibility study, and clear approaches to larger team management identified by the larger SEND schools suggests that good and outstanding practice could be achieved by this approach. It is essential that the final design is co-produced with parents, staff and children.

Prospective parent  
*"I am extremely concerned about the size of the new school development at Rowdeford, I do not believe my son will be able to safely and efficiently manage himself around a campus of that scale and the distance and distractions will stop him from engaging with the learning experience that a school should offer."*

Alternative proposals which include more than one site would reduce the number of buildings on any one particular site and could address the concerns about a 'super' school as well.

The consultees who do not support the proposal for a single school suggested a number of alternatives:

- A new school at an alternative site closer to Chippenham and Trowbridge
- A new school at Rowdeford and a satellite at either St Nicholas or Larkrise
- A new school at Rowdeford and a new build in either Trowbridge or Chippenham as a satellite
- A new school at Rowdeford and satellites at St Nicholas and Larkrise
- A new school at Rowdeford and new builds as satellites in Trowbridge and Larkrise
- A new school at Rowdeford and expansion at Larkrise and St Nicholas

On the whole, these proposals included the recommendation that there should be a single leadership team although one proposal included keeping separate leadership teams with an overarching board with 4 Multiple Academy Trusts (MATs).

The options for other sites are explored later in this report.

## **(ii) Travel time and routes**

Consultees, particularly parents of children with PMLD and health conditions, raised concerns about the time children/young people would be travelling to school. Concerns included:

- Levels of medical support on transport and how long journeys might endanger health

- The distance between Rowde and children’s homes may result in longer journeys
- Concerns that the roads surrounding the school had limited flat pavements and access routes
- The limited public transport to Rowde, which could involve several buses
- The time it would take for ambulances to get to the school and to a hospital
- 31 children do not use transport to attend their current schools and the Rowde school would incur additional cost and prevent families spending time together on school journeys
- For those parents who currently live close to their school, they would lose the regular support given by the school

Positive comments noted that:

- Coming to Rowdeford would avoid congestion in rush hour traffic into towns
- The quality of the school was more important than how long it took to get there (within reason)
- Their children already travelled so it wouldn’t make any difference

*“I’m not worried about the travel - I am concerned I get the best school for my child - that is Rowdeford!” Parent response to online survey*

Due to these concerns, a full assessment was made of the current and potential future routes/journeys that might exist for pupils if the one school proposal based at Rowdeford is adopted.

There are limitations to this approach as, in five years’ time, when the proposed new school would open, there would be a different cohort of children/young people attending the school/s. However, growth is likely to be in places where we currently have higher numbers of pupils.<sup>2</sup> The assessment of all current pupils enables Cabinet to assess the concerns raised by parents and carers during the consultation.

The travel assessment is shown in full in Appendix 9. Key highlights for a Rowde one site option are:

- a) **Fewer children would have a journey of over an hour** - Pupils currently travel for an average of 37 minutes. Guidance notes:

*“Best practice suggests that the maximum each way length of journey for a child of primary school age to be 45 minutes and for secondary school age 75 minutes, but these should be regarded as the maximum. For children with SEN and/or disabilities, journeys may be more complex and a shorter journey time, although desirable, may not always be possible<sup>3</sup>.”*

Contrary to the concerns raised during the consultation, the one school arrangement would not have a detrimental impact on the majority of pupils as their travel routes would not be longer than they currently experience. Neither would a disproportionate number of pupils with SEND have longer journeys than might be anticipated by the guidance for pupils with SEND or for pupils without SEND. All

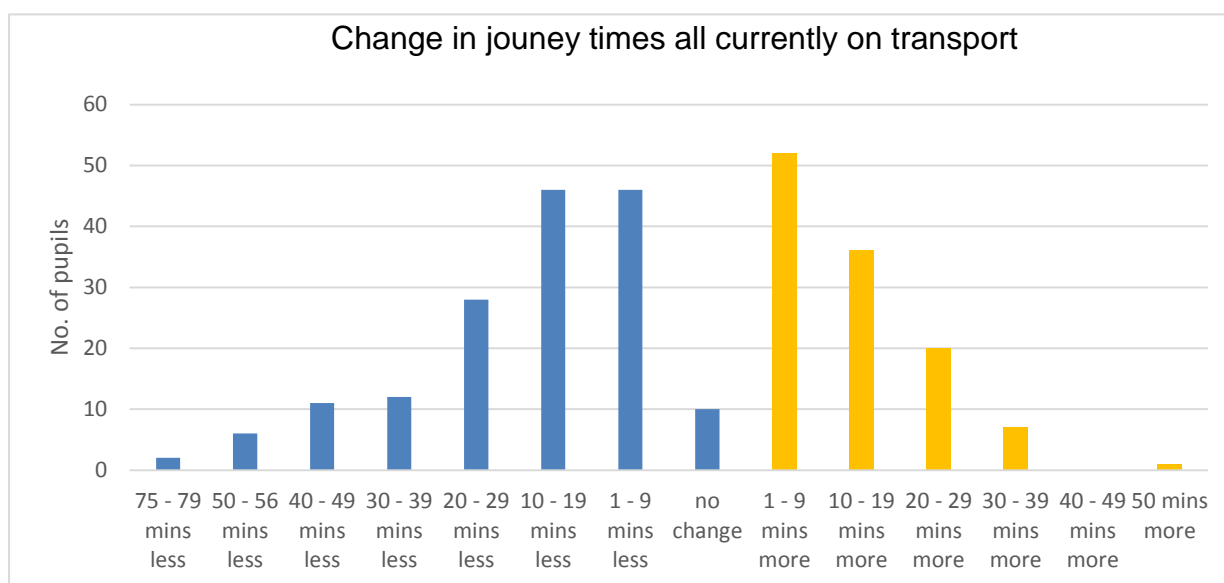
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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance>

children, bar two, would have journey times of less than an hour compared to the current situation where 48 (34%) of children have a journey time of greater than an hour. For the two pupils above an hour, one would have a reduction of 17 minutes the other 45 minutes.

- b) **Average pupil travel times reduced** - Using route analytics software, with sample testing of outcomes, the transport team identified that using a number of approaches to fleet management, route efficiencies created through one location and a variety of vehicles, (e.g. MPVs, buses, adapted cars etc.), on average, journey times would decrease:

School	Current routes average journey time per passenger (minutes)	Proposed route averages journey time per passenger (minutes)	Total difference in journey times (minutes)
Larkrise	37	33	-297
Rowdeford	42	34	-986
St Nicholas	31	30	-85
	<b>37</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>-1368</b>



It is recognised that 116 children would have a longer travel time, although nearly half of those would be between 1 and 9 minutes more.

In summary 59% of pupils would experience a shorter, or the same, travel times under this proposal:

Journeys to Rowdeford	No. of pupils	%
Increased journey time	116	41
Shorter journey time	154	55
Same journey time	10	4
Total	280	



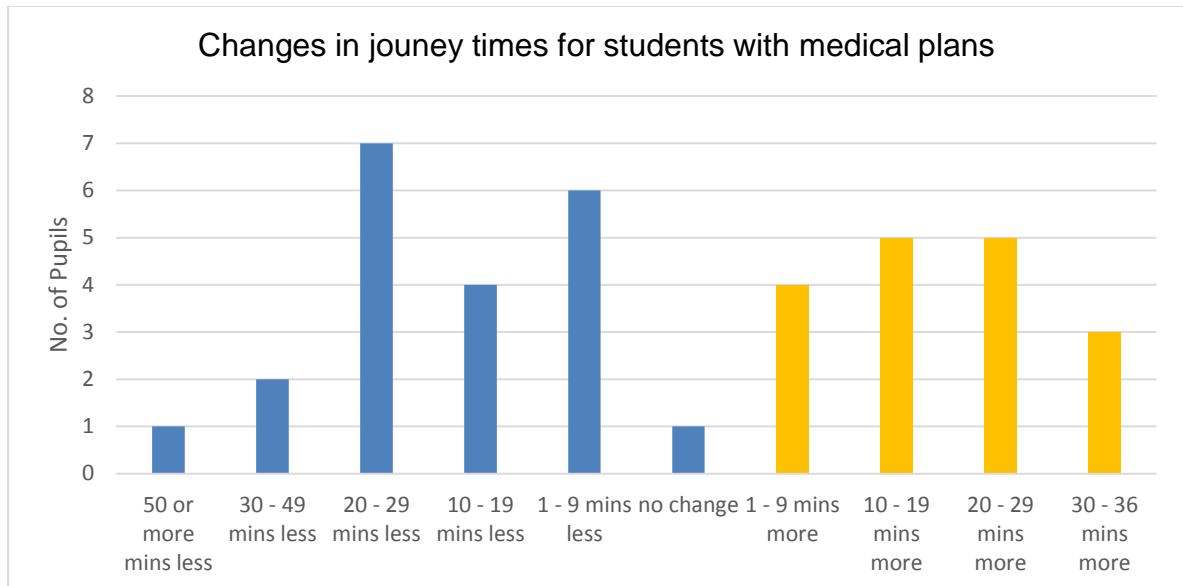
In relation to the Government's travel guidance, there would be 12 children of primary age travelling more than 45 minutes (currently 17). For five of these their journeys would be shorter than is currently, two with the same journey length and five with 11 to 38 minutes more. Appendix 9 shows the current transport costs (£1,788,900) and the forecast for a single site at Rowdeford (£2,221,100). The latter, however, improves standards for journey times, ensuring all but 2 children are within an hour's journey. Costings for 2 primary sites at St Nicholas and Larkrise and a primary and secondary site at Rowdeford are higher (£2,554,000) because this applies the guidance that transport to a primary school should be within 45 minutes. In this option 56% of pupils would experience a shorter, or the same, travel times.

<b>Journeys to multi-site primary at Larkrise and St Nicholas, primary/secondary at Rowdeford</b>	<b>No. of pupils</b>	<b>%</b>
Increased journey time	124	44
Shorter journey time	145	52
Same journey time	11	4
Total	280	

Costings and routes have also been carried out for Abbeyfield and Melksham for a one site option. Abbeyfield is both more costly and longer times for significantly higher number of pupils than Rowdeford. Melksham is similar to Rowdeford in both cost and travel time. All costings 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.

By comparison setting the same standards (i.e. all pupils having travel within 1hr) for the existing provision would cost £2,457,000 which is £235,900 more expensive than the one site Rowdeford provision. Thus, utilising the Rowdeford site would be the most effective option for improving travel times within acceptable financial expectations.

- c) **Most pupils with medical plans would have shorter journeys** – Particular concerns were raised about pupils with medical plans and officers undertook an analysis of these. Again, the majority would have shorter journeys to the one school at rowdeford, but there are a number with longer journeys as the chart shows below.



In total, 17 of the 37 pupils with medical plans would have longer journey times, 20 would have shorter journeys. The children with the 10 longest journeys would all have shorter journeys, but it also predicted that the 10 children with the shortest journeys would (for all but 1) have longer journeys. None of the journeys for any of these children/young people would be over an hour. Currently three primary children with medical plans travel over the advised limit of 45 minutes. All three would have shorter journeys in the proposed new routes (2 still above 45 mins, 1 significantly below), however, there is one child currently below 45 minutes who would be above 45 minutes in the new routes.

*“...we have children here that have severe epilepsy, they have life limiting illnesses, what happens if they have a seizure on transport and requires medication? I know PAs [Passenger Assistants] some of them are trained to give medication, well what if that medication doesn't work?”* Parent comment at face-to-face sessions

*“I suspect that this proposal to close some schools and centralise on one location may involve disproportionate transport costs”.* Wilts resident email

If the Cabinet decides to take forward the proposal for a single school at Rowdeford, it would be essential to review these individual medical plans to ensure that they have the appropriate support to travel safely. However, part of the planning around the new routes is also looking at reducing the number of children with medical plans on shared vehicles. This

would mean that should they need to stop they can do so and/or divert to home or hospital without impacting on the other children on that route. Officers have already consulted with Virgin Care's lead for medical plans and the SEND lead for transport. Their combined report is included in Appendix 10. In summary, their view is that there is a good approach in place. The Virgin Care lead noted that in her career (of 36 years) there has only been one child who she felt would not have been able to use transport with an appropriately developed transport plan. Currently the child with the highest level of medical risk on transport is a child whose journey would be the same (or potentially slightly shorter) at the proposed site for the school. It should be noted that further work would be needed to assess and plan for those currently not using transport, but both the transport and Virgin

Care teams did not feel there was a significant risk of not meeting need. Virgin Care wrote in their response:

*“Having read the proposals, the team has no concerns regarding clinical support required to transport children and young people to school. VSCL [Virgin Care] already work closely with passenger transport to manage risk and provide training. In the last 5 years VSCL are not aware of any child having an adverse clinical event requiring hospitalisation whilst travelling to and from school”.*

In Phase 2, two emails were received from Speech and Language Therapists that were critical of the proposal, one on the grounds that they believed the Council was creating an ‘institution style school’. A St Nicholas parent also submitted an email from a Children’s Community Nurse from Hampshire NHS Foundation Trust which outlines concerns about the impact of increased journey times and the risk of a school situated away from children’s homes.

d) **Parental travel could be supported** - The travel assessment also looked at how to enable parents to access the school. The routes above show that travel times should be reasonable for parents; however, the transport assessment also suggests using taxis to bring parents in when required if they do not have access to their own transport.

*“I’m one of the strange breed of people who doesn’t drive therefore will never be able to travel to the Super school as there is no discernible public transport for me to use, unlike Trowbridge where I can take a train and short walk and be at Larkrise school for meetings and reviews when needed”.* Parent via email

e) **Ambulance times and access would be reasonable** - Contact was also made with the ambulance service to ask what they felt the impact would be. The Ambulance service noted that they had received 20 calls from the three schools in the last year. They noted that they have ambulances based in Devizes and the Air Ambulance is based nearby in Semington. Their assessment was that while journey times may be slightly longer from Rowde to a hospital, the uncongested route would help the actual journey time. They also noted that the Rowdeford site could be used for a helicopter landing which was not possible with most town sites. 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	38	45	40

- f) **Staff travel time does increase** - Due to the fact that a lot of staff, particularly teaching assistants, live and work locally, there would be an increase to staff travel times, although perhaps not as much as feared by staff during the consultation:

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

### (iii) Medical and health support

There were three key concerns raised during the consultation about medical and health issues. Firstly, there was significant concern around travel time that was expected by parents and carers to increase for a significant number of pupils. Secondly, parents were concerned that the current support from Virgin Care is already too infrequent, hard to get hold of and too far from home. Specific concerns were raised about how parents (particularly those who do not drive) could get their children in and out of school and also to paediatrician appointments in Bath/Swindon. Thirdly, parents noted that while medical needs could be met as well as they are now, when their children are unwell they want to be with them and that this would take them far longer than is currently the case for some parents.

Some parents were supportive, however, recognising that bringing together the services of our children's community health provider (currently Virgin Care) would reduce overhead costs on travel and office buildings. Parents hoped that this would mean more money would be invested in staff time.

*"As well as providing access to therapies all at one site which would be highly practical, it would provide continued access to the excellent facilities for outdoor learning and teaching about the environment".* Parent response to online survey

The current capacity and potential for one school are set out below:

<b>Specialism</b>	<b>Rowdeford</b>	<b>St Nicholas</b>	<b>Larkrise</b>	<b>One school</b>
Speech and language Therapists	1.33	1.33	1.33	4 full time equivalents on site
Community Paediatrics	1 day a term	1 day a month	1 day a month	Potential for 2 - 3 clinics a month
Integrated Therapists	296 days across the schools			296 on one site
Public Health Schools Nursing (PHSN) and immunisations	18 days per year for both IMMS and school nursing			18 days for both IMMS and PHSN on one site

Children's Community Nursing	60 hours per week between the schools	1.6 Full time equivalents on site
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A particular request was to have a paediatrician's clinic at a new school/s and also to have opportunities for drop in (or online skype calls) sessions with key professionals such as speech and language therapists and physiotherapists. Parents noted that this might particularly address concerns regarding accessing Virgin Care. Parents noted that they liked the thought that professionals would work closer together and that there would be a team of professionals regularly available. Consultees stated this would offer greater continuity of care and options for the Centre of Excellence. As the children's community health contract reaches a review point in 2021, there will be an opportunity to develop a specification to put more services on site to provide this wrap around support.

*"For children, this can mean that specialist equipment and facilities are available on site for those who need them, supported by a broad team of therapists, teachers and care staff, whilst admin and other functions are kept to a minimum rather than duplicated across three schools. This project will succeed through collaboration".* Headteacher Springfields Academy

Consultation responses from Virgin Care suggest they would welcome onsite therapeutic and consulting rooms. This would reduce travel and rent costs, thus enabling them to divert more funding to staffing. They particularly noted:

*"The proposals would provide an exciting opportunity for co service delivery of VSCL [Virgin Care] clinicians from across Specialist Services into the SS [special schools] and further integrate our care pathways for children and young people with additional needs. We would very much envisage a one stop shop approach. The current model spread across a number of school and hospitals makes this challenging and whilst we have had some success this has been limited to 1/2 schools and is inconsistent and inequitable".*

*"Providing quick assessment of problems and issues that arise around children's nursing or equipment needs, if there are clinicians working on site they would be able to check on a reported concern without requiring travel and would also improve meeting attendance".*

*"Having a nurse allocated to the school would ensure training was tailored to the needs of the child's care plan and update training could be provided in a timely way should needs change".*

*"I would envisage all VSCL clinicians being very visible within the schools and a significant number of clinics ensuring children/young people do not need to leave school to see a paediatrician or therapist"*

Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group also endorsed this response noting that this is an opportunity to develop joint commissioning, bringing together health, care and educational practice for children/young people with complex needs:

*“... the potential to offer more integrated health provision within our special schools is greater if fewer physical settings are operational, thereby reducing the number of sites that the services need to work across”.*

Consultees also spoke about the option to have a residential unit at the school which could work alongside Canon’s House and Julia’s House (respite homes both based in Devizes) offering additional respite and longer-term boarding provision to those pupils (like those who currently go to Independent Special Schools) who need 24-hour care and respite for those whose journeys go above the 75-minute guidance. Both Julia’s House and Canon’s House engaged with the consultation noting support for the proposal. Officers recommend that this option is explored further.

Oxford Health sent in a comprehensive response (Appendix 10) identifying that *“Greater number of placements and combining of staff teams provides an opportunity to revisit staff training in order to improve and enable best practice in relation to mental health in front line staff. From identifying and supporting mental health needs in this group of children early, through to managing risk alongside CAMHS and social care colleagues. That is having a working knowledge and ability to use Positive Behavioural Support, attachment and trauma informed practice”.*

They also noted *“Careful thinking about building design which supports mental wellbeing and recognises the additional challenges which come with for example sensory processing difficulties (noise, light, temperature, space). A building design which supports safety and the ability to keep children and young people safe but doesn’t facilitate restrictive interventions. As well as the incorporation of appropriate space for multiagency meetings, specialist clinics and individual therapies. It is important for workers to be able to come to children with special needs rather than asking them to travel. This in turn facilitates collaborative working”.*

This suggests that a positive working relationship can be maintained and developed particularly through the one school model but does not preclude multi-site practice.

The advantage to a one site school is the fact that it would be possible to concentrate specialist resource in one rather than several locations.

#### **(iv) Post 16**

Post 16 learners make up 16% of all Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) (March 2019). It is unusual for an EHCP to be ceased before the end of post 16 education and many young people want and/or need a minimum of 3 years of educational and or vocational support.



During the consultation, significant issues were raised about the lack of detail in the original proposal documentation regarding post 16 provision and parents did not understand what was being offered. Parents of children with PMLD/SLD also argued that their child might not be ready for a transition at 16 and that they would benefit from longer in a school environment. This view was also supported by teaching staff. The one school consultation proposal suggested removing provision at post 16 from school settings, which could potentially reduce choice, particularly for those learners:

*“The lack of any provision for post 16 education is also concerning. Some pupils could be faced with transitioning to the new school for perhaps a year before having to face yet more change in a post 16 setting. This would be very traumatic for many of the children.” Parent email*

- Who have missed a stage of learning at school due to illness or trauma
- Where transition needs to be very carefully managed to support social and emotional development
- Where employment/vocational and academic pathways have limited potential, but a further 2 years at school would appropriately prepare young people for the next stage of their lives

Support was, however, given to the community led model, the engagement of a wider group of providers and greater support to transitions and whole life skills. In response to the concerns raised about a lack of information, Appendix 11 details the post 16 pathways and further information is available on the Wiltshire Local Offer. This describes three core routes as preparation for adulthood:

- Employment pathway
- Academic pathway
- Independence pathway

These are not mutually exclusive but enable young people to make choices about what they want to do next.

To address the concerns they raised, parents and staff requested that school-based provision should continue, and more support offered to those taking up options which happen on different sites. Appendix 11 explores five options for how this could be achieved. The recommended option is Option 5 which can offer:

- On site post 16 provision at the school
- Coordinated packages for all students
- More cohesive SEND support which offers close coordination and monitoring of goals towards adulthood
- Strong leadership of the provision
- Opportunities for students to engage with their home communities as they develop skills and experience
- Best use and oversight of the range of community providers

Having heard concerns raised about the loss of post 16 provision at school, it is recommended that provision is included on site and further work is undertaken on Option 5 (within Appendix 11). This would effectively give a range of options to young people, creating bespoke packages, but also utilising the scope of opportunity and support available in the main special school.

**(v) Lack of community engagement/location**

Respondents, particularly parents, staff and governors at Larkrise and St Nicholas, had concerns that the location of a school in Rowde would isolate children and young people with SEND from their peers. They argued that limited community education options are available including access to facilities such as shops, leisure centres and cafes. There was a strong feeling that a school in Rowde would be a retrograde step in the light of the effective community links developed by Larkrise and St Nicholas. Parents expressed particular concern that children would not learn how to live in their own closest town and that the communities without a special school would lose valuable contact with children and young people with SEND.

*"I constantly hear, that a school at Rowde would be shutting away pupils from their communities!!. This is so the opposite to what actually happens, so many people from all the local communities (Chippenham, Rowde, Bromham and Devizes) all work with the current school. Whenever I am out my daughter meets lots of people connected to school." Parent living in Chippenham whose child attends Rowdeford, via email*

There was, however, strong support, particularly from staff, governors and parents of Rowdeford, for a location which offered pupils access to wildlife, village life and a sort after rural environment. The pupils from Rowdeford submitted a video as part of their response to the consultation, which clearly articulates their support for the Rowdeford location. The video can be accessed <https://youtu.be/Heipf98H500>. Cabinet should note the responses by St Nicholas and Larkrise pupils submitted as part of the November Cabinet report. Overwhelmingly, Rowdeford parents, many of whom currently have some of the longest journeys to school, do not believe their children are experiencing rural isolation, nor is it having a detrimental impact of their children's ability to engage with their own community.

It should be noted that the one school proposals sought to build on the benefits of the Rowde community and offer new community engagement through creating a café, community gardens and facilities run by students as a vocational opportunity for young people. The headteacher and staff of Rowdeford have provided evidence of the wide range of community activities which are at the heart of the curriculum including:

- Work experience for all year 11 pupils
- Use of community buildings in Rowde including the church and the Rowdy Cow Café
- The Plus programme for pupils from mainstream schools delivered on site



- Events run by the school such as the Garden Fair and the Park Run

Respondents supporting a new school at Rowdeford noted that part of inclusion was the opportunity for students with MLD and SLD to mix and integrate.

Alternate proposals particularly expounded the benefits of urban community within easy access of shops and other local facilities. The SEND action group particularly spoke about the strong links with shops, cinema and public facilities.

*“The offer of outreach would be brilliant for a child like mine who is a round peg in a square hole. Mainstream schools need more support, especially at secondary level if they are to meet the needs of our children. I think flexible provision/attendance across more than one school would work well”.*  
Parent at WPCC meeting

Concerns were also raised about parental resilience and parents who attended the consultation meetings at St Nicholas and Larkrise spoke passionately about the role these schools play in enabling them to cope and, because of their proximity to where they lived, supporting on a near daily basis. Rowdeford school parents were keen to share that they, despite being often far away from their school experienced high levels of support from their school. However, as many of these children do not have PMLD and SLD, other parents noted that their experience was not comparable to their own.

Whatever solution is reached it will be important to ensure there:

- Are regular opportunities for parents to come to the school and social networks set up for peer and school support
- Is learning taken from out of county special schools and our own schools where families already live further away to support positive contact with parents
- Are opportunities for contact made through District Specialist Centres (nurseries for children with SEND) to be the proposals
- Are courses continued and expanded for parents and run with parents which build support and networking
- Is continued strong engagement with Wiltshire Parent Carer Council

It should also be noted that however many sites are utilised, there would continue to be families that do not benefit from living close to their child’s schools and therefore the recommendations above would still be required.

Concerns were also raised that the small community of Rowde would be overwhelmed by such a large school in the village. It is acknowledged that there would be an increase in traffic and community presence. Rowde Parish Council has written in support of the proposals, but also acknowledge that this is a sizeable change for the village. However, it was felt that this would continue to be positive for the village who have played a significant part in supporting and engaging with the current school.

Consultees significantly debated the location of the school. In particular, they noted that the significant increase in new housing was in Chippenham and Trowbridge rather than Devizes and that provision should, therefore, be retained in these areas.

Concerns were also raised about the suitability of the Rowdeford site and whether planning permission would be given. Appendix 12 provides the detailed pre-application process and gives a full assessment of the potential of the site. It addresses how the land might be used to create a good space to be educated in. The visuals are not intended to describe or set out the eventual buildings, only to provide more accurate costs, timescales and potential for the space required. An external team of professionals including Architects, Cost Advisors, Planners, Transport Consultants, Ecologists, and Archaeology and Heritage consultants have been commissioned to work with the Project Team to assess the suitability of the Rowdeford site.

The Wiltshire SEND Action Group raised with officers that a preferred location for a single school would be Melksham, Trowbridge or Chippenham. Consultees suggested that a 350 school could be based in Melksham or alternatively a school with two sites at Rowdeford and Melksham.

#### **(vi) Coproduction**

During the consultation, officers heard criticism about the consultation prior to November 2018. Some felt that the process had not placed enough weight on the views of parents and others suggested that they had been misled in the summer as they had not appreciated that there would be a proposal to shut all 3 schools. Strong comments were made that some parents (particularly the Friends of Larkrise and St Nicholas) had little faith in the process.

Equally, there were comments thanking the Council for the range of different types of consultation, the willingness to create alternate and different times for consultation and the commitment to ensuring that Councillors were fully informed. Wiltshire Parent Carer Council particularly commented that, although not everyone likes the proposals, they appreciated that they as an organisation and the parent/carers they represent had been engaged in the process from the beginning.

Even some of those who had been critical of the previous consultation processes recognised that the Council is very committed to co-production and this had been recognised in the SEND inspection by OfSTED. This report and the pre-publication consultation has sought to ensure that all, and particularly the parents and children most affected by this proposal, have had a voice to Cabinet.

#### **(vii) The Centre of Excellence**

Although there was some uncertainty about what is meant by a Centre of Excellence (some thought it was merely a soundbite), it was one of the areas where there was near unanimous support that such a centre could improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND in Wiltshire. The consultation was able to clear up some people's concerns that the Council was suggesting that a Centre of Excellence was needed because the current schools were not good enough. Whilst the Council has an ambition that all its special schools



are judged as outstanding by OfSTED, the aim of a Centre of Excellence is to share the expertise located in the school with the wider mainstream schools and providers to improve inclusion.

Some respondents noted they would have liked a bit more detail about what this actually meant, but most people recognised that this was something that the school teams could develop, building on current practice and relationships, once a decision is made about the number and location of schools. During the consultation meetings, many parents, staff and governors asked that, regardless of the outcome, plans are made to enable this element to be taken forward and developed ahead of the school build to:

- Enable school teams to work together
- Establish a new way of working between resource bases in primary schools, Enhanced Learning Provision (ELP) in secondary schools and all mainstream schools
- Support early years and post 16 education
- Improve training and support to mainstream staff particularly those who may have limited experience or training in SEND.

With the broad base of support for this element of the proposal, it would seem appropriate that whatever outcome is reached that plans are developed ahead of conclusions about school organisation to support and enable the development of good practice. The scrutiny task group gave particular strength to this approach.

#### **(viii) Transition planning to a new school**

Significant concerns were raised about the disruption to pupils who would be at one of the schools at the time of the transition. 21% of respondents who did not support the proposal identified this as one of their top three concerns. In the consultation people particularly noted their concerns for children who have ASD, noting that for the majority, even the smallest change e.g. new trainers, a different cup etc. can be really hard to deal with. They were concerned that the multiple changes that would come about from a new school would cause significant distress and anxiety for the children and their families.

Other families, however, acknowledged that some of the current school buildings were no longer adequate and that sooner rather than later their children would have to move to new buildings. They encouraged the LA to think about phased transitions, specific transition plans in addition to annual reviews, regular opportunities during the build and development of new schools for children to visit and see the building and strong design principles that bear in mind the sensory challenges for some children and young people. Consultees acknowledged that regardless of the number of locations, if new sites were needed there would be a level of disruption for those involved.

Positive support was given to the new “Time out” courses developed through a partnership with WPC and the Council which benefits from both professional and parent/carer trainers working together to support, train and network families who have children with SEND.

The Council will need to plan and work with families regarding the significant concern in respect to how changes will affect the wellbeing of children in their current schools. Close work will be needed on the part of the schools, their SENCOs and the LA SEND lead workers to ensure a plan is in place to ensure that anxiety and distress is kept at a minimum for all children. In addition, it will be important to continue to work alongside WPC and Children and Family Services to ensure that parents and carers are supported through this time.

*“Any change can be unsettling, but in order to meet the individual needs of the growing number of children with SEND children in the country we need to evolve. It is important to embrace change so that future generations can benefit”.* Parent via email

**(ix) Status of a new school – a new academy**

The Council consulted on taking forward a new school as an academy. A number of respondents to the consultation argued that the school should be an enlargement of Rowdeford and should be a maintained school rather than an academy. The arguments presented as to why this should be an enlargement included:

- The loss of what many respondents from the Rowdeford community described as the ‘magic’ of the school
- Concern that the threat of closing the school could result in the loss of valued staff who may feel uncertain about the future
- The potential loss of the work of The Rowdeford Charity Trust
- It is a good school with outstanding features

In respect to schools being maintained, arguments against an academy were based on the fact that staff felt that they were proud to work for Wiltshire Council and that parents felt that the Council would not be able to sufficiently discharge its responsibilities for children with SEND through an academy. Many parents were concerned that an Academy sponsor might not maintain the philosophy of the new school as set out by the Council and this added to their general sense of uncertainty.

There were a number of reasons why a new academy school was proposed by officers in the November 2018 Cabinet paper:

A new school rather than an enlarged school - There are some advantages to having an enlarged school as in this approach:

- i. There could be greater sense of continuity
- ii. In terms of the DfE guidance there is flexibility as the closing schools are treated within the rules for amalgamation which allow dates for closing and opening to be more fluidly related

It is recommended that regardless of the number of sites agreed by Cabinet this is a new school for the following reasons:

- i. If one school at Rowdeford, changing a school from 130 pupils to 350/400 is such a significant change that it is outside the appropriate bounds of “enlarging a school”
- ii. If more than one site is agreed, it is proposed that there should be a single leadership team
- iii. Creating a new school would enable all staff to have equal access to the new staffing structure

- iv. The new school would also be a Centre of Excellence and there is a need to appreciate the sense of newness and difference by creating a new school

An Academy rather than a maintained school - the November paper recommended that the new school was an academy for the following reasons:

- i. An academy has access to capital funds that maintained schools do not
- ii. Academisation is the Government's preferred approach to opening new schools

However, Wiltshire Council can also set up the new school either as a new maintained school (with permission from the Secretary of State) or as an enlargement of one of the existing schools. It is recommended that a new maintained school, regardless of the number of sites, is opened for the following reasons:

- i. While this would need dispensation from the Secretary of State with a clear case, it is possible for the Local Authority to set up a new maintained school. This possibility was not explored in the November paper
- ii. The benefits of this approach would be the sense of greater control by the Local Authority of the quality and standards of the school and its relationship to other local schools. Careful use of TUPE regulations can ensure fair access to posts for all staff
- iii. This would address staff and parental concerns raised during the consultation about the school being an academy

#### **(x) Early Years**

The proposal suggested that the school would have provision from 3 years upwards. Both St Nicholas and Larkrise are registered to provide from three but, in practice, this option is not used. Consultees felt there was little need for this provision as the District Specialist Centres, working with mainstream nurseries and childminders, provide good opportunities and could be part of the wider approach to centres of excellence and in reach and outreach. Responders felt that a better use of the buildings would be to provide post 16 education (please see Section (iv) for further consideration).

#### **(xi) Staffing, recruitment and retention**

There were a number of issues raised by staff, not all of which can be addressed before a final decision is made. However, staff were concerned about:

- Having to travel to work, when currently, some of them do not drive or have commitments which mean living and working in the same town was important
- Working for an academy
- Whether their specialist skills would still be needed
- Whether a school in Rowde could recruit sufficient staff
- Whether they would all get fair access to the jobs available
- Staff choosing to leave the current schools because of uncertainty about their future jobs

Due to concerns about the recruitment and retention of staff and the need to have a single leadership team to drive forward the changes necessary prior to a new build being completed in September 2023, it is recommended that a new

maintained special school with a single leadership team that covers the existing St Nicholas, Rowdeford and Larkrise schools is established as soon as possible and no later than September 2021.

It is recognised that some staff could choose to take redundancy rather than take a job in a single site if they do not want to travel. If there was more than one site, this would not be an issue. Senior staff at Rowdeford were asked in the consultation about how difficult it was to recruit staff and how far staff travel to work. The senior team robustly argued that they have no issues of recruitment and noted that applicants come from all across and outside the county to have a job at the school. Staff suggested better use of lift sharing, noting that this would be a positive impact on the environment as well as saving travel costs. Larkrise staff also noted that currently some staff start the day as a passenger assistant and then become care or teaching assistants during the school day. This offers continuity to pupils as well as travel solutions for staff. Section (ii) notes that there would be an increase to staff travel times, although perhaps not as much as feared by staff during the consultation. This would be appropriate for both a single or multiple site option.



**Academy-v-maintained school** - This is addressed in the above section. Some staff were adamant that they did not want to work in an academy, while others saw it offering change and development. In the Rowdeford consultation, one parent noted that her experience was that academies lost focus on children. However, both at this consultation and others, staff who had worked in both academies and maintained schools noted that the strength of a school was not in whether it was an academy or not, but the skill, experience and approach of the staff and leadership team and their commitment to positive engagement with parent/carers.

**Fair access to jobs and the potential for Rowdeford to be enlarged** - This is addressed in the section above. Some staff felt that if Rowdeford school was used for the site of the new school (regardless of whether it closed), that staff from other schools would be disadvantaged. Equally, the Rowdeford staff and governors strongly argued that enlargement of their school, rather than closing all three and opening a new school, was the way ahead.

**Staff choosing to leave and available jobs** - Some staff noted that they felt that the schools would lose staff due to uncertainty about the future or not liking the outcome. The Council acknowledges that this is a difficult time and that staff of all three schools must be engaged as soon as possible following the final decision. A swift move to a new shared structure could reduce anxiety and start to build positive changes sooner.





## (xii) Costs and Feasibility

A feasibility cost appraisal based on the initial design response has been carried out identifying a forecast project cost of up to £32,187,872 inclusive of construction costs, fees, equipment and furniture and contingencies. As established in the November 2018 Cabinet Report the Construction Works remains at £20m for creating 350 places. This new figure would create space for up to 400 pupils.

As this proposal is only at the initial stages, this is an outline feasibility. Further work needs to be undertaken on the brief and design when Cabinet has made a final decision. Consequently, this report presents three scenarios. The best-case scenario of c£26m assumes no risks would be encountered. The worst-case scenario of c£35m accommodates significant risks that officers currently feel can be appropriately mitigated for. Hence, the likely cost at this feasibility stage is estimated at c£32m. This figure also allows for a staged build which could potentially enable an earlier start for some pupils e.g. primary or secondary.

Description	Predicted Cost		
	Best case	Worst case	Anticipated
<b>Construction Works Costs:</b>			
New build works	£20,526,750	£20,526,750	£20,526,750
Refurbishment of existing school accommodation	£1,995,000	£1,995,000	£1,995,000
External works	£1,607,375	£1,607,375	£1,607,375
Demolitions & asbestos	£168,750	£168,750	£168,750
<i>Construction Works Sub-total</i>	<i>£24,297,875</i>	<i>£24,297,875</i>	<i>£24,297,875</i>
<b>Non-Works:</b>			
Fees	£2,413,579	£2,413,579	£2,413,579
Fixtures, Fittings, Equipment (including ICT equipment)	£1,250,000	£1,250,000	£1,250,000
<i>Non-Works sub-total</i>	<i>£2,930,863</i>	<i>£2,930,863</i>	<i>£2,930,863</i>
<b>Risks (contingency pot)</b>			
Statutory External Factors	£0	£2,985,000	£2,177,500

Non-Statutory External Factors	£0	£482,000	£294,500
Project Definition	£0	£1,625,000	£825,000
Design & Technology	£0	£1,335,938	£848,438
Contractual	£0	£3,154,688	£2,496,875
Site Conditions	£0	£767,813	£386,563
Financial & Commercial	£0	£28,125	£28,125
<i>Contingency sub-total</i>	<i>£0</i>	<i>£10,378,563</i>	<i>£7,057,000</i>
<b>Risk that could be backed off to contractor</b>			£2,511,500
<b>Total Forecast Project Cost</b>	<b>£27,228,738</b>	<b>£37,607,301</b>	<b>£31,774,238</b>

In all three scenarios, the following costs are to be expected:

- The construction works costs are just under £23m
- Fees are just over £2m (c10%)
- Fixtures, Fittings and Equipment are just over £1m

Heritage and Highways officers identified two key risks of the Rowdeford site:

**Heritage** - The original country house is a listed building as is the north-east entrance lodge and its related gates/piers. Other buildings and structures within the designated parkland are listed by association – these include the walled garden, greenhouses, and former kennels and south-west entrance gate piers/walls. Outside the site, the nearby Rowdeford Bridge over the Summerham Brook is also a standalone listed building.

**Highways** - The Council's Highways Officer was consulted on the suitability of the Rowdeford site in early January 2018 and was of the opinion at the time that with regard to highway safety in order to support a maximum of 400 place school on the site that a right turning lane might be required which would be impossible to achieve given the width of the road.

To address the heritage risks, a Heritage Appraisal study has been undertaken and consultations have taken place with the council's conservation officer to ensure effective early engagement. A full copy of the study is included with the Feasibility Report and a synopsis given in Appendix 12.

To address the concerns of the Highways Officer, a very detailed Transport Assessment has been carried out including road/traffic surveys and data has been obtained from Rowdeford School as to how current staff and pupil get to school and where they travel from. School travel data has also been obtained for Larkrise and St Nicholas schools and this coupled with the Rowdeford school information has been used to forecast the traffic impact of a 350/400 place school at Rowdeford. The conclusion is that:

- There is no need for a right lane turn
- Improvements should be made to the school entrance
- Improvements should be made widening the footpath and consideration given to field footpaths that could also be upgraded behind the school.
- Two entrances/exits could be utilised



- It is also a possibility that the 30mph sign could be moved to include the school. This is not a requirement, but a consideration.

Another potential significant risk at the start of the process was linked to Ecology and whilst the site is not covered by any statutory designations, there are two local Wildlife Sites adjacent to the site boundaries. Further detail is again given in Appendix 12. The assessment suggests that there is a range of wildlife (that students can benefit from), but the risks associated with Ecology have been assessed as being medium and are manageable.

From an Architecture/Build point of view, the feasibility report shows that the Rowdeford, site including the adjacent Council owned land is capable of accommodating a 350/400-place school.

The team then took time to assess the potential for the buildings required. There is a detailed summary in Appendix 12. showing the potential for the building and how the land could be used. The team reached the following conclusions:

- The site is a rich and vibrant environment in which to place a school giving children the potential for an extensive outdoor and spacious indoor facilities and classrooms
- There is significant capacity to create intimate and bespoke spaces which enable children/young people to experience transition, secure and contained spaces, open and restful spaces, supportive and engaging environments
- There is sufficient land to build in stages/phases or all at one time and to consider residential provision
- Initial assessments suggest that there can be attractive layouts making the most of both the land available and the grade 2 listed building
- That as identified above the planning constraints are not insurmountable, but would need to be planned into the development



In summary, the land and feasibility assessments suggest that while there are matters to attend to in respect to heritage, ecology and highways they are not high risk and strategies can be implemented to preserve and make good use of a beautiful listed building and enable children and young people to benefit from this diverse rural location.

Below are further issues that were presented in the proposal, but did not receive significant comment through the consultation:

**(xiii) Balance of denominational provision, impact on rural primary schools and displaced pupils**

This proposal does not change the balance of denomination provision, rural primary schools or lead to displaced pupils and was not raised as an issue within the consultation.

Issues were raised in the consultation about the relative benefits of a rural versus an urban education for children/young people with SEND. There was strong feeling from parents and staff at St Nicholas and Larkrise that such a rural setting prevented children from learning how to access shops and facilities and would lead to fewer people (without SEND) being in communication with children with SEND. However, there was an equally strong voice that children do not get enough time to access a rural education and that the current generation are losing touch with the benefits of outdoor education and the particularly the rural benefits of Wiltshire.

**(xiv) Admissions**

At early stages of the plan there were some concerns that all pupils, regardless of the SEN designation, would be offered places at the school. The current proposal, which identifies that the school would focus on complex needs, seems to have reassured people that the new provision would not be for children of all SEND designations. There are separate plans being taken forward which include new places at Downland school and Springfields for pupils with SEMH/ASD. In addition, the Council is delighted that a submission for a new free school for children with ASD/SEMH in the south has been successful. In addition, the Council is also working with mainstream schools to create new resource base places and to look at how the approach to resource bases can be supported in secondary schools through the Centre of Excellence.

There were also some concerns raised in the consultation that as the one school is being proposed for the Rowdeford site that priority would be given to pupils with MLD. Equally so there was concern from Rowdeford parents that pupils with SLD would gain priority. However, respondents also noted the positive opportunity for greater integration for pupils with complex needs with those with MLD. In addition, many respondents felt the approach to some pupils being offered dual registration, short term opportunities in mainstream and special school, secondments for staff both in and out of the special school would also bring about integration.

The Council recognises these concerns, bringing together large numbers of children and staff whether on a single or multiple site would need to be carefully planned. However, staff in all the schools consulted, regardless of their concerns, were quick to note that they would ensure every child and young person would continue to have the best support they could give. There was wide spread enthusiasm for learning new skills from each other.

**(xv) Curriculum and Special Educational Needs**

The curriculum was briefly sketched out in the proposal. Once a decision has been made work will need to be taken forward to develop this with staff, parent/carers and pupils to create a range of options and paths for children/young people to take through their education.

Respondents particularly noted the benefits of a larger school offering a range of different pathways and a wider range of options allowing pupils to benefit from




different subjects, specialist approaches and differing environments which could be tailor made to meet needs. If on one site there can be easy movement between pathways. It is acknowledged that using two or three sites (or more) would make these transitions potentially more stressful, particularly for children/young people with ASD. Some parents had concerns that if a single school could not meet their child's needs there was no other option than travelling to Salisbury or out of county. It is hoped that the benefits of the larger school would offer a good range of options which would increase rather than decrease choice within the school. There will continue to be access to Exeter House, and special schools in bordering counties as well as independent special schools.

## Analysis of Other Options

8. Having more than one site was strongly put forward by a number of parents, especially from St Nicholas and Larkrise, as a preferred approach. This approach, and others, was analysed through an options appraisal across a number of sites, utilising existing sites and alternate sites.

In order to have transparency as to why officers recommended a single site school in November 2018, officers developed an options appraisal which is attached as Appendix 14. All options were evaluated against 4 main criteria:

- Sufficient provision – a minimum of 220 additional places are needed of which 50 are for complex needs in the North. These should be in line with the Department for Education (DfE) requirements.
- Value for money – The Council needs to get the best special school buildings for its money and use revenue appropriately to meet need.
- Quality - Great design helps harness the creative energy and passions of the pupils, teachers and support staff.
- Outcomes - Thriving pupils and staff feel a sense of ownership and belonging to their school. This helps build good relationships, inspires outstanding learning and teaching and a healthy lifestyle.

Wiltshire Council Where everybody matters										
Scoring criteria										
Positive 				Neutral 				Negative 		
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Sufficient provision										
We need at least 220 new special school places in Wiltshire by 2026 123 in the North, of which 50 will be for complex needs Reduce overcrowding (in line with DfE guidance) Impact on timeline										
Value for money										
Cost effective buildings Maximise potential for reuse of existing buildings Reduction in running and maintenance costs Reduction in management costs More in-county specialist provision										
Quality										
Partnerships Transport - time and cost (public transport links) Considerate Constructors Scheme Community Engagement Facilities and resources Medical and health support Co-production and support from families Staffing, recruitment and retention										
Outcomes										
Teaching and curriculum Pupil voice and influence Outreach/engagement with other schools In-reach/engagement with other schools 14 + pathways										

All four criteria carried the same weight – 25% of the overall score. However, each option needed to “unlock” before moving to the next in sequence. So, if there was not sufficient provision then it would not be possible to proceed to review the option for value for money. The report considers the barriers and issues associated with each potential option.

It is not being presented that the appraisal is scientific or free from subjectivity, but it does provide a clear methodology for applying the same criteria across all options. Cabinet members are able to use the appraisal to score options themselves. The options were scored by a number of officers, two special school headteachers (it should be noted that this was not undertaken by the headteachers of Larkrise or St Nicholas although it was sent to them) and a representative of WPCC.

The following options were ruled out:

- Do nothing - this will not enable the Council to meet the requirement for more school places
- Expand Larkrise - the site does not meet DfE's minimum recommended areas because of the site constraints
- Expand St Nicholas - the site does not meet DfE's minimum recommended areas because of the site constraints
- Develop Ashton Street - the site does not meet DfE's minimum recommended areas because of the site constraints as either a stand alone provision or combined with Larkrise
- Develop Trowbridge West Ashton Manor Farm - Planning consider this to be in remote countryside, and other issues, meaning there is likely to an objection in principle
- Develop Melksham Land at Woolmore Farm - it is considered that the designation of the site as Public Open Space, the severely restricted access rights and the proximity to a Listed building make it not suitable for development as a new special school
- Develop Wyke Road Trowbridge - concerns over access would limit options, alternate use for residential being proposed as part of larger scheme
- Develop Chippenham Magistrates Court - the site does not meet DfE's minimum recommended areas for a 350-place school, but could be used for a smaller school, however it would increase costs due to site purchase
- Develop land next to Rowde primary school - the Planning Officer considers this site to potentially be one of the better options – however it is outside the settlement boundary and is likely to require a right turning lane
- Expand Rowdeford, Larkrise and St Nicholas on site and with new sites, keeping separate leadership teams, but creating an overarching board with the 4 MATs - in terms of sufficiency this would not meet DfE standards for Larkrise and St Nicholas and would need to use new sites. The free school option is not possible for replacement of school places

Of the other options:

**Expand Rowdeford as a single site school**

This option scored the highest amongst all the options (7.07 out of 10). The capital costs for up to 400 children would be up to £32m and revenue costs of approximately £10.2m. The advantages of this option are:

- Revenue costs are reduced the fewer sites that are used
- Specialist staff and facilities can be concentrated on one site-there is more potential to have co-location of other services
- The travel model ensures all but 2 children can travel to school in less than an hour, improving the current provision of 45 children over an hour
- New, state of the art facilities are built
- Greater curriculum choice

The disadvantages of this option are:

- This was not supported by 55% of consultees and particularly by many parents of children at Larkrise and St Nicholas
- There is reduced choice in location of school
- This does not allow an urban community education favoured by many respondents
- Does not address concerns of parents who wanted a school close to home in the event of an emergency

### **Develop Abbeyfield as a single site**

This option scored 6.2 out of 10. The capital costs would be higher (up to £40m) as use is not being made of existing buildings. The revenue costs for a single site remain at £10.2m. The advantages are the same as a single site at Rowdeford except it would address the criteria of many parents to have an urban based community curriculum. There are some significant disadvantages that would make this site unsuitable:

- This is the most expensive option in capital costs
- One site is committed as part of a PFI scheme
- There are travel concerns for the other site which is not committed

### **Develop Rowdeford with primary satellite provision in Larkrise and St Nicholas**

This would involve expanding Rowdeford to accommodate an additional 100 places with numbers at Larkrise and Rowdeford capped at 50 each. This option scored 5.99 out of 10. Due to the fact that existing buildings are being used and the new build would only need to accommodate 100 pupils, the capital costs are lower at up to £22m. Revenue costs, however, are higher at approximately £10.9m. The advantages of this model are:

- Greater location choice at the primary phase
- Addresses concerns that the one site proposal would create a 'super' school which would be too large
- Provides an educational presence in the main urban locations - Chippenham and Trowbridge - which would address concerns of some parents about segregation and a lack of urban community education
- Reduced capital costs

The disadvantages are:

- Increased revenue costs
- Split site options do not allow for specialist staff and facilities to be concentrated in one location
- There is potentially an inequality in the condition of buildings with St Nicholas and Larkrise school sites continuing to not meet DfE minimum area recommendations and children still experiencing overcrowding
- There are concerns that multiple sites reduce continuity of experience and provision for all children

### **Extend St Nicholas and Larkrise onto new sites and maintain Rowdeford**

Appendix 13 includes the model put forward by the Wiltshire SEND Action group. This scored 5.49 out of 10 but this would increase if the number of sites were reduced. The capital costs (estimate £28m) are less than a single site option due to the utilisation of existing buildings but the revenue costs are significantly higher at £12.5m due to approximately 5 sites being utilised. It would be possible to reduce the revenue costs if the number of sites were reduced and there were new builds only in Trowbridge and Chippenham, however, larger new builds would increase capital costs. The proposal also suggests that existing Resource Bases could come under this centre of Excellence and that there would be potential to both expand Resource Bases and deliver outreach and training to them and mainstream schools. The advantages of this model are:

- It enables families and their children to feel stronger identity with their preferred local community
- The Wiltshire SEND Action Group strongly articulated that this model would meet their criteria of being local and small, having more choice and a community-based curriculum
- If new sites were found in Chippenham and Trowbridge, this proposal offers the potential of 420+ places across 3 sites (Chippenham (140 places) and Trowbridge (150) in addition to 160+ at Rowdeford) under a single leadership

The disadvantages of this option are:

- Significantly increased revenue costs
- Split site options do not allow for specialist staff and facilities to be concentrated in one location
- There is potentially an inequality in the condition of buildings with St Nicholas and Larkrise school sites continuing to not meet DfE minimum area recommendations and children still experiencing overcrowding. This disadvantage would be addressed if 2 new builds accommodated all pupils in Trowbridge and Chippenham
- There are concerns that multiple sites reduce continuity of experience and provision for all children

### **Utilise the Rowdeford site and maintain St Nicholas**

This option maintains a site in Chippenham in the event of increased housing and demand for school places. It scored 6.33 out of 10 with revenue costs of £10.4m and capital costs of £33m. The advantages of this model:

- Provides more school places (460)
- Partially addresses concerns about choice of location and urban community education
- Maintains a site in Chippenham which has a HIF application to increase the number of homes substantially

The disadvantages of this option are:

- Split site options do not allow for specialist staff and facilities to be concentrated in one location
- There is potentially an inequality in the condition of buildings with St Nicholas continuing to not meet DfE minimum area recommendations and children still experiencing overcrowding
- There are concerns that multiple sites reduce continuity of experience and provision for all children.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Engagement**

9. There has been a scrutiny task group that shared their views at the November 2018 Cabinet Meeting. A further report was shared at the Children's Select committee on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2019. This engagement has helpfully enabled there to be a robust investigation of the options and their impact on children with SEND and their families. In June 2018, the task group did raise a number of concerns, recommending that the Council look towards a three-school option. Their latest report in March 2019 suggests that, having had the opportunity to visit two schools, one that went through the process of bringing three schools together and another which is a similar size to the proposed schools, the task group felt that with a well-managed process identified through



the listed recommendations that there was much to be gained within the proposal. The recommendations include the following (more detail is in the Select Committee report):

- Make arrangements for school staff to work with the architect and development team-this will be implemented when a final decision is made by Cabinet
- Clarify the role of the academy sponsor in the Centre of Excellence-it is proposed that this is a maintained school
- Ensure WPCC and parents are closely involved through the process-a parent group to work with the Project Team will be established as well as regular engagement through WPCC
- Ensure parents are kept well informed-a communications plan will be developed with WPCC
- Ensure facilities such as hydrotherapy pools are available for community use
- Ensure a dedicated space for multi-agency staff, including health-this would be built into the plans
- Ensure that an effective transitional process is in place

*“What’s going on here has a knock-on effect with those around us – staff will leave in droves because there is no security for them. Might be able to transfer to new school but might not keep their job”.* Parent comment at face-to-face session

The Scrutiny task group met again and interviewed officers in May 2019 following the conclusion of the extended consultation. A report from this Scrutiny Group will be discussed at a future Children’s Select Committee.

## **Safeguarding Implications**

10. There are no anticipated safeguarding issues arising from this proposal. Special school pupils are vulnerable, and this proposal seeks to enable better co-ordinated and consistent approaches to their support.

## **Public Health Implications**

11. The provision of education, especially in a SEND context, positively contributes to population health and wellbeing. Access to education plays a vital role in providing the foundations needed to ensure that pupils have the best start in life, giving them the ability to learn and understand about health and wellbeing and have the opportunity to live healthier lives. However specific risks were considered as part of the consultation:
- a) Would the changes in travel routes and times for children and young people present medical risks?
  - b) Would the proposals increase or decrease access to continuing care provision? e.g. Speech and Language Therapy, Physiotherapy, Occupational therapy, paediatricians?
  - c) Would the proposals increase or decrease access to emergency care?

To answer these questions views were particularly sought from Virgin Care (the current provider of community health care in Wiltshire), Oxford Health (the



current provider of mental health support for children), Wiltshire Ambulance Trust and Air ambulance, the three main hospitals which support Wiltshire patients (Great Western Hospital in Swindon, Bath Royal United Hospital, and SFT in Salisbury). These points are addressed earlier in the report under Medical and health support.

## **Procurement Implications**

12. None at this stage: the potential, subject to due process and procurement regulations, would be for building contracts, which would be let according to the Council's policies. Consideration has been given to the potential advantage of a strategic partnership with a commercial developer in a building project, but any such advantage is seen to be negligible in terms of the interests for which the Council is responsible. The procurement process would be considered as part of and following post publication consultation on the decision.

## **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

13. At every stage of the process of developing proposals, Equalities Impact Assessments (EIA) have been carried out at regular intervals. Appendix 15 has the revised version considering the issues identified through this Cabinet report. The EIA has shaped and informed the proposals and will continue to be a process that will support secure decision making. The consultation has been extensive and inclusive, and every attempt has been made to get the views of interested parties. The EIA is clear that the majority of respondents were against the proposal to move to one school and that there would be some negative impacts for some children and their families.

Cabinet is required to pay due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, however, it is not always possible to eliminate all negative impacts of a decision on a particular group. In this report officers have tried to ensure that any decision that Cabinet makes is done in view of all the relevant information, including knowledge of any negative equality impacts as identified by the EIA. This report and the subsequent recommendations seek to decrease or eliminate any disadvantage for any children or family involved. The proposal for a Centre of Excellence positively seeks to offer greater access and diversity of curriculum and support in a world class learning environment.

The impact assessment suggests that mitigating actions can reduce, but not eliminate risk. This is a very complex project and it is challenging to put across all the reasoning and balance of issues that the Council has reviewed to arrive at the proposed option. There are over 3500 pupils with an EHCP and many more on SEN support in mainstream schools. It is essential that the plan supports both the



individual and majority needs.

The assessment of issues and of protected characteristics suggests that overall the one school proposal can have a significant positive impact for children and young people with SEND both in the school and supported through the Centre of Excellence in terms of:

- Wellbeing
- Increased availability of choice (within the school)
- Progress
- Attainment
- Health
- Community opportunities,
- Inclusion and integration

However, it is recognised that some students:

- Will have longer journeys (although more will have shorter journeys)
- May experience a level of disruption as they move from the old to new schools
- May have worries during the development of the project about what school will be like in the future.

For some parents:

- This may be seen as a loss of support – the school is often seen as extended family – causing anxiety and increased stress and worry
- This will/may incur additional travel costs
- Require time and commitment by officers to build relationships and engagement, particularly where consultees see the outcome as not their preferred option.

It is hoped this will be mitigated by:

- Many opportunities for engagement in the development of the school and centres of excellence
- Good transition plans and investment in support for children, staff and families
- Better access to health care professionals
- Increased support and networking with families via the schools, WPCC and SEND team
- Greater diversity and choice within the one school curriculum as this will be a large school
- Well-arranged transport and transport plans
- Good planning, coproduction and communication throughout the progress of the project
- Taking forward the plan more rapidly than first envisaged by transferring the schools into one school at the soonest possible opportunity – thus:
  - Reducing anxiety for staff about roles and jobs
  - Beginning the work around the Centre of Excellence as soon as possible e.g. shared training, strategy and intention
  - Creating shared approaches to significant matters like admissions and also back room functions such as photocopying contracts etc.

- Taking forward the statutory processes around the buildings and locations of schools on the original timetable in 2023
- Building the new provision in a way that offers certain groups of pupils to potentially move in early and create phased transition
- Applying to the Secretary of State to set the new school up as a maintained school offering greater flexibility around transition

Please see the EIA for detailed analysis. The options appraisal can be read alongside this.



## Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

14. Since the November Cabinet, further work has been taken forward to review how a new build at Rowde/Rowdeford would impact on the local environment. These reports are contained in Appendix 12.

These reports conclude that there are considerable benefits to pupils in having a school within the fertile countryside location of Rowdeford school which is home to a number of rare and protected species. The report concludes that new buildings at the Rowdeford site would not negatively impact on the wildlife and their habitats.

*The transport links, including the road access, is poor. The roads are narrow, twisty and dangerous with passing HGVs; this is a huge concern considering the school will be 43minutes to the nearest A&E, not counting the ambulance needing to get to the remote school first. For this reason, I will explore ALL other options before sending my child with epilepsy there.*  
Parent, on line comment

Consideration was also given to how travel may impact on the environment. The attached transport report (Appendix 9) concludes that the use of vehicles need not either decrease or increase hazards to the environment. The new builds would be designed with regard to principles related to conservation and renewable energy where ever possible. Principles that were taken forward in the extension of Rowdeford school in 2008 which can be further invested in during this new build. (e.g. the biomass boiler)

## **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken**

15. There are a number of risks associated with not making a decision:

- Continued uncertainty for staff, parents and children
- Inability to provide sufficiency of SEND places in the north of the county
- Continued revenue pressures
- Children continuing to be educated in buildings not fit for purpose

## **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks**

This report lays out in detail the risks and concerns presented by respondents who opposed the proposal. Each risk clearly identifies plans for mitigation.

## **Financial Implications**

16.

**(i) Capital Programme** - The estimated and anticipated capital costs (building cost) of £32 million are shown in Appendix 12.

The costing allows for 100 additional places and the replacement of 300 current places to reduce existing overcrowding and; an improvement in the conditional of school building as agreed by Members in the November report.

The expectation is that the local authority would have to provide the necessary capital finance.

There is provision in the current capital programme ("Construction Works Sub-total" in Appendix 12, Financial section) of £19 million as per the November Cabinet report and this is financed by capital borrowing. Therefore, the assumption is that the Council will have to borrow to pay for the increased investment, with the consequence that there will be additional loan repayment costs falling on the revenue budget (see below).

External sources of capital finance are very limited. The priority for a Wiltshire free school bid is the new special school in Salisbury planned to provide up to 150 places, addressing pre-existing geographical imbalance with a shortfall of places in the south, and growth in autism.

**(ii) Dedicated Schools Grant** - The revenue cost of special schools and out of county placements is met from the high needs block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG). The recent budget monitoring report to the Cabinet makes mention of the increasing difficulty of containing expenditure within the high needs block. This position is not unique to Wiltshire. Looking ahead, the projection of pupil numbers will see a greater strain on DSG and when this is coupled with the 'hardening' of the national funding formula for schools. It is highly likely that any

shortfall in the high needs block will spill over into the council's general fund budget.

The creation of an additional 100 places should avoid recurrent DSG revenue costs of £2.2 million. The High Needs Block is under significant financial pressure and so the costs avoided would not release budget but would avoid a future overspend.

**(iii) General Fund** - As mentioned above, it would seem that any resource shortfall in the high needs block of DSG will become a call on the general fund. The council's medium-term financial plan already forecasts a continuing need to identify means of reducing budget spend, through a combination of income generation and savings in expenditure. The potential impact of increased numbers of pupils with special educational needs is not factored into these forecasts.

It is clear that the council needs to act to mitigate the effect of increased SEND pupil numbers. However, because it is likely the council will have to borrow to finance the build costs, this will result in borrowing costs on the general fund. It is not possible to charge these costs against DSG. Based on the preferred option, the borrowing cost that would have to be met in the first full year would be in the order of £1.635 million. Members need to be aware that this is factored into the current medium-term financial plan at the original estimate of £0.970 million and will need to be increased. This represents a fixed additional annual cost that will have to be met from savings elsewhere in the council's budget as part of the annual budget setting process.

One further implication could be the balances held by the current schools. If a school has surplus balances immediately prior to the point of amalgamation or closure this is transferred for the benefit of the new academy. However, if a deficit balance exists then the amount must be met by the council from its own resources. At 31 March 2018, all schools were in a surplus position but 2 out of the 3 are forecasting in-year deficits in 2018-19. All 3 special schools are projecting in-year deficits for each of the ensuing 4 years, with an overall collective deficit of £1.758M by the end of 2022-23. Transfer to a maintained school does not result in the same implications as both asset or deficit remains with the local authority.

**(iv) General** - The council is in a difficult position. Without a change in the planned operation of the high needs block within DSG and an increase nationally in high needs funding, the council needs to plan for additional costs falling on the general fund. This can be mitigated to some extent by the option now proposed, which however, will result in debt costs falling on the council. The council does not receive any funding for schools over-and-above DSG and therefore schools-related expenditure now falling on an already stretched general fund budget is an unwelcome



additional pressure. The high needs block of the dedicated schools grant funding from the DfE is currently forecasting an overspend and the work of a task and finish group (High Needs Working Group) comprising Heads, a Parent Carer representative and Council Officers continues with a work programme and regular reports including further proposed mitigations to reduce spending levels are being shared with Schools Forum at each meeting.

There are choices to be made in responding to the consultation. None of these are funded; however, if an option were chosen other than the one now recommended the result would be an even higher level of unfunded costs. Initial projections taking into account:

- Staffing costs
- Non-staffing costs
- Transport

And suggests that there is a potential for up to a 4% savings on a one site model which includes an improved transport time suggesting the majority of children/young people can have journeys of less than an hour. Whereas at the other end of the scale the multi-site model (5 sites) could incur additional costs of 26% on current expenditure.

Overall capital costs benefit from utilising existing buildings, but revenue costs are not reduced or become significantly increased by multiple sites. The one site option at Rowdeford benefits from utilising existing buildings, a new build which improves annual maintenance costs and ensuring that costs are focused on children rather than the administration of multiple sites.

## Legal Implications

17 Under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (as amended by the Education Act 2011), the opening and closure of maintained schools is governed by The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 (“Establishment and Discontinuance Regulations”). When exercising functions under these regulations regard must be had to guidance published by the Department of Education (DoE), including *Opening and closing maintained schools: Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers (November 2018)*, which sets out the statutory 5 step process.

Extensive and wide-ranging pre-publication consultation has already been undertaken and concluded on the 6th May 2019, as set out earlier in this report. Therefore, subject to Cabinet’s decision, the guidance provides for 4 further stages as follows:

### Publication

- Obtain consent of the Secretary of State to publish proposals
- Publication of a statutory notice and proposal
- Copies of the notice and proposal must be sent to Department of Education within one week of publication

### Representation period



- Any person can send objections or comments to the LA within 4 weeks from the date of publication of the proposal

## Decision

- The local authority as the proposer must refer the matter to the School Adjudicator, the decision-maker for the establishment of a new school, with related proposals needing to be considered together
- Where permitted appeals must be made within 4 weeks of the notification of the decision
- Copies of the decision record must be sent to Department of Education.

## Implementation

- No prescribed timescale. However, the implementation date must be as specified in the published notice, subject to any modifications made by the decision-maker

The Cabinet, as the decision maker on behalf of the Council, is now asked to make a decision on the options presented. In doing so Cabinet must have regard to the above guidance. They will need to be satisfied that the consultation carried out to date was appropriate, fair and open, and that full consideration has been given to all the responses received.

A link to the statutory guidance documents are included within the background papers at the end of this report.

## Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

The PSED is a duty requiring public bodies and others carrying out public functions to have due regard to:

- a. the elimination of discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- b. the advancement of equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- c. the fostering of good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The protected characteristics are defined at Section 4 of the Act as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Given the subject matter of this report, it is clear that the PSED applies to this decision.

In making a decision on the options put forward in this report Cabinet must be aware of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) when undertaking their deliberations. They must have due regard to the need to achieve the above three statutory objectives as set out in s.149(1) of the Equality Act 2010 (“the PSED”).

“You have borne our questions, our worries and anxieties with calm professionalism throughout and we very much appreciate the diligence with which you have pursued every suggestion we have offered up for consideration.”  
Wiltshire SEND Action group

They must exercise the PSED with rigour and with an open mind. The detailed Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) appended to this report will inform their judgement on this requirement.

The following other statutory provisions are also relevant:

**Education Act 2002 Section 175**

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 (“s.175”) requires that a local authority in discharging its education functions must do so with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and must exercise such functions with a view to this.

**Children and Families Act 2014 Section 27**

Section 27 of the Children and Families Act 2014 (“s.27”) a local authority is required to keep under review education provision, training provision and social care provision for children and young people with special educational needs.

**Education Act 2004 Section 11**

Section 11 of the Children’s Act 2004 (“s.11”) a local authority is required to ensure that functions and services are discharged having regards to the needs of safeguarding and promote the welfare of children.

**Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006**

Under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE) an obligation would be placed upon the proposed new school to automatically transfer to it, all qualifying employees of the three school under a proposed closure.

## **Conclusions**

18 Having completed pre-publication consultation it is recommended that the Cabinet:

- Approves the establishment of a new maintained special school with a single leadership team for the existing St Nicholas, Rowdeford and Larkrise schools as soon as possible and no later than 1 September 2021
- Approves the closure of St Nicholas, Rowdeford and Larkrise school as a related proposal on the 31 August 2021
- Approves expansion on the existing Rowdeford site to accommodate up to 400 pupils as part of the new special school by September 2023
- Notes that, in the event of Cabinet approving the proposals that a final decision by Cabinet would be required following representations.
- Authorises the Executive Director of Children’s Services, after consultation with the Cabinet member for Children, Education and Skills, the Director of Legal, Electoral and Registration Services and Chief Finance Officer/Section 151 Officer to take all necessary steps to implement Cabinet’s decision.

That this is achieved by:

- Subject to consent of the Secretary of State, approving the issue of a statutory notice and 4-week representation period on the proposal to



discontinue St Nicholas, Larkrise and Rowdeford as three separate Special Schools with effect from no later than the 31 August 2021. The notice also to refer to the opening of one new special school from September 2021 under the Opening and Closing Maintained Schools Guidance November 2018

- Approving that the Council would present a proposal to the School's Adjudicator to open a new maintained special school, subject to conclusions of the representation process.
- Approving the use of the statutory processes, (under the 'Making Significant Changes (Prescribed Alterations) to Maintained Schools' Guidance November 2018, to transfer to the Rowdeford site the provision at St Nicholas and Larkrise. This statutory process would take place no later than 12 months before the opening of the new provision. This would result in the closure of the St Nicholas and Larkrise sites at an appropriate time after the new provision is built
- Approving that the new school will have primary, secondary and Post 16 provision on the Rowdeford site (early years not to be included due to sufficiency)
- Noting and approving the proposal for a parallel programme of work to create a cross county approach to Post 16 special education and transition to independent living.

### **Terence Herbert-Executive Director**

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Date of report 13 May 2019



### **Appendices**

Appendix 1	Proposal and vision
Appendix 2	Copy of Phase 1 on-line survey and analysis
Appendix 3	Transcripts and notes of staff and governor meetings
Appendix 4	Transcripts and notes of parent meetings
Appendix 5	Notes from the meetings held by WPCC

Appendix 6	Copy of the letters and emails received between January and 6 May (any letter or email specifically referring to a child has not been included and has been made available to every Cabinet member)
Appendix 7	Analysis of on-line comments in Phase 2
Appendix 8	Copy of notes from consultation meetings in Phase 2
Appendix 9	Travel Assessment
Appendix 10	Health Professionals Response
Appendix 11	Post 16 Proposals
Appendix 12	Site Feasibility Studies
Appendix 13	Proposal presented by the Wiltshire SEND Action Group
Appendix 14	Option appraisal
Appendix 15	Equality Impact Assessments

## Background Papers

The following documents prepared for the 27 November Cabinet meeting have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

Special School 19.11.18

<https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s154116/Special%20Schools%2019.11.18.pdf>

Annexes:

<https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s154115/Special%20Schools%20Annexes%2019.11.18.pdf>

Composite list of all questions received:

<https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s154299/Cabinet%20Agenda%20item%2006%20-%20Special%20Schools%20-%20Composite%20list%20of%20all%20questions%20received.pdf>

Results special schools' graphs 27.9.18:

<https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s154679/Results%20special%20schools%20graphs%2027th%20Sept.pdf>

Guidance

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/756328/Opening\\_and\\_Closing\\_maintained\\_schools\\_Guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/756328/Opening_and_Closing_maintained_schools_Guidance.pdf)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/756572/Maintained\\_schools\\_prescribed\\_alterations\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/756572/Maintained_schools_prescribed_alterations_guidance.pdf)

**SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (22 May 2019)**

**APPENDIX 1:**

**PROPOSAL AND VISION DOCUMENTS**

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1.2 Vision Document.....	14

## 1.1 Proposal

### PROPOSAL FOR SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN NORTH WILTSHIRE PURSUANT TO A STATUTORY NOTICE PUBLISHED ON THE 9<sup>TH</sup> OF JANUARY 2019

***A Statutory Notice in respect of the closure of St Nicholas School, (Special) Malmesbury Road, Chippenham, Wiltshire, SN15 1QF, Rowdeford School, (Special) 2 St Edith's Marsh, Rowde, Wiltshire. SN10 2QQ, and Larkrise School, (Special) Ashton St, Trowbridge, Wiltshire. BA14 7EB and the related pre-statutory notice regarding opening of a new special schools has been published on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2019.***

A copy of the notice is attached at the end of this proposal.

Below are the detailed proposals

*Responses to the proposals must be received by the Council by 5pm on the Friday the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2019 extended from the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2019).*

***The headings and issues described below are those required by regulations and statutory guidance<sup>1</sup>.***

#### Reasons for Closure

The proposed closures are put forward as part of the Council's overall strategy to create new special school places for children with special educational needs by drawing together the expertise that exists across our current special schools and creating a Centre of Excellence to provide high quality support and advice to mainstream schools.

The general reasons for closure, which affect all 3 schools are:

- The numbers of pupils in Wiltshire needing a special school place are growing and there is insufficient space for the number of pupils who need a special school place in the north of the county. Currently over 300 pupils are educated out of county because there are not enough places of the right quality in Wiltshire schools. With housing growth and military rebasing this, number will continue to grow.
- The three schools proposed for closure have a collective in-year deficit which is projected to grow to a shared trajectory of over £1m by the end of 2021-22. There are also wider pressures across the council budgets for provision for children and young people with SEND.
- The opportunity exists to improve provision by closing these schools. This would enable the establishment of a new academy as a SEND Centre of Excellence at a size of operation which could provide economies of scale and a wide range of professional skills and expertise alongside a consistent outreach capacity to support mainstream schools.

However, more specifically, there are individual reasons for each of the proposed closures:

#### St Nicholas

- The school, which was originally built for 56 pupils, regularly educates more pupils on roll (79) than the current capacity (77). Expansion across the sites is not possible and the best available site in Chippenham is not well-located, being 2.2 miles from the town centre and adjacent to a growing comprehensive school with concomitant transport congestion issues at key times

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools>

- The school was judged as Requires Improvement in an Ofsted inspection of November 2017.

#### Rowdeford

- The school currently has 137 pupils on roll, with a current capacity of only 130. In 2017, we extended the designation to include Severe Learning Difficulties, (SLD) and we expect to go to consultation to extend numbers further during this year as we deliver a short-term plan to increase places in the county.
- Expansion on the site is possible, but DfE guidance states that due to the significant change in size and impact on the other two schools, the proposed education provision should be established as a new school.

#### Larkrise School

- The school has significantly more pupils on roll (95) than the current agreement (85) and was built originally for 48 pupils. The site would no longer meets DfE guidance<sup>2</sup> for even 48 pupils as there is insufficient space for both indoor and outdoor learning.
- Expansion on site is not possible. Land close by and further afield in Trowbridge has been considered, but the possible sites are either:
  - not well-located, accessed along residential side-streets with concomitant transport congestion at key times
  - too small, even when combined with the existing site, for the number of pupils
  - not sufficiently central for the north of the county to ensure workable journeys for the maximum number of pupils
  - or a combination of each of these.

### Pupil numbers and admissions

Pupil age groups	St Nicholas	Larkrise	Rowdeford
Pre-school	0	0	0
3-16-year olds	66	85	137
16-19-year olds	8	8	0
19-25-year olds	5	2	0
Total	79	95	137

All three schools are coeducation special day schools. Both Larkrise and St Nicholas offer provision for pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) and Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), including pupils who may also have Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and physical disabilities. Rowdeford also offers provision to young people with Moderate Learning Disabilities (MLD), but not currently PMLD.

### Admissions arrangements for the proposed new school

All pupils currently in the three proposed closing schools will have the opportunity to transition to the new school proposed to be in place from 1 September 2023. Each child will have a transition plan agreed through the annual review process. Following this, all new admissions will be via the Wiltshire Council SEND panel for pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). This will be a co-educational special school for children and young people aged 3 – 16 with SLD, PMLD, MLD and associated ASD (often called complex needs). There is no expectation that pupils currently placed in schools out of county will go to the new school unless requested by them and their parent/carer. However, the new school will reduce the number of children/young people who will need to be placed out of county in the future.

<sup>2</sup> Area guidelines for SEND and alternative provision; Including special schools, alternative provision, specially resourced provision and units  
Building bulletin 104; December 2015

### Ethos and Religious Character

The replacement school is expected to be non-denominational. Its ethos would be the provision of high quality learning which will give pupils the best start for adulthood and being active citizens in their communities. It will provide a Centre of Excellence, supporting pupils and staff of mainstream schools to promote inclusion and local provision where it is most effective.

### Balance of denominational provision

As all three existing schools are non-denominational and the proposed replacement school is also non-denominational, there will be no impact on the balance of religious provision or the opportunity for parental choice in this area as a result of the proposed closures.

### Displaced pupils

Given the nature of the proposals, the closing of 3 existing schools and the opening of a larger and purpose built school, there are unlikely to be displaced pupils needing accommodation as there will be more places in the new provision.

The context for these proposals is a long-standing strategic review of special school places and pupil numbers across the county. Based on analysis of growth due to SEND reforms, housing developments and military rebasing, the projected requirement for additional places is shown in the table below.

By SEN Designation	Placements in Wiltshire Special Schools (5 – 16yrs)		2yrs (2019)			5yrs (2022)			9yrs (2026)		
	Places North	Places South	North	South	All new	North	South	All new	North	South	All new
ASD	111		4	9	13	24	22	46	50	40	90
SEMH <sup>3</sup>	68		2	3	5	10	9	19	21	17	38
Complex	279	82	4	8	12	23	20	43	49	37	86
Sensory			0	1	1	2	1	3	3	3	6
<b>All</b>	<b>458</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>220</b>

In addition, while Wiltshire has been able to benefit from school places in neighbouring counties, these schools are also now reaching capacity and need places for pupils from their own Local Authority. Parental choice will be maintained via continued access to all schools within the region which includes Outstanding and Good Special schools in BANES, Somerset and Swindon as well as Exeter House in the south of Wiltshire. There are also additional special schools for children and young people with ASD/SEMH (Autism and Social Emotional and Mental Health) in Devizes, Calne and now Salisbury, all in Wiltshire.

There have been concerns that the new school would be for all pupils with SEND regardless of their particular needs. This will not be the case. We will continue to have schools for children and young people with ASD and SEMH and will also continue to expand the places available

<sup>3</sup> Social Emotional and Mental Health

in mainstream schools. The Centre of Excellence will be a key development that will enhance integration, inclusion and differentiated support and opportunity across all schools in Wiltshire.

Closures of the three schools are timed for 2023, by which time the proposed new special school would be established in Rowde. The new school would cater for 350 pupils aged 3-16. Post-16 education will be available at Wiltshire College, already a provider of relevant SEND education in several locations across Wiltshire, and other private sector providers already working in partnership with Wiltshire Council.

We recognise that for pupils who will be attending Larkrise, St Nicholas, and to a lesser, but still significant degree, Rowdeford in 5 years' time, any move from the proposed closed schools to the proposed new school will be disruptive and may cause some anxiety for pupils and their families.

However, we hope to minimise this disruption by:

- Ensuring as many children/young people and their parent/carers can engage in the design and creation of the new school
- Considering opening a first phase of the proposed school for 3 and 4-year olds ahead of the main start for all pupils. This would involve phasing the construction of the school. This would reduce the need for transition for these youngest pupils
- A similar arrangement could be offered for 15/16yr olds if it were in their best individual interests, with an early phased transition to college which could reduce transitions for this group also
- Ensuring that every child has an individual transition plan
- Having a 5-year programme during which we will prepare children, young people, their families and staff for the proposed change
- Appointing an academy sponsor early on so that the leadership of the new Centre of Excellence can start making a positive impact as soon as possible
- Creating communication plans, such as newsletters and online engagements, that keep everybody involved and informed
- Learning from other schools that have managed similar changes, such as Three Ways School in Bath.

### **Impact on the community**

None of the three special schools specifically serves a local area due to the rural nature of the county and, therefore, no individual community would be disproportionately adversely impacted by the proposed closures. Each school teaches pupils who are predominantly transported from communities across Wiltshire rather than from their local area. Currently, around 80% of children/young people attending special schools do not live in the town where their school is located.

However, we recognise that the communities around St Nicholas and Larkrise, and indeed Rowdeford, have taken the schools to their hearts. Therefore, we will work with the local communities to explore ways in which they can continue to be involved in the lives of both the children/young people who attend the new school, but also the many children/young people with SEND who attend local mainstream schools and colleges.

Rowde itself has embraced Rowdeford school and has actively supported the continuation of a special school in this rural community close to the busy town of Devizes. It is hoped the proposed new school will support the local economy, bus services, facilities and employment. To date, Rowdeford school has not struggled to recruit staff, and welcomes the opportunity to offer greater local employment to people living in the local and wider area.

The location of the proposed replacement school is central to the north of Wiltshire, matching an equivalent special school covering the south. These two schools will be well placed to ensure access to inclusive special education in all parts of the county and to offer support and outreach to local mainstream schools.

All current staff will be subject to TUPE<sup>4</sup> regulations.

### **Rural primary schools**

None of the schools proposed for closure are a rural primary school designated as such by regulation. Special educational provision will continue in the rural location of Rowde. The Centre of Excellence will have a wider impact and will be able to support rural schools that often do not have the capacity for specialist SEND provision, allowing greater local inclusion.

### **Early years provision**

Early Years provision at St Nicholas and Larkrise would be replicated and extended in the proposed new school and further supported by the three specialist nursery settings that will benefit from the outreach delivered by the Centre of Excellence. The Centre of Excellence would also be able to support mainstream nursery settings and child minders to ensure that every child with SEND has a good start in life. We will explore the possibilities of offering multi-agency partners, such as health visitors, space in the new provision to offer integrated support from birth onwards.

### **Sixth form provision**

St Nicholas and Larkrise schools currently provide post-16 Education which will be closed or taken on by an alternate provider. Rowdeford does not have post 16 provision. It is proposed that all 16 -19 education will be provided by Wiltshire College and the range of private providers across Wiltshire with whom the Council has developed strong relationships. This may involve the current buildings or other community based sites.

The aim is to increase the opportunities for preparation for adulthood in a wider range of locations, expanding on arrangements already in place and judged by Ofsted as effective. For those learners who will have formerly received their post 16 education through one of the special schools, there will be some change involved, however, this should lead to better development of life skills closer to home.

### **Special educational needs provision**

Of the three schools proposed for closure, two are rated by Ofsted as Good and one as Requires Improvement. The proposal will lead to improvements in the standard, quality and range of special education:

- The new 350-place school will replace significantly overcrowded schools which currently do not comply with relevant DfE regulations, and will offer up-to-date facilities in a new build
- The replacement school will provide economies of scale which reduce the financial pressures faced by the existing smaller schools. The ambition of the project will attract national interest and affordably secure the best academy sponsor/provider and the best leadership
- The current schools have limited access to therapies. By bring the schools together all pupils can access good shared resources such as theraplay, SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning), sensory support, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Paediatricians and community/school nursing

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<sup>4</sup> Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations



- Currently we are not always able to offer all children and young people a place in our local schools because of lack of space and insufficient specialist support on site. The new school will offer more places and higher levels of support
- Currently pupils have to choose between a specialist or mainstream provision. The new approach will ensure flexibility of choice and a full range of provision to meet the spectrum of need.

### **Curriculum and special educational needs provision**

The proposed new school will deliver a curriculum compliant with the general requirements of Section 78 of Education Act 2002, enabling students to benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum which will allow them to develop their skills and knowledge, preparing them for life after school. As a special school, it will place great emphasis on personalised learning, aiming to ensure that all students develop their expertise in literacy, numeracy and life skills, but in a way best suited to each individual student. There will be separate approaches for different key stages and levels of engagement and ability, including those who will potentially have dual placements with mainstream schools.

Broad curriculum pathways would include;

- A curriculum that covers the broad topics first introduced in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- A Profound Curriculum designed for students with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties
- A broad curriculum developing the learning of students with moderate learning difficulties, speech, language and communication needs and autism in all areas whilst focusing on reducing specific barriers to learning that individuals with complex needs may experience.

At every stage of their education, each child's strengths and needs would be considered carefully and the best curriculum pathway for them chosen and reviewed regularly in the context of assessed needs and EHCP targets. The aim would be that challenge is pitched at the right level for each student to make the best progress possible.

Further details will be set out once an academy proposer has been established as noted within the DfE Guidance for opening schools, but, we hope the above gives a feel for the scope of the provision.

### **Effect on standards and contribution to school improvement**

The new school will build upon the recognised good practice of the existing three schools and, therefore, will not have a detrimental impact. This will enable a comprehensive, viable school fit for the future which will support not only the pupils who attend the school but also the wider population of pupils with SEND in Wiltshire as a Centre of Excellence, using curriculum approaches and expertise described above to support pupils and staff in schools across the county.

### **Travel**

It is recognised that, for some pupils, journeys will be longer while, for others, shorter. This change can be a concern, when children/young people have significant medical or behavioural needs. Currently, pupils' journeys average 40 minutes (Rowdeford 43 minutes, St Nicholas 37 minutes and Larkrise 41 minutes), with the shortest being 4 minutes (St Nicholas child) and the longest 119 minutes (St Nicholas child). Initial estimates for the proposed new provision suggest there is likely to be a similar range of journey times, but potentially for different children/young people.

All pupils who attend Special schools can be considered for transport provided by the local authority and the vast majority will be eligible (all current pupils are eligible). For the three schools:

- Rowdeford pupils would continue travelling to the same location on transport provided by the local authority
- For pupils who live in or close to Trowbridge and Chippenham, it is likely that journeys may be longer. Our initial assessment of pupils traveling now (and this will be different in 5 years' time when the new school opens) is that about half of the pupils will have longer and half will have shorter journeys
- There is guidance from the DfE about reasonable journeys. We will try to ensure that every child has a journey within these limits but, as the guidance recognises, this may not be possible for every child in a rural county like Wiltshire
- We hope that by choosing a non-town location we will reduce the amount of time in congested town traffic at peak times and, by having one destination, be able to reduce the number of pick-ups, or time between pick-ups, so that the longer distance is balanced by a more efficient fleet of transport options
- We will be creating transport plans for every child/young person with particular regard for the support they may need for medical, behaviour and/or sensory needs.

We also recognise that this may be a difficulty for staff who will have a longer journey to work and for parent/carers with limited access to transport. Rowde does have good community transport links and, as the local authority also has a role in public and community transport, we will seek to ensure this is continued and, where possible, improved.

Rowde has good access routes, being close to Julia's House and Canon's House respite facilities, quick access from local ambulance stations and onwards to major hospitals if needed. It will also offer Virgin Care (our current community health provider) consulting, office and therapy rooms. This will mean that there can be full time nursing provision as well as other therapeutic support, reducing the need for hospitalisation and parents to travel to the school to support medical concerns.

### **Location and Costs**

The school will serve the northern, middle and western parts of the county of Wiltshire

- The land utilised will include space available in the grounds of Rowdeford School and potentially additional current farm land that will be re-designated, also owned by Wiltshire Council
- The cost is estimated at £20m and will be met by Wiltshire Council (agreed 27.11.2018 Cabinet)
- Planning permission will be required; this should be obtained in the summer/autumn of 2019

Pre-consultation raised some concerns that this rural site could segregate and isolate children and young people with SEND. This has not been evidenced by the current school, which has a strong and proactive relationship with the community. The Centre of Excellence will also enable the school to build strong links with all schools across Wiltshire, offering opportunities for both staff and pupils to engage in both in and out reach education.

### **Summary**

As part of these proposals, the local authority has taken forward a series of Equality Impact Assessments. The impact assessment suggests that mitigating actions can reduce, but not eliminate all concerns. There are over 3500 pupils with an EHCP in Wiltshire and many more on SEN support in mainstream schools. It is essential that the proposals support both the individual and majority needs. We recognise the loss of well-loved schools will be difficult, but

believe the plan for the Centre of Excellence will provide an outstanding provision and approach to ensuring every child/young person with SEND has a good education and is able to make good life choices as they grow up.

Overall, the proposals will have an overwhelming positive impact for children and young people with SEND both in the school and supported through the Centre of Excellence in terms of:

- Wellbeing
- Progress
- Attainment
- Health
- Community opportunities
- Inclusion and integration

However, it is recognised that some students:

- Will have longer journeys
- May experience a level of disruption as they move from the old to new school
- May have worries during the development of the project about what school will be like in the future.

We hope this will be mitigated by:

- Many opportunities for engagement in the development of the school and centres of excellence
- Good transition plans and support from staff and families
- Well-arranged transport and transport plans
- Good planning and communication through the progress of the project.

### **Access to copies of the full proposals**

Background papers can be found on the Wiltshire Council website in the meeting agenda for the Cabinet meeting of 27<sup>th</sup> of November 2018. Paper copies of these proposals can also be obtained upon request by emailing [SpecialSchools@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:SpecialSchools@wiltshire.gov.uk) or by writing to Special School Project, Education Directorate, Wiltshire Council, Bythesea Rd, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA1 8JN

### **Comments on, or objections to, the proposals**

Any person or organisation may object to, support or comment on the above related proposals by sending them to Special Schools Project, Education Directorate, Wiltshire Council, County Hall, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN by 5pm on the 26th of February 2019 or by emailing [SpecialSchools@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:SpecialSchools@wiltshire.gov.uk) .

This email will only be used to collect objections and comments and send out paper copies. There is also a short consultation reply form on: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council-democracy-consultations> along with supporting documents.

There are also surgeries being arranged at the schools for parent/carers of pupils and for all parent/carers arranged by Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC). Letters will be sent via schools to parent/carers and WPCC will advertise dates on their website [http://www.wiltshireparentcarercouncil.co.uk/en/Home\\_Page](http://www.wiltshireparentcarercouncil.co.uk/en/Home_Page) .

The Wiltshire Council site will also have a series of videos available where Stuart Hall was able to have a conversation with Cllr Laura Mayes about the proposals. <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council-democracy-consultations> . This may be particularly helpful way to understand a little more about the proposals.

**Signed:**

**Ian Gibbons, Solicitor to the Council**

**Date: 8.1.2019**

## Consultation Process

<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>Publication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposal will be published on Rowdeford, St Nicholas and Larkrise School's and Wiltshire Council's website from the 9<sup>th</sup> of January 2019 for 6 term time weeks.</li> <li>• A copy of the proposal will be sent to the Governors of Rowdeford, St Nicholas and Larkrise School and the Head teachers.</li> <li>• Rowdeford, St Nicholas and Larkrise Schools will ensure that the information is released through a circulated update (this may be a paper or electronic newsletter or update) and also sent directly to all parent/Carers of all registered pupils.</li> <li>• Copies of the proposal will be available via the schools, by contacting Wiltshire Council and on the websites.</li> <li>• The proposals will also be shared with all schools in Wiltshire via the RIGHTCHOICE website and via representational meeting for primary, secondary and special school heads.</li> <li>• Comments can be made via E-mail to: <a href="mailto:SpecialSchools@wiltshire.gov.uk">SpecialSchools@wiltshire.gov.uk</a>, or letter or Special schools consultation, Education Directorate, Wiltshire Council, Bythesea Rd, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN</li> <li>• Comments must be received by 5pm on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2019 to be considered in the decision making.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Representation (Formal consultation 4 weeks)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The period of consultation will be the 9<sup>th</sup> of January 2019 to 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2019.</li> <li>• 2 Surgeries will be arranged in this time, led by the Wiltshire Council Project lead in each of the Schools:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Staff and Governors</li> <li>2. Parents, carers</li> </ol> </li> <li>• In addition, wider Question and Answer surgeries will be held particularly for parents of children not currently at these special schools by Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC) in four parts of the County.</li> <li>• Dates will be advertised and invitations sent via the schools and WPCC.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 3</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following the period of consultation, a decision will be made between the 1<sup>st</sup> of March and the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2019, by the Local Authority with the engagement of the Schools Adjudicator (The Local authority is the decision maker in respect to closing maintained schools. The school's adjudicator is the decision maker for opening new schools. As related proposals, the school's adjudicator, therefore, must be involved and may extend the decision timetable, but will not take a direct role until this stage of consultation is complete)</li> <li>• The proposal can be:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Approved</li> <li>○ Rejected</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Or approved with modifications.</li> <li>● The decision will be published within one week of the decision and; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Published on the same sites as the proposal</li> <li>○ Sent to parent/carers of every registered pupil</li> <li>○ Sent to the Schools Adjudicator</li> <li>○ And sent to the Governing bodies.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Following the decision, the Governing bodies may appeal within one week of publication with information that is additional to that which was presented during the consultation.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 4</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The implementation date is set as the start of the school year 2023 subject to appropriate processes and timetables</li> <li>● The Secretary of State will be informed by updating the departments Register of Educational Establishments</li> <li>● If the proposal is accepted an implementation plan will be agreed with the schools involved and as identified in the Wiltshire cabinet report 27.11.18.</li> </ul>

**Wiltshire Council Statutory Notice: Intention to Discontinue the following Special Schools:**

- **St Nicholas School (Special), Malmesbury Road, Chippenham, Wiltshire, SN15 1QF**
- **Rowdeford School (Special), Rowde, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 2QQ**
- **Larkrise School (Special), Ashton St, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 7EB**

Notice is hereby given in accordance with section 15(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (as amended by the Education Act 2011) and Regulation 12(1) of the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 that Wiltshire Council, County Hall, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 8JN intends to discontinue the above three schools with effect from 31 August 2023.

It is proposed that the three schools will be closed and replaced by a new special school which will be developed and established in accordance with Department for Education (DfE) Guidance "Opening and closing maintained schools: statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers" (November 2018). All capital costs will be met by Wiltshire Council.

**Reason for Closure**

The proposed closures are put forward as part of the council's overall strategy to create new special school places in the north of the County for children with special educational needs. The proposed new school will be established as a centre of excellence, building upon the recognised good practice of the existing three schools and providing high quality support not only for the pupils who attend the school but also for the wider population of pupils with special educational needs in Wiltshire.

This notice provides the requisite statutory notice regarding closure of the above three schools and preliminary notice of the related proposal of the opening of a new special school. A further statutory notice will be published when a proposer has been identified for the new special school.

The full proposal, along with supporting documents and a short consultation reply form may be found on: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council-democracy-consultations>

Any person or organisation may also respond to the proposals by sending them to Special Schools Project, Education Directorate, Wiltshire Council, County Hall, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN or by sending an email to [SpecialSchools@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:SpecialSchools@wiltshire.gov.uk)

This email address will only be used to collect objections and comments and send out paper copies of the proposal. Questions will be welcomed at the surgeries described below.

**Responses to the proposal must be received by the Council by 5pm on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2019 (extended from the 26<sup>th</sup> of February).**

#### **Further**

#### **Information**

1. Questions can be raised at surgeries being arranged at each of the above schools for parent/carers of pupils and for all parent/carers arranged by Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC). Details of the meetings will be sent by letter via schools to parent/carers and WPCC will advertise dates on their website: [http://www.wiltshireparentcarercouncil.co.uk/en/Home\\_Page](http://www.wiltshireparentcarercouncil.co.uk/en/Home_Page) .

2. Information on the Wiltshire Council website will also include a series of video conversations about the proposals between Councillor Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, and Stuart Hall, Strategic Director, Wiltshire Parent Care Council. These may be found at: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council-democracy-consultations> .

Signed:

Ian Gibbons,

Solicitor to the Council  
9<sup>th</sup> January 2019



# A Vision for Special Education in Wiltshire



Wiltshire Council is proud and pleased to announce a bright new future for children with special educational needs.

We propose a bold investment of around £20m in two new centres of excellence in the county – purpose-built and amply equipped, giving our children a better start in life than ever before.

The new and extended campuses are proposed for Rowdeford, near Devizes, and Exeter House, Salisbury.

The new direction for SEND in Wiltshire will mean keeping Rowdeford at Rowde, St Nicholas at Chippenham, and Larkrise, Trowbridge, open until the new schools are completed in autumn 2023.

All the pupils and staff teams from Larkrise and St Nicholas will come together in the new, purpose-built modern school at Rowdeford, Rowde, from 2023.

The buildings at Larkrise and St Nicholas are past their prime, out of date and need replacing.

They no longer meet Department for Education guidelines on space.

They don't have enough outdoor green areas for children to play and learn in the fresh air.

We also need a new vision because the numbers of children we care for is rising, and the money we have to pay for it is falling.

But this is not about saving money.

The investment means we are committing more to special education needs.

Not less.

Our vision targets our budget to provide a better education and a better experience for our children.

This vision is based on three years of consultation with families, schools and communities. It offers a future where we concentrate the best facilities, the best teaching, and the best learning environment in specialist locations in the north and south of the county, rather than only being available in some parts of Wiltshire.

It means our expertise and experience can be applied in greater strength with greater purpose and greater focus across two centres, reaching out to all schools.

It might mean a little more travel time for some children.

For many it could mean less.

For all, it will promise a better education, better life chances, and better outcomes. It also assures:

- great teaching from well-trained, well-paid, caring, specialist and dedicated staff
- the right facilities and support: hydro-pools, sensory rooms, physio, open outdoor space, speech and language therapy, family care
- strong community links – with cafés, community gardens and public playing fields
- attractive, comfortable, child-scale buildings - safe, friendly, calm and engaging places with wide corridors and lots of natural light
- closer links between SEND schools and neighbouring mainstream schools. Each have resources the others can benefit from
- links with specialist nurseries, offering children with special needs seamless attention from the time they are tots to their teenage years
- both sites are on good road routes, central to the home locations of children and young people with SEND and with space to expand.

We look forward to discussing our vision with parents, families and schools.





## **SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (22 May 2019)**

### **APPENDIX 2:**

#### **ONLINE SURVEY AND ANALYSIS FROM PHASE 1 and 2**

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## 2.1 Phase 1 Online Survey

### Wiltshire Special Schools Consultation Phase 2

Having read the proposals for the future of Special School provision in Wiltshire and taking everything into account we would like your views on the proposed way forward. This consultation will be open between the 9th of January and 1st March 2019. You can also:

- Send feedback to Wiltshire Council on the email address: [specialschools@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:specialschools@wiltshire.gov.uk). This email is only to leave comments and should not be used if you need a reply. You can also use this email to request a paper copy of the consultation documents. Please put the request in the title of the email.
- As a parent/carer of a pupil, attend surgeries in the three schools, Rowdeford, Larkrise and St Nicholas. Parent/carers of pupils, staff and governors of these schools will receive invitations to these sessions.
- Attend one of the three open meetings for parent/carers that will be run by Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC) which will be advertised and booked on their website. [www.wiltshireparentcarercouncil.co.uk](http://www.wiltshireparentcarercouncil.co.uk) home page

You can read the full council documents from the 27th November cabinet meeting and also watch the cabinet meeting as a webcast by going to the Council web site and searching for the cabinet meeting

You can also watch videos of a conversation between Cllr. Laura Mayes and Stuart Hall from the WPCC which enables you to have a better feel about the thinking behind the proposals which you can find on the consultation portal on the Councils website, just search for consultations

### How we use your data

For the purposes of this survey Wiltshire Council acts as the Data Controller and by answering this survey you have given consent to the Council to process your personal data for the specific purpose of Market Research. All your answers will be treated with the strictest confidence and your personal data will not be shared with third parties outside of the Council. Any reports made public will be anonymised so that no individual can be identified. For further information about how Wiltshire Council uses your personal data, including your rights as a data subject, please see our Privacy notice on the Wiltshire Council website.

### Proposal for Special School Provision in Wiltshire

## A survey on the proposals for Special Schools in Wiltshire

Q1 The proposal for the future provision of Special Schools in Wiltshire is to invest £20m in a new centre of excellence for pupils with special needs and disabilities. It will be developed at Rowdeford/Rowde near Devizes to match the excellent facilities at Exeter House, Salisbury. This will involve closing the three schools, Rowdeford, St Nicholas and Larkrise and opening a new school at Rowde. We want to know whether you support this proposal?

- I support the proposal
- I do not support the proposal

Q2 If you said you support the proposal can you say what is your main reasons are for this? (please tick up to three boxes only)

- The idea that a Centre of Excellence will be created
- The proposal would provide improved facilities
- There would be access to therapies all at one site
- The proposal is about giving the best provision for children and young people with SEND
- Keeping the best of the schools
- Having a rural location but close to a town with good community links
- Other reason

If you said other  
please say

Q3 If you said you do not support the proposal can you say what is your main reason for this? (please tick up to three boxes only)

- Increased travel time
- Concern about the size of the new school
- The disruption to pupils who will have to move
- Worries about inclusion
- Closure of existing schools
- Being too remote
- Other

If you said other  
please say

## About you

Q4 Are you answering this survey as? (tick all that apply)

- A Wiltshire resident
- A parent carer of a child or young person with a SEND
- A relative or friend of a child/young person with SEND
- A parent carer of a child/young person currently in one of Wiltshire's Special schools
- A professional with an interest in special school provision
- Someone representing an organisation with an interest in special school provision

**A survey on the proposals for Special Schools in Wiltshire**

If you represent an organisation can you say what organisation?

**If you want to know more about the proposals please see the documents identified above that are also available to read on the Wiltshire Council website consultation portal, just search for consultations**

## 2.2 Phase 1 Online survey results

### A survey on the proposals for Special Schools in Wiltshire

This report was generated on 08/03/19. Overall 2400 respondents completed this questionnaire.

The report has been filtered to show the responses for 'All Respondents'.

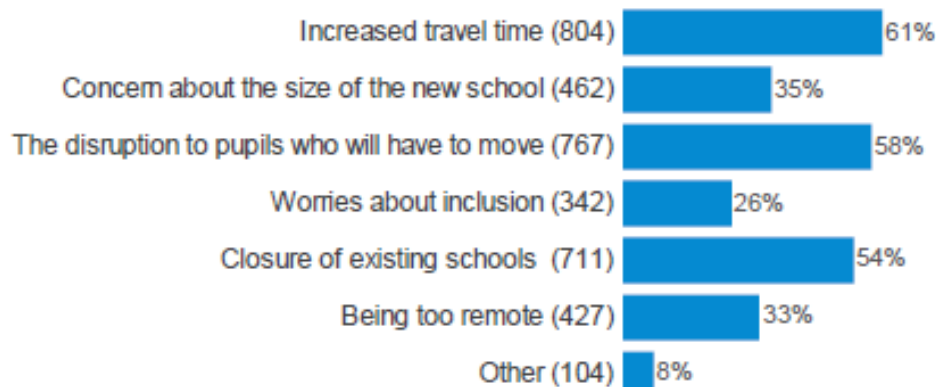
**The proposal for the future provision of Special Schools in Wiltshire is to invest £20m in a new centre of excellence for pupils with special needs and disabilities. It will be developed at Rowdeford/Rowde near Devizes to match the excellent facilities at Exeter House, Salisbury. This will involve closing the three schools, Rowdeford, St Nicholas and Larkrise and opening a new school at Rowde. We want to know whether you support this proposal?**



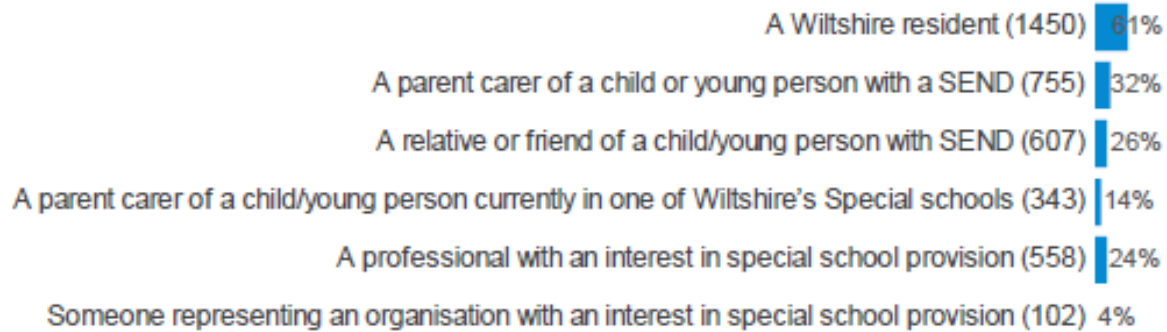
**If you said you support the proposal can you say what is your main reasons are for this? (please tick up to three boxes only) (If you said you support the proposal can you say what is ...)**



**If you said you do not support the proposal can you say what is your main reason for this? (please tick up to three boxes only) (If you said you do not support the proposal can you say w...)**



**Are you answering this survey as? (tick all that apply)**



**(If you represent an organisation can you say what organisation?)**

- Early Years
- Larkrise
- Jacob's Ladder
- St Nicholas school
- Lark rise school
- Larkrise School
- Parent Governor
- Parent Governor
- Wiltshire Portage
- Staff at St Nicholas
- Neptune Aquatic Solutions
- I am also a TA in a mainstream school, which has high level Sen. Parents feel trapped.
- A parent whose child goes to Sen resource base, and likely need Sen school secondary
- Coleme CE Primary School
- primary school
- Primary school
- School governor rowdeford
- Sheldon School
- Rowdeford Charity Trust
- Wiltshire parent carer support group
- Rowdeford School
- Magna Learning Partnership
- Exeter House School
- Exeter House School
- Pewsey Primary School
- Studley Green Primary School
- St Mark's C of E Junior School
- Exeter House School
- chair of governors Rowdeford School
- I'm Chair of Governom at St Sampson's CoE Primary School, Cricklade
- Rowdeford
- At last a forward thinking approach to sendbin wiltshire
- St Nicholas School
- Trustee of Rowdeford Charity Trust
- chippenham senior phab club
- Larkrise
- Childcare & SENCO
- No to special school closure
- Somerset county council ex employee of 28 years. Moving to ofsted next month.
- S6C
- Larkrise School

(If you represent an organisation can you say what organisation?)

Taxis

Taxis

Taxis

Cobra

Cobra

Taxis

Cobra

Cobra

Taxis

no

Parents

Rowdeford Charity Trust

devizes lions

Devizes Lions Club

Devizes Lions

Rowdeford Charity Trust

Rowdeford

Virgin Care

Wiltshire Connect

St Nicholas school

Chippenham Town Council

St Nicholas school

St Nicholas school

Rowdeford School

St Nicholas School

St Nicholas

NHS Speech Therapy

EOTAS

Hoc

an ex-student of Rowdeford School

Send teacher

PDA/ Autistic/ anxiety support groups nationwide and ex parent at Rowdeford School.

Rowdeford

Clubs that used the facilities in holidays for our young children/ adults with disabilities

Parent of a SEN professional.

Rowdeford Governor

Rowdeford Governor

It would be such a shame to see the school close as it is an amazing school

St Nicholas School

Rowdeford Charity Trust (Registered No 1088605) founded by me in 2001

Rowdeford



(If you represent an organisation can you say what organisation?)

---

HM Forces

---

Parents

---

Kennet

---

Parents grpup

---

Wiltshire Music Centre

---

Canon's House



## 2.2 Phase 1 Online survey additional comments

Taking all disabled children from Trowbridge town will create more discrimination against disabled people in our community .
The effect on the children...read into autism and the effects
The chosen location of the new superschool in a tiny village with no infrastructure
Location of new school
Proposed new school's isolation from pupils' own communities. It will be far more difficult to prepare them adequately for life after school, which is the ultimate goal.
Distribution of schools does not match distribution of population/fair distance to travel.
Removing children from their community
Implications to Staff
Equalities
Lack of Parental choice when choosing a school
My son is sick when having to travel on his medication. At the moment I can walk him to school, Its not right a child should be taking travel sickness tablets every single day just to get to school.
All the above. Asking us for 3 options is not enough.
Relating to the closures The environmental impact of the increase in car usage in number of journeys and cumulative mileage , including the increases using WCC own figures related to the relocation of 30plus percent of pupils currently attending schooling in their home towns of Chippenham and Trowbridge. The ability of pupils particularly PMLD students to attend this single school and hospital appointments without unduly increase the time out of school and the demands on parents. Due to illness
Lack of adequate Post 16/18 provision for those not suited to Wiltshire college
The Rowdeford School site is retained.
The proposal as detailed will by its outcome create a more urban environment thus losing the magic that is within the present location .
Location 1 school is not enough to cover Wiltshire
The transport links, including the road access, is poor. The roads are narrow, twisty and dangerous with passing HGVs; this is a huge concern considering the school will be 43minutes to the nearest A&E, not counting the ambulance needing to get to the remote school first. For this reason, I will explore ALL other options before sending my child with epilepsy there.
No nearby hospital with specialist equipment
Poor access for emergency services and the fact that it is remote from towns for walking to shops etc
We as parents have our amount of choice of school reduced
Children should be educated in the community where they live, not a remote warehouse
Our son would have got lost in a larger school it just is not appropriate for many children with SEND.
SEND pupils need to be in small schools where they can receive the attention they need to achieve their full potential . It also strikes me that parents and careers are going to find it difficult to access the new school from across the county.
Access to these schools from others who need support
My son going out of town
The lack of 6th form provision. There's not enough of a choice now!

Removing the children away from the local community like you already have done with the adults with learning disabilities
all Of the listed reason above. A failure of Wiltshire council to consider local community connections that have been built. Saying Abbeyfield site is too far out of town contradicts where the new school will be. Reduculous . Our poor children and families. It's all a money saving excercise and no one is listening.
Do not close Rowdeford, but expand the excellent provisions already in practice
The option proposed in summer 2018 was to 'create one new school' but nowhere did it say this would REPLACE the existing schools. Many of us read this as in ADDITION to the current schools to meet growing demand for SEND provision. The proposal then and now is unfair and fundamentally flawed! Also, how are we supposed to consult on the closures of the schools at the same time as the new mega school, which is only an idea? I can't agree to the closures based on a badly formed and incomplete plan.
Loss of the hydrotherapy pool at St Nicholas school, which is used by over 1000 people per week
I think the plans are too big. Keep st nicks and lark rise as primary school SEN school, and then create new school for 11+ years SEN. This should still meet capacity needs
Segregating young people with additional needs from their local communities and opportunities to integrate and be a part of joint activities with their local mainstream schools and pupils. Isolating nature of location in case of emergencies. Increased travel time is a major disadvantage especially to those with seizures and complex medical conditions.
Where the school is located
All of the above but can't tick all wonder why hummm
Disruption to road as busses get in and out of school
Withdrawing any kind of choice that may currently be available for parents and carers.
Current schools Larkrise and St Nicks are NOT fit for purpose. Over crowded too small no storage and not fit for purpose. Also young people having to stay in
Rowdeford can accommodate the increase in numbers, and is a fantastic school
Not near to shops, cafe, walks (pavements to narrow for wheelchairs or linked arm walker, leisure facilities/centre/gym, local community removed. Again cutting choice of parents who already have limited choice due to sen and provision locally
The Rowdeford site is ideal for expansion, therefore able to support many more children
I would like the existing rowdeford site and school to be included with the super school. It's ethos and the achievements are too great to ignore. This is one of your best assets and you would be crazy to close it.
Rowdeford School is a wonderful school and marvellous site. The school at present is well resourced and managed with amazing teaching and non-teaching staff. I see no reason why it should close while additional facilities are completed to bring a stronger provision to Rowdeford. Why lose what is already there?
There is children that have very complex needs and that will need more monitoring, putting all the pupils together would upset, routine would be out of sync. These pupils needs to be embraced by the public not shut away in a remote environment.
Rowdeford school site is retained and grows as needed.
Rowdeford is an amazing school which has changed my son's life.The walled but large country environment allowed him to learn that outside can be a safe and welcoming space, and it was outdoors he firsy tried cooking!(over a campfire which he loved!). The physical set up of the school has helped him feel more confident, it has encouraged his interest in history. Please don't let it lose it's character which is a real strength.

My son has excelled at Rowdeford- his confidence and social skills have improved so much. His ability to visit the local cafe and church has made him feel part of a community who really accept and support the children of Rowdeford.

The unique set up of Rowdeford has helped my son in ways I couldn't imagine - the history of the buildings encouraged his interest in war history and caused him to explore his dead granfathers life in the war- he now calls him his hero!! Being surrounded by physical history and amazing grounds creates an atmosphere of longevity and stability, it's anchored him in a safe place to learn and mature.

I thought the new school was going to be in ADDITION to the other schools, not in place of it. I feel Wiltshire Council deceived us and were misleading with the options presented in the summer's consultation!!!

The current Rowdeford site can expand and grow without having to close the school. The site has the most available land for expansion to provide all facilities on one site

The Rowdeford School site will be retained. Rowdeford School can grow to accommodate the increase in numbers.

The Rowdeford site will be retained. Rowdeford can grow accommodate the increase in numbers.

the Rowdeford School Site is magic, im glad it is staying, however i believe Rowdeford school can remain and increase its numbers rather than have to close and re-open as a new school

The Rowdeford site will be retained. Rowdeford can grow to accommodate the increase in numbers.

retaining the Rowdeford site and that Rowdeford can grow to accommodate the increase in numbers rather than needing to close.

The Rowdeford School site is retained Rowdeford can grow to accommodate the increase numbers.

Rowdeford School and it's surrounding land is more equipped for expansion to allow a better and improved education centre for SEND

The Rowdeford site will be retained. Rowdeford can grow accommodate the increase in numbers.

The Rowdeford site will be retained and provides the scope for the further development, thus future proofing SEND provision in the north of the county.

Rowdeford school site needs to be retained. This is an excellent resource with the capability to grow to include the increase in pupil numbers.

I agree that SEND needs to improve and believe that Rowdeford should grow to incorporate the increase.

I believe that Rowdeford School is an excellent school that provides opportunities for learning which are not available in many other schools. I think the school can grow and develop over time with school numbers growing with this development.

Rowdeford has amazing outdoor spaces that allow even better learning opportunities for the students on the site. Rowdeford is in the unique position to have room for expansion still allowing pupils to have the opportunity to have access to these outdoor spaces.

Rowdeford has amazing outdoor spaces that allow even better learning opportunities for the students on the site. Rowdeford is in the unique position to have room for expansion while still allowing pupils to have the opportunity to have access to these outdoor spaces.

I'd like to see the existing site retained to allow continuance of the current ethos and excellence of Rowdeford, with enhanced provision for students.

Rowdeford has amazing outdoor spaces that allow even better learning opportunities for the students on the site. Rowdeford is in the unique position to have room for expansion still allowing pupils to have the opportunity to have access to these outdoor spaces.
Rowdeford school would stay open. However, it is the least worst of the options and the whole thing looks like a cost cutting exercise with the most vulnerable pupils
The Rowdeford site will be retained and provides the scope for the further development, thus future proofing SEND provision in the north of the county.
Rowdeford school site needs to be retained. This is an excellent resource with the capability to grow to include the increase in pupil numbers.
because the teachers are very friendly at rowdeford and all strudents should be taught by them
Rowdeford school site needs to be retained. This is an excellent resource with the capability to grow to include the increase in pupil numbers.
I'd like to see the existing site retained to allow continuance of the current ethos and excellence of Rowdeford, with enhanced provision for students.
The Rowdeford site will be retained. Rowdeford can grow accommodate the increase in numbers and continue to be a centre of excellence for children with SEND.
As well as providing access to therapies all at one site which would be highly practical, it would provide continued access to the excellent facilities for outdoor learning and teaching about the environment.
Rowdeford is a great location and I strongly believe that the school's ethos and values can expand to the growth in potential numbers rather than close and loose it's identity
Rowdeford site is amazing and you will never get an equivelent site in a new site
The outdoor space at Rowdeford is amazing
Rowdeford is an awesome school. Why does it need to close?
Nlce school in the best environment for SENd students
The thereputic benefits of learning in the outside that only the rowdeford site can support
Rowdeford must stay open - it is amazing and teaches students independants with their outdoor learning
Rowdeford is amazing and cannot be lost
Amazing resources that would be lost if Rowdeford School- let all children experiencecthevrowdeford magic
Rowdeford is an ideal site for the one school proposal. It has room to expand and I believe it is the best option for the children and families of Wiltshire
It is essential to retain the Rowdeford site due to its unique opportunities for outdoor learning and its space to grow and accommodate the increase in numbers of pupils.
Rowdeford School should be retained. Rowdeford School is blessed with a large estate. By utilizing the council owned fields at the rear, the School can be grown to accomodate numbers. The financial investment can be optimised to make use of existing facilities where appropriate as well as a new build at the site.
It is important to retain Rowdeford School site that can expand to accommodate increased numbers and not close the school.
Rowdeford can grow to meet the increase in pupil numbers: it has site capacity and a dedicated, experienced staff willing to share their expertise.
I cannot stress the importance of retaining the Rowdeford site and I believe Rowdeford can grow to accommodate the increase in numbers rather than needing to close.

Rowdeford School is a unique site which provides excellent outdoor learning facilities for its pupils (and those who attend regularly from main stream schools as part of the Alternative Provision programme). It has the space to grow both in size of accommodation and capacity and is ideally situated for pupils from all over Wiltshire to attend.
Rowdeford site is unique and will be a shining light for the new school
Rowde is centrally located in Devizes which means that journey times will be equitable - wherever you live
I've known since my son was born that I wanted him to go to rowdeford- I am overjoyed the plan is to make it even better for when my son joins in 5 yrs time
I'm not worried about the travel - I am concern I get the best school for my child- that is rowdeford!
The Rowdeford Site is the best site due to it's environmental surroundings and also the outdoor experience the children would get going there
Rowdeford School has amazing facilities unable to be replicated anywhere else, it has the space to grow with the needs of an ever growing special needs student population now and into the future. You must keep this amazing site!!
Rowdeford school and it's rural site is excellent for children with SEN. The school can grow and its positive ethos can be maintained.
It is important to retain the Rowdeford site. Rowdeford can grow to accommodate the increase in numbers rather than needing to close.
It is extremely important to retain the magical Rowdeford site. The best solution would be to expand Rowdeford School not shut it!!
The only reason is that rowdeford must be preserved
Amazing rowdeford site giving all children the benefits of outside learning
Rowdeford must survive - only they have the expertise to manage this growth
Mike Loveridge is the only head with the vision to make this plan a reality
Rowdeford is the only site this new centre of excellent could be built to keep the space so send students are educated in minimum floor space designed schools
Rowdeford is amazing - just go there and see the ethos and learning environment
The existing facilities at Rowdeford School should be used and expanded to provide all of the above.
It is very important children from rural Wiltshire, are educated in a rural setting
Rowdeford has an excellent reputation, plenty of space to develop a new school, lovely grounds/woods for the children
Rowdeford is the best site to have a school with the space to grow
Rowdeford is central to Wiltshire and is the idea location
We need a co-ordinated approach to send this can only be done under one site and with the expertise of Rowdeford staff
But Rowdeford must stay open to drive this new development forward
Rowdeford is the only place for this super school- in a super location and a school with a super track record - Rowdeford must stay open
Rowdeford is the only option in terms of location, site and opportunities for growth. I think the proposal is really inspiring and exciting
I totally agree with the proposal having one school at Rowde but do not understand why you are shutting Rowdeford, surely you need their expertise - so why not just grow Rowdeford?
Rowdeford must stay open

<p>This facility, particularly its outdoor surroundings, gives freedom of movement and space to children whose worlds are often turned in on themselves.</p>
<p>I have known Rowdeford for many years and have seen children blossom, due to the skills of the staff and the space that allows learning to take place beyond the classroom.</p>
<p>The site in Rowde is perfect for a growth of a school already on the site. Rowdeford school is known for the fantastic outdoor provision that is so precious to the SEND students it can not be lost. No other centre of excellence anywhere in the county would be able to offer outdoor learning as it is at Rowdeford.</p>
<p>The unique and high quality provision and experiences provided for children at Rowdeford School needs to be protected</p>
<p>Rowdeford is the right place, right setting and ideally located for pupils and has space to grow numbers.</p>
<p>ALL of the reasons above</p>
<p>Rowdeford has room to grow and is an amazing site with lots of oppurtunities.</p>
<p>lack of information and transparency available on the - selection of the academy provider, skills &amp; knowledgable experise within the LA to manage this, huge disruption for very few extra places - many of the extra places are created by taking post16 students out of the schools and into Wilts College, lack of information regarding the adequacy and strength of the post16 offering, lack of information regarding the '3 nursery provisions', inability to guarantee the claims of improvements</p>
<p>concerned about the new academy provider, WC skills/impartiality to select appropriately, &amp; restrictions on new providers coming into Wiltshire, lack of evidence on alledged 'inclusion' merits - what do the priary ands econdary schools say?, lack of infirmation about how Exeter Ho fits into the plan, claims of better dev of life skills closer to home cannot be true, choicse is still mainstream or special in these plans,</p>
<p>Rowdeford School and it's surrounding land is more equipped for expansion to allow a better and improved education centre for SEND</p>
<p>You can't have a successful 'super specialist school' if you want to look at an outstanding model look at Fosseway School . There is no way a big school environment can offer the nurturing, low level travel, purposeful, supportive environment that these students require and deserve</p>
<p>I believe it is vitally important to keep the unique Rowdeford site as it can grow to accommodate the increase in numbers.</p>
<p>Amount of extra traffic. Parents getting children to the school</p>
<p>The Rowdeford site has unsurpassed LOTC facilities that engage the students and provide varied opportunities that are not available at any of the other sites. It also provides opportunities for SEN students from mainstream to undertake the plus programme and help keep them engaged in learning. If this facility was lost, it would have a far reaching negative impact not only in SEN school provision but on mainstream SEN provision and opportunities.</p>
<p>Loss of 16 to 19 provision</p>
<p>Recruiting suitable staff, appropriate sensory curriculum for more profound students, accessing the wider community as part of curriculum</p>
<p>Rowdeford can grow to support the extra pupils. It does not need to close. The school is excellent with the grounds and facilities it can offer.</p>
<p>The Rowdeford site is a beautiful site with enough space to grow in the future. This could be done while current pupils are maintained without too much of an issue.</p>

i think Rowdeford school plays a very important roll in special education & should definitely stay very active supporting the need of children now & in the future & funding shouldnt be put first & the support of children that benefit so very much from the school should provide proof this school stays in its current prominent position to support children within its area as it does so well
This school is outstanding and should remain open
The rowdeford school site retained Rowdeford school can grow to accommodate the increase in numbers
the rowdeford school is the best place for children that have needs and i support this school
It'd be great to see Rowdeford school stay in place, and allow it to grow to accommodate the growth of other users.
it would be good to see rowdeford school stay as is and expand to accommodate the other facilities
Rowdeford School to grow and accommodate the increasing numbers of SEN children.
It presents an opportunity to build on a fantastic existing site. There is a chance for Rowdeford to grow to meet the needs, preserving the amazing ethos of the school.
Rowdeford School is such a fantastic school with amazing facilities, why can it not be expanded upon so that things like the farm, the walled garden, the outdoor space etc can be retained, rather than building a whole new school from scratch?
the magic of Rowdeford
The Rowdeford School Site is retained. Rowdeford School can grow to accommodate the increase in numbers
rowdeford school needs to remain to further the good work they do
I think the rowdeford site and success of the school as it stands will provide good care to the children who already attend and who will join the school.
Keeping a school on the Rowdeford site with all its amazing outdoor opportunities
I think that Rowdeford is an excellent school in an excellent location with a proven track record. I think that the new proposal should be an expansion of Rowdeford school rather than a complete new start.
Rowdeford School needs to grow not close.
Because my son attends Rowdeford and it's a fantastic school, he is doing really well and loves the small school and rural outside space
Rowdeford should grow and not close.
The details you have sent refer to a complex needs special school. This is far too narrow. If the school is exclusively "complex" needs, there will be many children who fall outside of this, who cannot cope with mainstream and for whom there are too few specialist secondary school options to accommodate their specific needs.
The details in the email suggest that the specialist school will be for children with complex needs and disabilities. That implies that those who fall outside of that narrow band will be forced into a mainstream environment where many of these young people will not cope.
Rowdeford is the only school with the vision to make this one school work
I believe this is the only feasible option
I believe the rowdeford site needs to be prepared for the benefit of all SEND schools in Wiltshire
Rowdeford is the only viable site for expansion
If we have to have one school - it should be at Rowdeford
Rowdeford is a great site but must not close but grow
By keeping Rowdeford open you keep the best of the three schools

Rowdeford staying open is the only option that makes sense
Send students must have a home and I believe that is at rowdeford
Our children deserve the best - that is rowdeford
I support the proposal but why does rowdeford need to close- give the children the continuity of provision at one school and respect rowdeford
The rowdeford site provides fantastic mature outdoor environment for skills development and mental well being
The Rowdeford site already benefits from fantastic outdoor learning opportunities for young people and must be retained.
The Rowdeford site has space to expand and accommodate many more students whilst retaining the outdoor learning spaces.
The site at Rowdeford affords opportunities to expand extensively whilst keeping its existing outdoor learning facilities.
There is room at Rowdeford for the school to grow to accommodate the identified increase in numbers whilst still retaining, and expanding, the very special facilities and atmosphere offered at Rowdeford School
The Rowdeford School is retained as rowde ford school is big enough to accommodate growing school
exclusion from the community in which pupils live and will continue to live in when they are adults
Rowdeford can grow to support the extra pupils. It does not need to close.The school has excellent facilities and grounds.
I would support the opening of a new school but feel it l'd shortsighted to close existing schools due to lack of SEN place
Rowdeford is an amazing resource.
Rowdeford has amazing outdoor spaces that allow even better learning opportunities for the students on the site. Rowdeford is in the unique position to have room for expansion still allowing pupils to have the opportunity to have access to these outdoor spaces.
Rowdeford school site needs to be retained. This is an excellent resource with the capability to grow to include the increase in pupil numbers.
Rowdeford School and grounds are an amazing space with the facility to expand whilst providing a wide range of experiences for the children to grow
Leveraging the existing Rowdeford site would exploit the facilities and land and potential for more children. There has also been significant investment by supporting charities which is likely to continue and expand which will help the authority to deliver first class support and be a leader in this area of education.
the rowdeford site is retained, the school can grow to accommodate the increase in numbers
Rowdeford School and grounds are an amazing space with the facility to expand whilst providing a wide range of experiences for the children to grow. The rowdeford school site should be retained and Rowdeford can grow to accomodate the increase in numbers.
The Rowdeford site will be retained. Rowdeford can grow to accommodate the increase in numbers.
Rowdeford is the only viable option
Rowdeford is a special place that all send students deserve
Although I wasn't in favour of the one school, if we have to have one big school, it needs to be at rowdeford
I agree with the proposal although I disagree that Rowdeford needs to close. Keep this school open and grow its pan!



Rowdeford must stay open
This is a great idea but needs the Rowdeford school staff leading the growth. They are the experts in their field.
Rowdeford is the only place for room for growth, now and in the future. Let's make this amazing!
I've just been there for the first time. What an inspiring place
I love Rowdeford for the help it has given my child. The grounds are part of the magic
Let Rowdeford lead the future of send in Wiltshire
Have you been there? It is just an amazing inspiring place for a school
Rowdeford has the best pupil progress and attendance in the north. That isn't by accident. Rowdeford must grow not close!
Keep Rowdeford open
If I had a child with send I'd want them educated at rowdeford
To keep the ethos and experience of Rowdeford it must NOT be shut but just expand
Rowdeford have remained professional and have acted with integrity through out this process- more than I can say for the two other schools!
This option is the only one that will give send students a beautiful environment to learn in.
Inspiring setting, inspiring school- that must remain open
Rowdeford must remain open!
Children thrive at rowdeford
Why not have a post 16 centre at rowdeford- there is room!
Don't throw the baby out with the bath water - keep Rowdeford open
Rowdeford deserves to stay open.
Apart from the bit about rowdeford closing- they must stay open to help define the future of this new school
Long live rowdeford
Rowdeford is simply in the best location
Rowde is centrally located in Wiltshire, has the best environment/grounds and is the only place with room to grow
ALL OF THE ABOVE!
Medical needs
All of the above
Children with complex needs will have limited access to the hospital if they need to get there
My son's safety on bus journey..he needs total supervision for choking risk. The pupils won't know their environment and surrounding area. Unable to get to school to pick up child if needed as don't drive.
Rowdeford school does not need to close as it is an excellent school with facilities and grounds to offer extra pupils its support.
Increased traffic in the area.
Rowdeford School is retained and enabled to grow to support the increase in numbers and support the development
Students need to be within the community not ousted.
Exclusion from their own local communities
The two reasons ticked above can be achieved by retaining & expanding the existing Rowdeford site so that Rowdeford can grow and flourish to accommodate the increase in numbers.
Removing choice from parents, moving children from being educated in their communities

Why not split and invest the money in existing schools?
The excellent facilities for learning outside the classroom. Strong and established community links at Rowdeford School, including highly regarded support for mainstream schools through Rowdeford Consultancy.
Children being away from their local community
Losing the very important aspect of belonging and being a part of the community that we live in.
It is a village setting so this doesn't provide local cafes, shops or soft play amenities within walking distance for the children to attend so they can develop confidence in accessing their local amenities for their future development
Too far to travel for the children many with complex medical needs
Special schools across all counties play a vital and important role in the development of their pupils. Having worked for 28 years in Somerset's special schools, I have fought long and hard to keep each and every one as they are fantastic. I am sure Wiltshire ones are too
Impression is that the proposal is providing for children with complex needs and though this is obviously needed - what about all the others who can't cope in mainstream but do not fit in to the 'complex needs' bracket?
Having been a governor of Rowdeford for several years I believe staff have got the vision to make this work. I am proud of the school and want it to remain open and driving this idea forward
I am pleased at the proposed investment in send and believe this option would give the best economies of scale and allow Rowdeford to grow to support even more children
Rowdeford is the only site that can accommodate the suggested growth with minimum disruption to current students
I don't understand the bit of the proposal that says that Rowdeford is to shut- surely it is better to keep this school open
I think the location of Rowdeford is idea for access from all over the county
Rowdeford school has already got the expertise to support other schools, in terms of their consultancy and the current plus programme- they will be able to support the merger of the three schools into the growth of Rowdeford
With one change - Rowdeford must remain open
Keep Rowdeford open
Rowdeford already has the management structure to make the vision a reality- it must stay open
Despite the other two schools slandering of Rowde ford, I have first hand experience the the travel to Rowdeford is positive for students as it allows transition between home and school
Rowdeford will save the best of send provision in the county
The local authority needs to preserve the rowdeford site but also keep rowdeford school open and the driving force of this new plan
The benefits of learning outside in the environment has been proved. Let rowdeford use their expertise to benefit all SEND students
Stop and think about what the children need. Not what the council need!
Rowdeford needs to stay open - any other option is counterproductive
At last, a Wiltshire plan which is thinking of the long term future of send
Children's behaviour due to lack of understanding
Children not schooling in their local community

Creating anxiety for pupils who already attend special schools who need consistency, not change!
Rowdeford can grow to support the extra pupils. It does not need to close. The school is excellent with the grounds and facilities it can offer.'
Please keep Rowdeford open instead of shutting it - it has been a true lifeline for my child and my family
Rowde is the ideal location central in Wiltshire and with all the space to grow and expand in the future
Distance to closest A&E
We love the school
its a great school!
The Rowdeford site is ideal for expansion, therefore able to support many more children.
its a great school
As a parent of SEN child at Rowdeford I feel this is just making choice less to parents. Surely it would make more economic sense to build or re jig a school on the other side of the M4 ie Malmesbury side nearer to the county boarder. This would result in less travel for some, and more choice for families and children.Again not enough room to comment.....
HIGHLY SENSITIVE CHILDREN WHO'S NERVOUS SYSTEMS ARE ACUTELY OUT OF BALANCE WILL BE HUGELY EFFECTED BY ALL OF THESE, THIS ALSO INCLUDES EXTRA EMOTIONAL STRESS TO THEIR FAMILIES TOO. EMOTIONAL STRESS IS THE BIGGEST KILLER IN OUR WORLD (HEART DIS-EASE) WE NEED TO SUPPORT EMOTIONAL WELL BEING, INCLUSIVE, SUPPORTED AND SHARING. ONE SIZE WILL NOT FIT ALL IN OUR MORE RURAL LOCATION OF WILTSHIRE. PERHAPS ONE PULSING SPECIALIST SCHOOL SUPPORTING THE OTHERS WILL COVER EVERYONE'S NEEDS
Central location in Wiltshire makes it accessible for our daughter.
Its an excellent school and so important for the children who attend.
My grandson is st one of the schools listed for closure over the past 12 months he has made fantastic progress and has recently started to talk our fear the move will have detrimental affects on these achievements he does not adjust well to change his routine is strict for him so he knows his routine
This is NOT person centred.
Rowdeford is such a fantastic school it would be a shame to see it close
It is a necessity. We need to do this for the children.
All the children need to have a place at school that is the best for them.
Rowdeford School provides the best education.
The Rowdeford site is amazing. It could be even better.
Having all children on the same site is beneficial
Having all the children in the same place makes sense.
All the children at the same school makes good sense.
It makes sense to have all the children at the same school.
All the children going to the same school makes sense.
All the resources in one place with continuity of provision.
It is central in the county
It's the only site that makes sense
Rowdeford is the only school in my experience capable of delivering this vision and please keep the St Nick's head away from everything
I want my son to go there so please keep it open - it is the best school in the area

I'm a taxi driver and the site in Rowdeford is the only one that makes sense for such a large school- Chippenham and Trowbridge roads are already a nightmare! plus Rowde is central in Wiltshire
Rowdeford staff are well organised, effecient and they are the only special school that can even bother to train their taxi drivers and PA they get my vote!
The only school worth its salt in my opinion is Rowdeford
Who wouldn't want their child to be educated in that amazing environment that is Rowdeford
Rowdeford have the space, plus the buildign could all happen in the field next to the school, causing least disruption. Plus there is an easy solution to the taxi transport at the school with a one way system
Its the best school hands down
I love the kids at Rowdeford - they are so happy and polite. they have rules and values and this is due to the atmosphere and ethos of the school
Of course, Rowdeford must stay open - it would be a waste of tax payers money to shut it
all the medical and other support in one place in a school is a no brainer and the only school with capacity to grow is Rowdeford.
everyone knows that Rowdeford needs to stay open - the other two schools are just not facing facts - they have outgrown their sites. Rowdeofrd is the only school flexible enough to push these changes that the council wants
Just get on with it! The council's first decesion was the right one, to keep rowdeford as the centre of excellence - now have the balls to make it happen
At last a good decision made by the council
Allt he parents fromt he other schools that are complaining don't like change - their child will have left school anyway by the time this school is built at Rowde
I wish I had had the chance to go to Rowdeford - what a wonderful school
This makes so much sense. Everything in one place. So much space and freedom for our most vulnerable children
I was overjoyed when I heard that the county supported Rowdeford because I think it is the only option that makes sense - due to their site, expertise and overall commitment to SEND not only at their school but in the county.
I wanted to tell you how much Rowdefors has done for my son. He had already been in 3 send schools that "could not meet his needs" Staff at rowdefors has never given up - they have gone the extra mile and more - I cannot speak more highly of them and that is in direct comparison of the other three Wiltshire schools! I wish I had gone to Rowdeford first!
I beleve it will work
The Rowdeford school site will be retained. Rowdeford school can grown to accommodate the increase in numbers
The range of needs covered will be too great. There needs to be separate schools for children with different needs (e.g. severe vs moderate)
Rowdeford School should expand to become a centre of excellence
my grandson has autism and his special has worked miracles we have to help our vunerable children and adults
The Rowdeford site should be retained as it can easily grow to accommodate more pupils.
Rowdeford must remain open
Rowdeford is already the biggest school, with the vision and space to become a centre of excellence
I have seen it work in threeways

One school makes sense in terms of economies of scale
The way the other schools have conducted themselves has been disgraceful and not repeat full to the staff or students/ parents of rowdeford
Rowdeford has the space and vision to grow
Medical reasons
One school in Rowde would make an excellent centre of excellence
Rowdeford is central in Wiltshire and the best site to upgrade
My child is already enrolled in Exeter House
If school fails child there is no other option
The site at Rowdeford School is large enough to allow it to accommodate the needs of students from all three schools and to expand if necessary.
Having SEND students in an environment which caters for nurture will have a huge impact on students that need specialised care. It would reduce costs if secondary schools needing TAs to train in care giving.
There is no/very little provision in the proposals for those children who do not need full time special school provision but who are not suited to/need more than full time main stream provision could offer them.
The fact that Rowdeford can grow to accommodate the increase in numbers rather than needing to close.
Rowdeford can grow to accommodate the increase in numbers rather than needing to close.
Rowdeford can grow to accommodate the increase in numbers rather than needing to close.
Rowdeford is the only solution but it must remain open to save the expertise
Rowdeford has all you need in a SEND school - let it grow to accommodate this
Rowdeford can grow to accommodate the increase in numbers rather than needing to close.
Rowdeford has a Learning Outside the Classroom curriculum that gives realistic employment opportunities to not just their pupils but a host of others from around the county - totally unique - totally successful.
Rowdeford can grow to accommodate the increase in numbers rather than needing to close.
I can't believe lark rise sent a parent to the Rowdeford consultation- it greatly affected the atmosphere and stopped parents giving their true opinion. I have even heard that some parents did not attend due to not wanting a confrontation with this parent! This is par for the course of st nicks and larkrise tactics- I would not trust them to having anything to do with educating mychild
My child has a life threatening condition. I have heard the rubbish from other larkrise parents saying Rowdeford is not safe. Do they think I would send my precious child there if this was the case. There are two virgin care staff actually based at the school
Thank god for Rowdeford
The proposal must change to expand rowdeford
I hate the one school solution but you didn't listen to this on the pre- consultation! So if it has to be one school, Rowdeford needs to grow on it site and not shut
I have lost all respect for the two other schools and their dirty tricks campaign against Rowdeford. Lr and Sn ave obviously no respect for send children apart from their own! Speaks volume about what school has the vision- Rowdeford!
Rowdeford is the only site with the space for a centre of excellence
Hate the one school programme, but if that is the price of keeping Rowdeford.i would pay it!
The benefits of the outdoor space at rowdeford out ways any negatives I have heard
keep Rowdeford open - it is the only way to provide the quality provision Wiltshire needs
Rowdeford is the best school. Read the ofsted reports.

Rowdeford is the only school capable of growth
I don't believe in the La but I definitely believe I Rowdeford and its staff. Give the problem to them and they will solve it.
Rowdeford's mission statement is " being at the forefront of education" let them be the centre of excellence
For once have the strength of your conviction and continue this proposal, just change to keep Rowdeford open
My son is thriving in a resource base with the inclusion and social interaction he has from his mainstream peers. I feel consideration hasn't been made for SEN children who are in the middle. Children who will be too delayed for mainstream secondary school but are happy, well behaved yet vulnerable. I worry how my son will continue to make progress in an environment with severe, profound and multiple learning disabilities.
I am a parent and I have heard all the concerns about travel time for children. This is ridiculous - my child enjoys the taxi journey, it is a great time to unwind, mix with different children and gain some independence
I agree but with the change that states Rowdeford must remain open
I whole heartedly agree with the proposal
I have been to the super school in bath and can see the same school repeated at rowdeford.
Let's think of the kids for once. What Rowdeford offers is the best education you can ask for. Rowdeford site and staff must be at the heart of this solution
I believe a one school solution is the best way to spend tax payers money effectively
Rowdeford is idialic lets make it bigger and better
It's the best place to be taught- I know I was a Rowdeford student
Having all specialists under one roof is perfect and will give children better education. But don't shut rowdeford
Why don't you shut larkrise and st nicks and enlarge Rowdeford?
Just been to the meeting at rowdeford. Rowdeford must not close but remain open. Btw- why wa a larkrise mum at our meeting - that is not acceptable
This consultation has driven a wedge between the three schools that will never be reconciled.
With the proposed change to enlarge rowdeford and shut the other two schools
Grow rowdeford not close
Rowdeford is an amazing school. Perfect for the children.
The staff are wonderful, you couldn't ask fo r better for the children. It is nice to see happy children.
Rowdeford is such a good model. It should be rolled out so other schools and children can benefit. The environment and facilities at Rowdeford add an extra dimension to learning.
All of the above, please see feedback letter from Chippenham Town Council sent to consultation address 27/02/19
Rowdeford School must be retained.
Crowds, Noise
The new school should be developing Rowdeford not closing it. Other schools could join us on this site and maintain identity.
Rowdeford should grow and not close.
The school is fun and I learned a lot there
Its a very specialschool and ithas helped me become a man
its lovely and I have learned s lot especially in the outside which has helped me with my anger

Because it is a good school - It helped me to be independant
it is grate school
It is essential that all transport is enabled to leave and enter at the school safely.
Of course I do - I would not be there person I am today without Rowdeford
Rowdeford gave me the independance to drive, get a job - to say it is isolated is rediculous
The final school must truly provid for all needs.
The new School must cater for all needs. I like the idea of all three joining together.
Rowdeford is such a fantastic school and location that it simply must be kept. It's a jewel in the crown for Wiltshire and it's SEND provision
Current school can grow to allow all students needs to be fully met. A merge rather than closures would encourage the schools to work together before their closure and allow a smoother transition to a newer school. Why lose the expertise and reputation of excellent schools by closing them down? A growth would be more appropriate.
Amazing school keep it open
I have now got a job as a Gardner because of Rowdefords gardens
Rowdeford is the best school I think all children should go there
This is the best solution, but Rowdeford should stay open to lead the way
All those parents bad mouthing towdeford should actually go and have a look at the school
Keep as rowdeford and let the school continue to flourish.
The outdoor space is second to none at rowdeford plus there are amazing staff-
I think this is a great idea, using the best school and the best site to generate an amazing centre of excellence
If there were schools built in Trowbridge and Chippenham they would not be in the centre of town anyway, as there is no room. So the other parents arguments about community is rubbish
Rowdeford is a good central Wiltshire location
Wiltshire is a rural county. Many of the pupils will be from villages so travel will be needed in almost all cases. Allow pupils to enjoy the rural setting and benefits of being in a rural county. Teach them the skills and knowledge of rural lifesyles (animals, gardens, foresty, etc.)
Rowdeford is excellence already! No ajustment needed!
Rowdeford is already at the forefront, excellent school
Special schools are intended to be small to meet the very specific needs of each individual child. A large 'centre of excellence' would be anything but.
All of those reasons and have equal value
Fully support the location. Children, espically those with SEN / PMLD, spend far less time outside due to modern life (technology, safety fears, etc). They are missing the vital health and emotional benefits. This site promotes this positive well-being. I query the need to close the existing school rather than expand it.
Sensory issues must be look into and acknowledged a larger setting would cause pain and suffering.
Increased ambulance response time to proposed site
Does not adequately consider the effects of travel and distress on pupils, due to school size and location, with their type of needs. Size is not always better. Excellent but local is vital. Put this before cost.
The proposal is a return to 1950's. Have politicians learn nothing in the intervening 60 years? The pupils concerned are part of our society and should not be shut away. The council

should promote inclusion and not exclusion. This money saved will cost us all in the long term.

These pupils are part of our community not numbers on a balance sheet. Shutting them away is not what the community want or needs.

This provision should be local and integrated with the community and not remote and isolated.

Post 16 provision for the severely disabled is not included at Rowdeford. In addition a restriction to 3 main concerns is too restricting in this survey. I have 5

I feel that the school is great as it is and functions well as a smaller school, however if the alternative is to have no school I would choose the option to have a larger school.

The Rwdfd site retained, but I am AGAINSTCLOSURE OF all 3 schools , but RELOCATE, MERGE and EXPAND. Approach this new build as a partnership with the 3 schools. The experience from the different provisions invaluable to making this continuing provision better, less bitterness. Rowdeford have shown readiness to work with the LA to expand. Outcome would be similar, but journey to get there different. Allow the smoother running of the schools over the next 4 years before the new build is in place

retain amazing school sit. However, Rowdeford should not be closed but EXPANDED - Rowdeford is more than the site and it would be a travesty to close the school and lose all the intangible assets and values developed over the years that have earned it consistent high esteem.

There should be more links between Rowdeford and mainstream schools

Rowdeford should remain open but maintain a small school environment

The best part of the school is the countryside around it

The buildings in Rowdeford should stay as should the staff

There should also be a 6th form on the site, for people who don't want to go to college.

I like the buildings which has got a lot of history to it

The staff at rowdeford are the best

I like the school as it gives students freedom to learn in the outdoors

I started my learning there - its helped me to be able to go to college.

The school gav me more ways to learn and gave me confidence

The school is vital for supporting students with needs in such a rich amazing environment

The animals has really helped me to understand my emotions

I like the animals - they have taught me how to look after other things which will help me to get a job in the future

Rowdeford run amazing trips that helped me learn how to get on buses, pay in shops and be more independant

The school helped me with my learning because when I flipped I could go outside and see the animals

The excellent Rowdeford grounds would be maintained

Top of the range School provided for the children of Wiltshire.

The Rowdeford site is big enough to expand to take the increase in students who need support.

All of the above and the no post 16 provision.

Not promoting social inclsuion , equality and right of child to be edcuated witin thier community

Outdoor Learning facilities



I went to towdeford andbit made me the man I am today. I loved the freedom of the outdoor spaces
The Rowdeford school site is retained Rowdeford school can grow to accommodate the increase in numbers
S.e.n.d school available from an early age would have helped our sons education. He still suffers Anxiety from being kicked out of 2 primary schools and was forced into a school from age 9 as it was the only one available it is not meeting his needs for education but moving him will cause so much distress that we have had to sacrifice his academic learning for his emotional well being.
Reduced places at Special Provision forcing more into Mainstream which is also currently underfunded and not able to adequately provide for the Special Needs, this also needs to be addressed
The Rowdeford School site should be retained. It has capacity to grow and accommodate the increase in numbers rather than closing
Rowdeford School site to be retained and grow to accommodate the increase in numbers.
I think Rowdeford school should just grow rather than a new school being established
That Rowdeford school is kept open and can grow retaining its unique character
Rowdeford should grow to accommodate the increase numbers
The Rowdeford site is superbly suited towards expansion
Why can you not have all schools in place and have a bigger school as their are more and more children diagnosed with ASD, ADHD etc also you insist in keeping them in mainstream education which needs more help closing schools is not the way forward should work together.
All the above
All of above
All of the above
All of above
All of the above
Despite some concerns about the potential impact on the individual schools and communities, we are supportive of the draft plan.
It will expand the current excellent provision, maintain use of the fantastic stress-reducing outside space, add to existing teams of committed caring staff, continue to nurture each individual pupil, and maintain support from the local community.
Rowdeford school to remain with the potential to grow to accommodate the increase in numbers.
The history of rowdeford needs to be saved as does the buildings and the staff
I want my child to go to rowdeford
lthevstaff st rowdeford are so knowledgable and will go the extra mile to help
I think having one base with all support on site is a great idea
Rowdeford is the idea site, centrally placed and the space to GROW
Rowdeford should stay open and not close
I would like rowdeford to stay open. It is the outdoor space that makes a difference- that no other one of the schools have
It runs contrary to current guidance on LD and autism support



### Extended pre-publication consultation on special schools provision

This extended consultation is an opportunity for you to decide if there is anything else you would like to say knowing that this is part of the pre-publication consultation process.

This consultation is about how Wiltshire Council will develop provision for all children and young people with SEND and in particular create new special school places by 2026.

The previous proposal to close the three special schools, Rowdeford, Larkrise and St Nicholas and to build a new school at Rowdeford remains an option. However, we will take into consideration all responses which differ from those as part of an inclusive and wide-ranging reconsideration of consultation submissions.

To date some of the criteria that have been taken into account have included the following (these are not in any particular order or weighting):

- Travel times and routes
- Leadership, staffing, recruitment and retention
- Teaching and therapy spaces
- Community, inclusion and coproduction
- Capital and revenue costs
- Medical needs
- Preparation for adulthood
- Land options and planning
- Development of a Centre of Excellence (improving support to all children/young people with SEND)
- Quality of provision
- Support to families
- Timescale

Please give your response below:

Name

Email

Postcode

Please state your interest in this consultation (tick one)

- Parent/carer of a child with a special educational need and/or disability
- A child or young person with a special educational need and/or disability
- Friend of a family with a child with a special educational need and/or disability
- Professional with an interest in special educational needs and/or disability
- Other

For the purposes of this survey Wiltshire Council acts as the Data Controller and by answering this survey you have given consent to the Council to process your personal data for the specific purpose of Market Research.

Please state below how you would like your answers treated:

- That you give consent for your response and name to be included within any publicly accessible document produced by the council as part of the work undertaken to develop special school provision
- That you give consent for your response only to be included within any publicly accessible document produced by the council as part of the work undertaken to develop special school provision
- That you do not give consent for your response to be included in any publicly accessible document produced by the council as part of the work undertaken to develop special school provision

For further information about how Wiltshire Council uses your personal data, including your rights as a data subject, please see our [Privacy Notice](#) on the Wiltshire Council website

## 2.4 Phase 2 Online survey results

### 2.4.1 From friends of a family with a child with SEND:

**Jill Coward: BA12**

The idea of transporting children to a large school that is further from their home is simply wrong when we have 3 good schools that can be enlarged.

**June Hawker, BA12**

No No No Angry 🙄🙄

**Kelly White, BA12**

I am greatly concerned about the proposals to create a super school for the children in our area with special needs, I don't believe it is taking into account the needs and welfare of ALL of the children it would affect. I appreciate it will be a good thing for children who's needs are possibly the lower end of complexity, or those who live locally to the new super school. But what of those whos needs are complex, who's health needs greater care and those who can not cope with long journeys or large places, or lots of people. How accessible is a local hospital? How does the super school plan to be a part of the local community? I fear that this is a huge step back in the progress made by society regarding special needs, and steps toward the institution style of old, separating these members of pur community from their peers and the local scene. I fear that on top of dealing with their already complex lives these children will be thrown into a long and exhausting daily journey, which will no doubt affect their ability to learn at school, possibly increase absences, and could result in them not fulfilling the capabilities they currently strive to build upon at their current schools. I believe that the sheer size of the super school, the number of intended students and it's isolation will add to this negative situation anxiety and stress which they currently don't face. All this will have a roll over effect on their entire families, not just the children you intend to move. And what about the community in the local area to this super school? The added traffic, the wear and tear on country roads, not to mention the construction traffic during the building phase. Lastly, the environmental impact, in a time when Wiltshire Council have declared an environmental crisis, it is then proposed to add to the emissions by increasing travel for all these students, impacting the wildlife around the current school and area and destroying some of the green belt in the process of extensions. It's a HUGE amount of money to invest in something with so many flaws. Money that could be used to bring the current schools up to standard, to provide better equipment and services, whilst keeping these children in their local communities.

**Mrs Lauren F Mackelden, SN14 7HN**

I am passionately against a super school in Rowdeford and would like children with special needs to be taught and learn to live in their community, just like all other children. I would not put a child of 4 years on a bus to travel for over an hour both ways to school, even if they did not have life threatening special medical or educational needs. I hope and trust that the councillors will imagine what they would want if it was their children or grandchildren under consideration. Surely children with special medical needs must travel shorter distances than other children, not more? There must be a duty of care for the council that the children will be safe, and I cannot see that this scenario passes the 'headline ' test if any medical treatment is needed mid journey. I suspect the costs of correctly supervised travel for all pupils will also be astronomical, as well as court cases if there are any medical emergencies en route. There is no point in investing in a new school if it is so far away the children are never well enough to travel that far to attend. Families need to be able reach the school quickly in emergencies (which are likely to be far more frequent than for other children) and this is would take a distressingly long time or be impossible if reliant on public transport. These children may also have to attend more hospital appointments etc, and parents also have to juggle school runs with other children, difficult already, and impossible with a school so far away. It is vital that

children with special educational needs are part of their community, to learn to access its facilities and live in it to prepare them for adulthood, as well as vice versa- everyone must be educated to be aware of children with special needs and used to their presence in the community. They must not be segregated in a ridiculously huge school and hidden from the world ,as if in the Victorian era. My children were able to attend a local primary and secondary school, why should the most vulnerable and ill children have to attend a school that is over an hour away? Their parents are already under unimaginable pressures ( and if they crack under all the stress it will cost the council far more). I would support greater investment in local schools for special needs children, giving them the quality of teaching and therapy that they need, together with support for the families so that they can raise their whole family in the same community.

[Steven Hobday, BA13](#)

A minority should not have priority over the majority. All members of the public should share in council cutbacks equally. You should economise in this area as in others and not be swayed by what will undoubtedly be the protests of the effected few. It is a scandal that the council is funding 'horse riding' for a select minority of Wiltshire school children! I would remind you that you closed the everleigh recycling centre after 96%25 of repondants wanted it left open. Hold your nerve and preceded with this sensible project.

[No consent given to share name](#)

No centralised Special Needs School can be a "centre for excellence" as children with these conditions need educating as near as possible to their home. Shutting 3 excellent schools is shear vandalism with an agenda other than caring for Special Needs Children.

[No consent given to share name](#)

It is outrageous to close these facilities. To expect these children to travel such long distances, especially when some have brothers and sisters attending mainstream closer to home, is unjust. We are meant to be supporting fami!he's with special nerds, not putting extra pressure on them

[No consent given to share name](#)

Rowdeford School is a truly amazing and unique resource. Due to the fantastic location, it can offer the varied and specialised curriculum that children with complex needs require as well as being a truly magical place to grow and learn. The outdoor learning resource I truly believe makes such a difference to the experience that can be offered which is why it seems contradictory start this again from scratch in a less desirable setting/location when extending for more to benefit is a clear option.

#### [2.4.2 From Parents/carers of a child with SEND:](#)

[Jane Scrivener, BA14](#)

There are many reasons why this original proposal is absolutely wrong for SEND children. Travel is one issue, although not the only one. Very young children and children with complex medical vulnerabilities should, under no circumstances, be expected to travel up to a 3 hour round-trip every day simply to get to school. It's unfair, exhausting and potentially dangerous. Inclusion in the community must be the top priority for SEND children. Education, for them is not about academic achievement, it's about independence, life-skills, social inclusion and relationships. An education in a centre of excellence is meaningless if it is in isolation. Our children currently have a visible presence in the community. This is absolutely vital to their futures. Children grow into adults and adults live in communities. Let's be realistic - society won't change to suit our children, our children have to fit into society and they can only do that if they have lived, socialised and been educated within it. The proposed size of the new school is of great concern. ALL research into SEND education has found that the optimum size for a

special needs school is between 100 and 200 students. The number quoted of 350 is large to start with but is also misleading. It does not include children currently out of county or returning army families and certainly does not take into account that, with nowhere else to go, SEND children will be sent there so, within 5 years you would be looking at around 600 children. For some children with autism, sensory impairments etc who struggle to be in a room with 5 people that would be catastrophic. 16-19 year olds have a right to be educated and supported within their schools, the same as their mainstream peers. As well as dealing with all the challenges their disabilities bring, they are coping with the pressures and changes that come during the teenage years. Their transitioning to adulthood should be a priority. It's insulting to suggest that they should be left to the goodwill of some charities - this would never be put forward as an option for their mainstream peers and I would argue that SEND young people need that continuity of support with trusted teachers even more. Surely, this is an equality and human rights issue? It's impossible to open a newspaper, turn on the TV or go on the Internet without reading something about mental health and well-being. What about the mental health of parents and families? Having a disabled child is stressful and isolating. As parents, we do not enjoy the same school experiences as our mainstream counterparts. We have little in common with our friends who have no understanding of the worries we face every day. For many of us, meeting and getting to know other parents of SEND kids is really important for our ability to cope and share our thoughts and concerns. Being able to briefly speak to your child's teacher at the end of the day is equally important. Hurriedly meeting an exhausted child off a bus with no other contact will only lead to further stress and frustration. So, what should be done? All 3 schools should be extended. Obviously, there is room at Rowdeford for an extension. Larkrise would work really well across a split site. It could be divided between primary and secondary years, mimicking what happens in the mainstream and each site could be made more age appropriate in terms of decor and environment. I don't know if there is room to extend at St Nicholas, it may be that they could build up and create a first floor or, alternatively, find another site locally. It would be far better, in terms of resources, personnel and targeting each child's needs that the 3 schools should come under one umbrella with a management team made up of a Principal of the 3 schools and a team of deputies, based across each school. This would mean that the schools could share resources and therapists much easier. Children's needs can change over time and it may become more appropriate for a child to move to another school which would be much smoother if all schools were working together and sharing information. As part of the management team there should be a small team of outreach workers whose job it is to urces, bringing communities together - not dividing and isolating. Our children will face enough bigotry and lack of opportunity in their lives, let their school years be happy, inclusive and LOCAL. To illustrate the importance of inclusion in sport please check out this article from the BBC website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/super movers/47777732>

**Jane Scrivener, BA14**

Regarding post-16 provision: Could you please specify which charities you are in discussion with and what exactly are their proposals? Thank you

**Janet Fraser, SP4**

I believe the option of keeping a school at Rowdeford is the most important. My son has attended there for almost 5 years and has turned into the most amazing young adult because of the expertise of the staff. James' interest in history was really encouraged by the old buildings and war history when it was used as a hospital. He first cooked ever over a campfire in the school grounds. Also in his first year he changed from being a child who REALLY hated being out in garden etc. to one who proud

**Marcia Paviour, SN10**

I think as a member of staff and a parent with an sen child the option of 1 larger school in Rowdeford is a great idea. Currently all 3 existing schools have a great need for improvement and facilities that would enable all pupils to access every service that they require. Having all



the facilities and services in 1 school with the most up to date equipment is in every child's best interest. Even though a lot of parents from St Nicholas and Larkrise are concerned about the travel times that will be extended there are currently a lot of pupils who travel extended times going from their hometowns to those 2 schools and Rowdeford is a lot closer for them! Another argument was the distance from hospitals but as Devizes has an ambulance depot then the journey to a hospital in Bath or Swindon is not likely to be any greater! Everyone finds change difficult but sometimes you have to think of the benefits of the majority instead of the minority even if that means it's not what you'd prefer.

#### Marie Elliott, SN13

I notice that the above list does not consider how SEN children will cope in a much larger setting with larger classes and how making the site much larger at Rowdeford would totally destroy the ethos of the wonderful school that it is.

#### Marilyn Daisy, SP4

Hi Unfortunately I cannot make the session on the day due to training at Exeter house. I would like to put my own personal experience with dealing with my own son and his needs. He is currently 7 and still in mainstream. We have tried every avenue in mainstream only for the school to admit that they cannot meet his needs. So after what I can only describe as a battle of a lifetime with county he has been given a space at a specialist school however no idea on the WHEN due to extra space being built. Which means he is left to struggle in a mainstream school and deal with exclusions, isolation and a place where he doesn't fit. It feels like our children with additional needs have to fail before something is done and the time process is NOT acceptable. Neither is the lack of information, the lack of provision, the limited choice of education and for some including myself looking at alternative options out of county. It is great that parents are being given a voice and that there is information however it's the not knowing and the uncertainties of our children's future. We all know the need for transition, preparation for our children however it feels in this county it is totally lacking. We talk about putting the child's needs first and how important early intervention is, then why is it so difficult for us to get anywhere to get the right support, the right information. Why does it need to be such a battle with EVERYTHING.

#### Natalie Romano, SP2

We are contacting you as a collective voice of parents with children with SEN (Special Educational Needs) in Salisbury & South Wiltshire. We would like to bring your attention to the extended special schools consultation that is currently running till May 6th 2019 so are also very aware we are running short on time to get our points across of how the proposed plans and the current lack of provision in South Wiltshire will and is already seriously affecting children and their families in the south of the county. The proposed plans at present are to close 3 existing schools north of the county and to build one super school in Rowde near to the existing school Rowdeford in 2023. Rowde is almost 30 miles from Salisbury and on a good journey without stopping can take on average around an hour. Parents at the schools north of the county have been fighting against these proposed plans with support of the local Labour constituencies to keep the current special schools open, keeping children with complex medical and educational needs within their local communities, an inclusive environment where they continue to learn and flourish with minimal disruption in terms of travelling. After talking to the parents in the north of the county we feel it's now time for parents in the south to be heard, our children matter too! At present there is one special school in Salisbury this being Exeter House, this school is primarily for children with severe learning needs. We have the recently opened satellite Springfields South at the Sarum Academy site and 4 small resource bases attached to local primary schools that are all at capacity and oversubscribed there is currently no secondary SEN provision this side of Devizes!!! The crisis for SEN places in South Wiltshire is very real and is happening right now! It is expected for children of South Wiltshire to hang on till 2023 for this super school that is miles away from home. There is no mention of the funding creating a school for children in Salisbury or South Wiltshire with

moderate learning difficulties or creating more resource bases so children can stay within schools in their local communities. The proposed Free School for ASD/SEMH is not due to open till 2026! in the meantime all these vulnerable children that deserve a happy education are either being sent miles away to schools north of the county that are bursting at the seams, or are having to be homeschooled causing hardship on many families, or children are being sent miles out of county to suitable placements! Instead of this super school that no one seems happy about why can't Wiltshire County Council focus on using this funding to provide appropriate provisions within different areas of the county? We look forward to hearing from you!

[Nicola Stevens, SN11](#)

It's important that both teachers and support staff are given the relevant training and resources to meet the children's needs, this can only be done by giving enough funding to specialist and mainstream schools to be able to provide training. As a parent with a sen child in mainstream school I see more and more pressure put on sen children to perform as their peers as teachers are held to target performance and data, we all know sen is getting bigger and bigger and costing the government hund

[Tina Hall, SN10](#)

. It is important that children are educated as near to their homes as possible. Travel is difficult for them and the single school will mean longer travel times.

[Tracy Bishop, SN14](#)

Special needs schools need to stay in there own community. The children need to be kept local and not have long journeys which there will be. Special needs children can't cope with shanhe and all these changes will not be good for them. And they won't be learning much with the extra time on there journey so be missing out on lot of education and sleep as they need to get up earlier and be tired. Keep our children local. St Nicholas helped my eldest to be where she is today. There is special need children that suffers with epilepsy and have them on the way to school this disrupt the other children on the bus as it is longer journey it will be worse and harder. Keep these children local.

[Vicki Wilson, SP2](#)

The closing of local schools is not the answer. Children need local schools which cater for their individual needs. They do not need extensive travel times added to their day. What about the south? We still have too many children who travel too far, who are in inadequate places or who don't have any provision at all.

[Vicki Wilson, SP2](#)

Good morning all at Wiltshire Parents Carer A collective group of parents, from Salisbury and surrounding areas, have been watching and supporting (were we can) the consultations which have taken place in the north of the county. Regarding the specialist school situation. We are all really behind them believing the school closures would be detrimental to children with SEND. However, we are now starting to think about provisions we have in Salisbury and surrounding areas. I am sure you know that all of the provisions here are full to capacity and many children travel up to the north of the county. As parents of children with SEND we don't feel this is adequate. There are still too many children travelling long distances and still children who are in provisions who are not catering for their needs or who are out of school altogether. So the point of this email is to see if we can find out what is being proposed for the south of our county and the time scales this entails? I look forward to your reply. Kind regards

[Jane Scrivener, BA14](#)

Re post-16 provision: who will be responsible for the curriculum development and monitoring of student progression and outcomes?

#### [Tessa Bools, SN12](#)

You need to build new schools for Larkrise and St. Nicholas in both Trowbridge and Chippenham. So that our very special children are adequately catered for. Sticking them in the middle of a village is not a valid option, particularly as some parents and members of staff do not drive. Also, having all children transported by minibus to Rowde would really increase the carbon footprint. Surely this isn't right.

#### [Rachel Griffiths, BA12](#)

If the councils plan to build a super school goes ahead we will be forced to move out of this area and sell our house. We do not envisage a future for us here when the Council plans to ship our daughter daily to and from a school 20 miles away. I didn't move here 4 years ago for this to happen. Devizes is not the place I chose for my daughter to go to school! I have no choice where my child goes to school! This is the Wiltshire Council plan for my child. Sorry no! Try closing some Mainstream Schools to save money and put this idea forward to Mainstream parents.

#### [Jane Scrivener, BA14](#)

With reference to post-16 provision: what choice will parents have in the direction their children take after 16? (Or will parental choice continue to be denied).

#### [Erica Watson, BA14](#)

FAO- Extended consultation re Special Schools In Wiltshire This is my second letter to Wiltshire Council regarding their decision to close Larkrise school and I would like it to be included as part of the extended consultation please. I find it very disturbing that Terence Herbert, Corporate Director Children and Education, Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children Education and Skills and the entire committee who voted unanimously in favour of closing Larkrise would consider it the best way forward for the vulnerable children they serve. For me it seems that the decision was taken to ease a challenging financial situation and not with the best interests of the children at its heart. I have no idea how many councillors voted but find it astounding that all of them would feel that vulnerable children should be hidden away in a large and unfamiliar location. Laura Mayes replied to my first letter and one of the points she made was that therapy staff had to travel to different sites which was time consuming. Was any consideration given to the parent's time in preparing their child for earlier starts and longer journeys and later returns to their homes? Therapists are able to travel unaided between sites and although I appreciate the time this may take surely a timetable could be devised which would maximise their time in each school? Another reason Laura Mayes gave was that knowledge of the school and child is lost when staff change or are on leave. I hope that this is not the case as full and proper recording of care and input to every child is an essential part of any professional role and if this is not being done then it should be addressed as a matter of urgency. Extended travel and transfer time for these vulnerable children cannot be in their best interests as it will be both confusing and exhausting adding stress and distress to both the children themselves and to their parents and siblings. It is hard for me to understand how a unanimous vote could condone this alone never mind the "Chiding away" of children with such individual special needs. Terence Herbert is quoted as wanting to work with families to find a solution and it is such a shame that this didn't happen before causing so much distress to the families concerned. It shows a complete disregard for the needs of pupils and their family's expertise in what would be best for the children rather than what is best for Wiltshire Council. To even consider placing all of the county's children in one institution shows a complete disregard for the inclusion which the individual schools have embraced which such success. Such large institutions are outdated as they have proved to be unsuccessful. I do hope that the extended consultation will include the knowledge and expertise of all the medical, mental health and teaching professionals involved in the care of these children and families as well as take advantage of the considerable research available as to why institutionalising groups of vulnerable children is ill advised. A valid answer as to why



the unused Aston Street venue cannot be adapted to help space issues at Larkrise site would be appreciated. I look forward to a positive outcome for the children as a result of the consultation as well as a response to my comments above

#### [Teresa Lilley, BA14](#)

Wiltshire needs MORE SEN schools in the North NOT LESS! A one size fits all school for all ages and abilities is NOT the answer and will only cause further uproar with parents and families who should matter. I DO NOT support the one school for 350+ children. This proposal needs to be withdrawn. Trowbridge needs an SEN school for primary and secondary children including post 16 provision and so does Chippenham.

#### [Helen Williams, SN11](#)

My son is 9 and attends a mainstream primary however he is not suited to mainstream Secondary. If you had Resource places in Secondary schools in Wiltshire then this may be a viable option for him. He however does not fit in for places at St Nicholas or Larkrise or Rowdeford so where is he meant to go? Please look at Resource Base places in Secondary schools. I have also not been able to attend any of the meetings you have had over the last few weeks, not enough notice has been given or options to let people attend re work & other commitments this is very disappointing!

#### [Mrs Emily Reed, SN14](#)

I am concerned that 1 schools give less parental choice or if school placement breaks down no other school to attend. Also 1 school which has no plans for over 16's. I also don't feel it will be better with all on one site better or easier to see specialists. Having children in special school doesn't guarantee a appointment either. Was told not enough slots per year as some children have to seen numerous times per year due to medical issues.Wiltshire is huge and need more schools but less especially in north and south of the county, I also don't feel the spaces proposed are not enough either.

#### [No consent given to share name](#)

I am tired of this process dragging on and I think a lot of people are both losing interest and extremely annoyed by a very small but loud, selfish parents who are delaying the process and jeopardising the futures of thousands of children in Wiltshire. I am devastated that a bunch of selfish bullies who are only interested in their own wants, are derailing a process that is in the interest of so many children. Please stop giving in to bullies, this has gone on long enough. If other options need to be considered, could there be two slightly smaller schools in the Chippenham and Trowbridge areas, but under one leadership so that they are in essence one school operating across a split site? This could still see savings as only one headteacher would be needed, and staff could move fluidly between the sites meaning that the children still equally access all the expertise available. If the bullying parent groups don't want Devizes as a base for the new school and the option of a school operating across two sites isn't workable, what about looking at a site in Melksham where there is a lot of building already taking place, or perhaps somewhere just outside of Trowbridge that is easier to get to than in the centre of town? I would also like to see creative use made of the schools that close, e.g. turn them into specialist centres for young people with special needs to help them get ready for independent living or learn and practise work skills in a special environment supported by local businesses.

#### [No consent given to share name](#)

I believe the provision offered at Rowdeford is truly amazing and just must be retained. With the values based curriculum and the outdoor learning it just would be wrong to shut Rowdeford School. Growing Rowdeford School will allow more children to benefit from this fantastic resources and experience the magic of the school. These children deserve an amazing environment like Rowdeford to grow and reach their true potential.

#### No consent given to share name

I am a Grandmother (there is no circle to tick for that) of a Special Needs Child. How can you think of closing 3 schools that will mean many children having to travel further? People living near Trowbridge or Chippenham having to travel to Devizes is simply cruel and shows little understanding of how important travel distance is to many SN children. All 3 schools are needed now and will be needed more in the coming years. A large school of the size that would be required would be a daunting place for any child with special needs. Children should be allowed to develop and grow up within, or as near as possible to, their local community.

#### No consent given to share name

I have no doubt that the Rowdeford site should remain. This site has a huge amount to offer and is perfect for expansion to accommodate more children. I feel that the potential opportunities available to youngsters on this fantastic site out-weigh any other concerns about location or travelling distance.

#### No consent given to share name

My Daughter has Down's syndrome and is currently in primary mainstream education however she is due to move up soon and the choices are limited. She doesn't need to be in a special school but will be lost in a big mainstream secondary school. There is no middle option! Secondary schools need resource bases for the children that need the extra academic support but also need the social interaction and modelling of their typically developing peers. These children take up valuable spaces at special schools when they should be in mainstream with the correct support and resources and trained teachers.

#### No consent given to share name

Rowdeford is in a fantastic location, the facilities it has and could continue to offer at the current site are superb and only adds to the magical feel at Rowdeford. I believe Rowdeford offers not only that sense of belonging that all SEN children so desperately need but also due to its unique location provides so many more opportunities for the types of varied curriculums required.

#### No consent given to share name

Rowdeford is a very special school, with amazing outdoor learning areas with gardening and animal learning opportunities that the children love and gain so much from. We have a great community relationship with using the local facilities and getting them involved with Rowdeford events such as the Garden Fair and Summer fair. The teaching staff at Rowdeford are very good, and show huge commitment to helping and supporting the children there. The school has a lovely friendly feel to it, where all the teaching staff and children know each other's names. I would like to see a post 16 provision based at the school, as this is an area I think Wiltshire will lack if the one school option goes ahead.

#### No consent given to share name

As parents waiting for a space in a special needs school we are concerned that our child may have to travel further afield due to local special schools being full. We agree new schools need to be built but not at the expense of closing existing ones in areas which would then lose easy travel access. Where possible funding could be made possible to extend existing schools, including funding for mainstream secondary schools. For example Hardenhuish have an excellent Key Centre with fantastic staff but due to the lack of trained teachers working within the key centre students have to leave the school to attend a special school. Would it be possible to have trained teachers working in this type of environment to aid the need of additional SEN spaces within schools? They take students who have behaviour problems from other schools and if the teaching support was there, within the Key centre then more students would be able to stay and not face the challenges of finding yet another school and feeling rejected again.

#### No consent given to share name

As the parent of a child with SEND living in the East of the county we have found Rowdeford to be the perfect balance of a fabulous and secure learning environment within a reasonable travel distance. The teaching staff and environment at Rowdeford are exceptional and we fully support the proposal to build on these strengths and expand the provision. Our only reservation with the current proposal is that it does not extend to options post-16 and we feel this area is lacking in the current offering and that having some form of on-site 6th form offer would be well worth considering as the options at Wiltshire college do not meet the needs of all.

#### No consent given to share name

Keep all 3 schools open, but enlarge where possible, Rowdeford has been and is a great school for my son, St Nicholas is closer but is for more disabled students, do not destroy what has been invested in the past, but keep adding to it. Disability is not disability, you cannot put all students in the same school, as they all have such a wide range of special needs. Established and experienced staff are vital, change is not always good, these schools have gathered experience, expertise, equipment in their current locations with strong links to their community and other schools. Invest yes, but do not destroy.

#### 2.4.3 From professionals with an interest in SEND:

##### Charlotte Sides, BA12

Travel times could have a serious impact for the pupils. Pupils with so many needs, often including complex medical needs, should not have to endure two hours a day (or more) being transported to school. People with children in mainstream schools would not accept this, without additional needs. I believe this is only being discussed as an option because these children and their families are in a minority group. The families would truly struggle to be part of their local community, when so much time will be spent so far from it. Being so far from the school may also make it incredibly challenging to engage in the school community, therefore isolating these vulnerable children and their families.

##### Jackie Bawden, SN10

As chair of governors at Rowde Academy we have welcomed the proposal to develop the extensive grounds at Rowdeford School to accommodate pupils with special educational needs in the Devizes, Trowbridge and Chippenham area. Rowdeford School has the potential to provide an excellent environment in a rural setting that would meet the needs of these pupils and one with which we at Rowde Academy would welcome closer links. However we appreciate that there are two issues that would need to be addressed: 1. safer access across the road outside Rowdeford to allow pupils to get into the village and catch a bus into Devizes and for the local community to visit and engage with activities within the school; 2. a specific community building on the site for parents, who may feel isolated and miss the support provided at the school gate. In their current schools, to meet, have tea and coffee and a chat. Ideally a taxi/minibus once a week to Rowdeford for a meeting would ensure that every parent had the opportunity to meet.

##### James Dwyer, SP3

As an organisation Gul sees increasing demand for its services to SEND pupils, indeed we work with over 45 schools in the south of Wiltshire and wider area. The lack of join up between all partners, alternative provision and schools is an issue as indeed is the length of time it can take to make decisions in more serious/challenging cases. However Gul and organisations like it can play a much greater role in assisting the wider network and could be brought into a more widely used database of register and appropriately verified providers. If SEND workers had access to such a list then procurement of service would be a much simpler process.

[John Buckingham, BA14, Ex teacher who taught in special education.](#)

The whole thrust of Conservative policy has been to put the local community at the heart of decision making, and it is fairly obvious from the reaction to your proposals to close the three schools that the parents and children are very much against that decision. At the heart of the parents objection is their genuine concern that it is not in the best interests of their children several of whom have profound learning and behavioural difficulties. All available educational evidence suggests that children and particularly special needs children do best when working in an environment in which they feel confident and secure, this invariably means being in their local environment, and again it is well researched that children travelling longish distances to school suffer in comparison to their fellows who live in relatively close proximity to their school. This issue will be exacerbated when dealing with children with serious health and psychological needs. From an educational and well being perspective there would appear to be no case for the radical change suggested, and this surely rather than monetary considerations must be at the heart of the decision making process. Putting oneself in the position of a parent with children attending these schools should make the decision making easier. Parents don't always know what is best for their children but in this case their voices are unified and have educational research, established knowledge and common sense on their side. This is a case where the children and their parents and helpers need to be placed at the fulcrum of decision making, and they are saying localism is best, having schools in the communities their children know and will grow up in. It would be sensible for Councillors to listen to their well grounded wisdom.

[No consent given to share name](#)

I believe it is in the best interest of the children to have opportunities for interaction with their local community. Many years ago when my son was 3/4 years old ( He is now 29!) I was involved with St Thomas pre-school. Larkrise and the pre-school children met once a week in term time at the school. The children from reception class at Larkrise and St Thomas older children used the hydrotherapy pool together and then had time playing together in the reception class. It was wonderful for all concerned and continued for a couple of years at least. I was reminded of this recently as my son and myself are both childminders in Trowbridge. We have met Larkrise pupils and staff out and about in Trowbridge, whether on the Castlemesd estate on in the town or local parks. We always take the oppprtunity to talk to pupils and staff and introduce our children. Again everyone benefits. It is important that these opportunities arise naturally in the local community. My background in the past was working with adults with learning disabilities who had previously been kept out of the community in hospitals such as St George's Semington. They were often institutionalised and once in the local community have been seen to make positive contributions and they and the local community have benefitted. I also held a role as advisory teacher for SEN in Wiltshire. Through this role I have seen the importance of multiagency working in local communities where families and children can access provision across mainstream and special schools through a graduated response. Often best served by a local approach.

[No consent given to share name](#)

I would on a 1:1 bases with a child in main stream primary school. This child will need a place in special education place for secondary school. She would benefit from a small school rather than a large one. She has developed amazing well in a small main stream class of 15 children but does find this overwhelming at times. She get very stressed at loud noise and a smaller environment will do her the power of good. She is a child that gets very tired as she doesn't sleep well so having to take into account of the travelling time to any school would lengthen her day loads. With her medical needs the school needs to be within ease access for her parents as she can go down hill quickly in her health. The family also needs support.

#### No consent given to share name, Teacher

Keep all three schools open and especially St Nicholas, as Chippenham is a big population centre in North Wiltshire and due to grow further as many new housing developments are underway or planned. This means there will be a greater need for a special SEND school and it's therapy pool to serve and support a larger population. It would mean families will have easier and closer access to a school based in Chippenham rather than travel big distances and over a long journey to get to another base.

#### No consent given to share name, Independent support

Autism support as too many children are being placed in the wrong settings, too many out of education at present. We attended the consultations and fed back for smaller schools and autism only schools in our area West Wilts.

#### No consent given to share name

I believe in a Centre of Excellence based in Chippenham, a town with further planned significant development. This could retain the current St Nicholas school and build a new school to create two sites split by age/need or one new school for all ages/needs including the 6th Form. This would mean we are able to retain the community links already established and continue to give our children the social inclusion and experiences that are so important to their learning and their day to day lives. If we retained the current St Nicholas School the Hydro pool would also be retained which is a much used and valued community facility. I also believe Larkrise should have a new school and keep Rowdeford open both of which can also be a Centre of Excellence. Rowdeford's children have quite different needs and it is important to have schools that are able to cater to different needs. This means that all 3 schools could take more children which is needed without any one school becoming too big for the children's needs and we would retain local schools in local communities which is so important.

#### No consent given to share name

I attended the recent consultation meeting at County Hall Trowbridge and was disappointed by the length of time given to L and S N presentation. I felt it unjustified in a consultation as there was little time remaining for questions. I understand the fear of parents (especially those with special needs) of change and change on a large scale, however sometimes change has to happen. During the 21 years I have been involved with Rowdeford School I am aware that parents may transfer their fears to their children, eg the travel time, which in fact for most is similar to now. Children are more resilient than we give them credit. At Rowdeford we are actively involved with the community and local towns and I find it ludicrous that anyone should think we are isolated merely because we are not in a built up area. In addition the air is not polluted by exhaust fumes and the constant noise of traffic. Government advises us that the youth of today spend too little time outdoors/aware of nature, we ensure our children are outside learning and experiencing nature on a regular basis. Children need to experience challenge to develop, Rowdeford can offer this whereas the other schools have outgrown their sites as they are and have no room for such challenge. There will always be a few children who do not 'fit' so would it be possible to maintain a small unit in either Trowbridge and/or Chippenham with the main school on the Rowdeford site. Clearly this would be more expensive running three sites instead of one, would funding allow? I believe it to be an excellent chance to put the expertise of three schools together for the benefit of the children in North Wiltshire. A learning curve for everyone. Rowdeford has never had problems recruiting staff or keeping them as it is a fantastic school in a wonderful setting with links to the community which work both ways, we go out and the community comes in. Finally, as mentioned at the consultation, providing funding could run three sites effectively, a large new build at Rowdeford incorporating the suitable buildings already there and two small satellite schools in Trowbridge and Chippenham could provide the necessary places and excellent provision for our children for the foreseeable future.



#### No consent given to share name

I believe it is important to provide choice for those with SEND and their families. SEND provision does not work on a 'one size fits all' basis as the needs of pupils are so diverse. Many have said that good local provision would actually be preferred to a "Centre of Excellence" which is in a remote location. Information regarding travel times on some documents provided by the council does not appear to be accurate and therefore not provided an informed proposal. It appears to be based on "door to door" travel times rather than including multiple pick ups or the need for loading and unloading specialist equipment. Safely securing pupils in wheelchairs onto a minibus can take between 5 and 10 minutes per pupil. This is something that cannot be rushed due to the dangerous implications if it is not completed properly. My concerns are not about how this will affect me as an employee but about how this will affect the pupils and their families. It takes away choice and forces those that would find a large school in a rural location difficult to move out of county or be homeschooled. These children are being discriminated against further mainstream primary schools are being opened, providing an increased choice but those with disabilities are not being given the same rights. The proposal to open a school in Rowde means that MORE children and young people will be accessing education out of their own community or indeed their nearest community. Chippenham and Trowbridge are areas of growth with more houses being built, they are also towns with facilities that pupils can learn about using - these will be lifeskills that can be used as they prepare for adulthood. Rowde may be a lovely community in itself but it is not the community that these young people will be using as they grow up and become adults. It is extremely valuable for them to be recognised by others in their local community and learn how to find their way around. Taking this away will impact upon the need for facilities for adults with learning disabilities in the future. The current proposal does not appear to be something for the long term but a stop-gap to deal with the current lack of provision. If the need for places is rising then it does not make sense to close any current provision. Keep St Nicholas as a primary site - open a secondary site in Chippenham. Keep Rowdeford as provision for those with MLD as this environment works well for them. Expand Larkrise so that they do not have classes in added on classrooms. What about post-16 provision? Again, there is more choice for neurotypical children but none for those with SEND. This stepping stone could be the making or breaking of some young people and impact upon whether they are able to live within a supported living environment as adults. I consider St. Nicholas school to be part of the local community. We often take the pupils for walks to the local park, local shop, church, town centre, supermarket. We are acknowledged and recognised. We invite local schools to see our school show in Spring term. We work with the neighbouring secondary schools to enable their sports leader programme to occur and provide many of their students with work experience opportunity. Our pupils enjoy going for walks around the grounds of the neighbouring school and also the sports day that takes place there each year. By taking the pupils out into their local community, they are given opportunities to become familiar with their surroundings and develop their independence which will support them in later life. Money was raised by the local community to build the hydrotherapy pool which is now used by the children at the school as well as by vulnerable members of the community. Please increase provision, not decrease

#### 2.4.4 Comments given by 'Others':

##### Anthony Scorer, SN10

Considering at least Staffing Retention; Community inclusion; Development of a centre of excellence and support to families, I make the following comment. Why is it necessary to close Rowdeford School? This is a centre of excellence with good staff morale and good community links with a great reputation as a centre of excellence. It has a recognised name with great appeal to those who donate time or money to the furtherance of the school. Changing the name to School B or the A.B. Cdefij Memorial School would throw away a name with value. I trust the suggestion of renaming has a practical and not political reason or a

reason connected with change of status to Academy. The work done by Wiltshire Council in the previous study agreed with the school's statement that the school can easily be EXPANDED to cater for increased numbers. Why not concentrate the St Nicholas on a smaller range of need. the buildings appear modern and it has great staff and parent backing. You would only then antagonise half of staff and parents and not all of them?

[Clare Moody MEP, DT4](#)

I support children with special needs being educated as close to their homes as possible.

[Elizabeth Kay, BA15](#)

I understand the concept of 'centre of excellence': it works well for factories... but it's not just process and facilities that educates children. I think the case for having special needs educational facilities in the hearts of our communities is really strong. I would prefer the investment you wish to make improves and expands the three different schools. This reduces travel time which can be difficult and dangerous for these pupils, whether by bus or family car. Most importantly, allows them to better integrate and interact directly with the community. For example, St Laurence students help at Larkrise, an opportunity lost by moving out of town.

[Lance Allan, BA14, Trowbridge Town Council](#)

Trowbridge Town Council objects strongly to the proposal to close Larkrise Special School. It is important that as far as practical, special schools are provided for within the communities that they primarily serve. Whilst it is recognised that it is not possible to provide special schools in all communities it cannot be right that special school provision is not made within Chippenham and Trowbridge as two of the most significant settlements in Wiltshire in addition to Salisbury. In addition the proposal to establish a new school at Rowdeford, in a rural area not closely linked to a town will result in significant increased travel time for these vulnerable young people and will deprive them of the opportunities to engage directly with a wider community in a town environment. Larkrise provides the best mix of town location at the heart of the community as well as additional rural facilities provided at Larkrise Farm. Please reconsider the closure proposal and ensure that Chippenham and Trowbridge have their own community based special school provision.

[Miss Lavender, SN10](#)

Special needs schools are paramount for the children that attend these schools. Children that would not cope in mainstream education and should be educated to meet their needs. Rowdeford has always been an exceptional school, supporting children to meet their support needs and giving them a quality of education that they would not get in a mainstream environment. This also provides parents with the comfort of knowing that their children are in a safe environment and ensures their children's needs are met. The teachers at Rowdeford are trained to work with special needs children. They are exceptional teachers that ensures the children work to the best of their ability without the pressures of mainstream schools.

[Shaun Laverick, BA14](#)

The closure of a facilities which have functioning adequately for those require them by supplying a decent level of education and care simply beggars belief. it will only result in causing unwarranted stress on pupils as they travel the distances to and from the new location Which may lead to having an adverse effect on their education. The money would be far better spent on improving what is already on offer at these schools so it allows to continue to supply the quality education many have benefitted from in the past .them for many more years ..the school closures are considered unwarranted and unwanted by many within the communities by those families who currently send their children to them and their wishes must be taken on-board and respected.

#### Megan Addicott, SN15

Having seen what goes on at St Nicholas and how important it is to parents for their children to be at a local school, I think it is very important to keep these schools so children can go to schools near to where they live.

#### Sue Buxton, SN10

Special Schools are just that, Schools that are specially set up, staffed etc. to give their students high quality education that is specific to their needs. Indeed all good schools will have teaching and learning programmes, which cater for all the various learning styles. All children need to feel secure at their place of learning, or learning will not take place. They need to know their surroundings and be familiar with the staff and other students. Large schools do not give children this security. Ideally a student's school should be close to where they live, so that it is familiar to them, and is easier for their parents to come into school for an emergency or visit. In any case it is not appropriate for children with special needs to have to travel long distances every day to get to school. When they arrive, they will be tired, and not ready to learn. The Special Schools we have already in Wiltshire are good schools, liked by children, parents and staff. Why try to change what we already have?

#### John Bowley, BA12

Children with disability and their parents are very unfortunate. These families need maximum support and genuine sympathy from the Council. I believe the proposal to close local Special Needs schools and concentrate all Wilts disabled or SN children into a single special institution in a comparatively isolated location to be unkind, impractical and wasteful. The consequent much increased transportation by motor vehicle would be hard on the children, disproportionately costly and, of course, environmentally detrimental. I ask Wiltshire Council to be open to proposals from the parents and others with understanding of the overall requirements.

#### No consent given to share name

Rowdeford is an exceptional resource - its location, site setting, teaching culture, community links all combine to make this the best option for creating a single school.

#### No consent given to share name

I think it essential that the children are educated locally and as part of the community. Time spent travelling to a centralised school could be distressing for some and would cause difficulty for parents either to accompany their child and give up time to do so, or leave their child to travel without them. Also if there was a need for the parent to go to the school, perhaps in an emergency, this could present difficulties if they rely on public transport.



## **SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (22 May 2019)**

### **APPENDIX 3:**

#### **TRANSCRIPTS AND NOTES OF STAFF AND GOVERNOR MEETINGS**

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PLEASE NOTE some names and person identifiers have been removed or redacted from transcripts and meeting notes to protect the identity of those individuals, as no written permission to share their details were obtained at the time.

### 3.1 St Nicholas – Consultation with Staff and Governors

#### 3.1.1 Meeting Notes – Staff Consultation 21 January 2019

**Venue:** St Nicholas Special School

**Time:** 4pm

**Attendance:** 25 school staff and 8 officials

#### **PRESENT:**

Members of St Nicholas' Senior Leadership Team, Teachers and TAs

Alan Stubbersfield, Education & Skills Specialist Lead, Wiltshire Council

Helen Jones, Director of Commissioning - Family & Children's Services, Wiltshire Council

Judith Westcott, Acting Head for Commissioning & Joint Planning, Wiltshire Council

Tim Morgan, SEN Inclusion Support Manager, Wiltshire Council

Caroline Bell, Acting Education Officer (SEN) MAT Cover, Wiltshire Council

Stuart Hall, Strategic Director of Parent/Carer Council

Simone Kermode, School Improvement Officer, Wiltshire Council (minutes)

<b>Actions</b>
<b>(1):</b> LA is to ensure that HR and the Unions clarify the TUPE regulations with regards to protecting pay-scales and the process for teachers applying for a similar grade job, i.e. whether they need to undertake an interview etc.
<b>(2):</b> LA is to ensure that the proposal is to include more information on plans for 16-19 education.
<b>(3):</b> LA is to collate evidence on how the current three special schools work well together, i.e. sharing a curriculum with Larkrise etc.

#### **From the LA's introduction, the following questions were asked:**

- Did the LA ever consider a split-site in Chippenham?
- Why was the proposal to build a large site at Abbeyfield rejected?
- Doesn't the argument to not have the split-site in Trowbridge due to congestion of traffic etc also apply to Rowdeford?
- How will the TUPE regulations protect the employment of, i.e. four deputy headteachers and several assistant headteachers on a single-site option?
- How long will TUPE regulations protect our existing pay-scale levels?
- Why didn't the LA consider keeping the new school as a LA school, rather than an academy?
- There is a perception that the LA wants the new school to become an academy to release the LA from any future responsibility for special schools?

- If pupils are at the centre of the proposal, what benefits will an academy, rather than an LA school, offer pupils?
- As the decision to merge the schools is not based on an ideological principle, we are seeking legal advice on the interpretation of the law of the school having to become an academy.

**Staff and LA representatives undertook small group discussions.**

**Questions asked were regarding:**

- **It would all be really exciting**, for instance having space, facilities, equipment, a nurse, physio etc.
- **70%+ of parent views ignored** – the LA has already made up its mind to have a one site campus and disregarded the majority view of parents.
- **When were the children consulted?** We aren't aware of that happening here.
- **Why not use Abbeyfield?** I am cross that the Council won't be building at Abbeyfield. The distance to the town from Abbeyfield is good.
- **Melksham** is more central in Wiltshire.
- **Who wants Rowde?** I haven't met any parents or staff who are happy. Apparently, there is only one parent who is happy with the situation.
- **New school on new housing estate instead?** Rather than a new mainstream school? Why does the LA sell off land to supermarkets, why not use the land for a school instead?
- **Lack of parental choice** – no choice about which school they choose.
- **All pupils will have go to Wiltshire College for 16-19 education?** Severe medical needs met at Wiltshire College? We need much clearer information about what post 16 provision will look like. Has the council thought how children will be supported post 16?
- **Owning a fleet of minibuses and people carriers** would be a good idea.
- **Vehicle access** at Rowdeford is an issue, especially for taxis and the area is known for fatalities.
- **Security** - how secure will the new site be for children that 'run off site'?
- **Multiple hydro-pools** will be required to share with 350 pupils.
- **Standing frames** will be required – children cannot be expected to spend the whole day in a wheel chair, there is a fear that that they will become institutionalised. Pupils will be in their wheel chairs much longer with the longer journey times.
- **Meeting the needs of pupils with severe and complex issues (that other schools do not want)** – how will their needs be addressed?
- **Pupils not coping in large groups** - i.e. an assembly of 70 pupils, let alone 350 pupils.
- **Access to medical support** for pupils who regularly have seizures and stop breathing – how close are ambulances situated and hospital facilities?

- **Access to community nurses** - at the moment local community nurses come in to school to manage issues like buttons that stop working.
- **No gym in Devizes** within walking distance of Rowde.
- **Parental access to Rowdeford**, especially when their child is ill.
- **Rowdeford is isolated**, the pavements are no good and you would have to rely on minibuses to get into town.
- **No buses** - there are no buses from Rowde, and even if there were buses, there wouldn't be enough space; buses can only take one wheelchair.
- **Staff's lack of access to Rowde** as they do not drive or will need to invest in a more reliable car. Some staff travel from Bristol and are unlikely to travel to Devizes. Will all Passenger Assistants want to go to the new school, especially if they don't drive?
- **Staff not willing to drive a minibus**, will this cause problems in the new school if it means not being able to leave the site?
- **No local facilities** – there is no supermarket or shops to walk to with pupils.
- **No access to Devizes town centre** – it will be difficult to walk on a busy road, up a hill where there is no proper pathway with pupils in their wheel chairs.
- **No access to a community** and do Rowde want 350 pupils in their village?
- **No access to pupils' own local community** which is mainly Trowbridge or Chippenham, of which are growth areas.
- **School should be hub of community** - we have a coffee shop here and some of the children do work experience in the town.
- **Less access to activities** - we could do everything we do here in Rowde but there wouldn't be time because of having to rely on transport.
- **Loss of strong links with Hardenhuish Secondary School** for GCSEs and, i.e. sports day.
- **Loss of The Lions Club** which is really active in Chippenham; we'll miss this.
- **St Nicholas already shares resources with other special schools**, i.e. the curriculum with Larkrise and there has been an art project with a huge art exhibition at Larkrise, as well as many other projects.
- **Longer journey times** are not good for pupils' wellbeing. We need to manage the journeys so children don't suffer.
- **Staff with specialist roles will not be required.**
- **Lack of trust in the process** – LA hopes specialist staff will lose their jobs to save money. Staff need to be included in more discussions and need access to accurate information to support our families during this time.
- **Mistrust in the consultation process** – the questions on the pupil questionnaire were deliberately misleading with trick questions like, 'do you like travelling to school?' Of course, the child answered yes because they are happy with the travel they currently undertake. The question did not ask would you like to have a longer journey to school? The questions were set to influence the responses.

- **LA misled all three schools** – as St Nicholas were led to believe that they were 'safe', there was no need to campaign for support from parents and the community etc to keep the school open. Now that the school is closing, staff feel that the LA were being deceitful and undertook this strategy to deliberately mislead and 'divide and conquer'. Rowdeford having had the opportunity to campaign very early in the process (with a petition and support from the press) has not been fair. Teachers have not been listened to – the whole process has just been a 'tick box' exercise.
- **Parental engagement** – how will parents continue to take part in school lessons and activities?
- **No guarantee this will be an outstanding school.**

### 3.1.2 Meeting Notes – Governors meeting - 12 February 2019

Welcome and introductions

Alan Stubbersfield:

Asked to do meetings for continuity in the process.

Helen Jones director for commissioning – baton from Alan to myself

Judith Westcott – head of children’s commissioning

Caroline Bell Education Officer (Minute Taker)

Purpose of evening is part of a series of meetings to take views following from consultation last summer.

Wide in its scope and looking at options in terms of number of schools to deliver enough special school places and future proof. Enough capacity 2026 and expandable beyond.

Alternatives in 3 schools – location – led to series of discussions to reflect on information from further research and consultation responses. Complex and competing messages.

Proposal for a single school closing 3 LA schools – now going through second consultation – statutory going through a prescribed format.

To do it – not do it – amend it – council end March.

Open new school would be an academy on expanded Rowdeford site – decision will be a recommendation from LA point of view through a procurement process to find a preferred provider to open in 2023.

Welcome questions/comments:

Q. Not given any numbers as to how we came to your decision – how did you get to the decision – e.g. numbers of people writing in – should be open for scrutiny

A. Annexed to November report

Q. Noted Devizes had a disproportionate with population

A. It wasn’t – anticipating a process we didn’t do – not a numerical response a number of factors to be taken into account. High number of responses in favour of Rowdeford location.

Why we want to make consultations school specific – reporting back to cabinet 26<sup>th</sup> March on outcome of consultation to ensure feedback the views of groups of staff, governors and parent/carers depending on location – we suspect there may be difference of views depending on setting – ensure it is made clear.

Q. Consultation in Corsham – mix of Larkrise, Rowdeford and St Nicks parents – don’t understand which views can be apportioned to which location.

A. Try to capture as many views as we can – opportunities to have consultation in different places. Coming back twice here due to concerns raised about being able to attend. In appendices to report will be transcripts of all the meetings so cabinet will have variety of views. Recognise different views between Rowdeford, St Nicks and

Larkrise – part of it is substance of what is said. Very clear things which are coming across which need to be addressed via the consultation – those for and against.

Q. What are those messages?

A. A body of people who are articulating support – facilities on site, investment being made – against, are the argument around community, is there a community in Rowdeford as there is in Chippenham/Trowbridge – issue around choice – travel – particularly young children with PMLD and life limiting conditions – issues around P16 education – for some the offer that is being embryonic state may not offer sufficiency – parental network and resilience parents get who live near a school

Q. Going back to point of community – pupils with behaviour – we can take them to local facilities which won't happen in Rowde – minibuses will be required and training around driving, fixing wheelchairs etc.

Q. Path between Rowde and school is not friendly – what traffic calming measures will be required to allow children out of the school safely.

A. Whatever is needed – not an expert on this point – but can be done.

Q. Salisbury Trowbridge and Chippenham are growth areas - Devizes is not in top 3 – so makes sense to have schools in the areas of growth. Growth in Chippenham is going to mean that it expands and potentially on greenfield sites – not fair there is nowhere in Chippenham as other sites have been identified for other purposes. Mixed messages as to how sites have been selected and adjudicated.

A. Did change our mind

Q. What is LA legal obligation to the children – if it is a requirement of choice and remain in community then it doesn't matter if it costs/pricing – should be legal and environmentally friendly/disabled friendly.

A. Links to previous point – compromise to find solution.

Q. Documents do not say what the benefits are – no definition of special needs being addressed – no detail about how the children will be cared for – if there is a compelling argument for one school at Rowdeford it is yet to be seen. Make any statement of centre of excellence – no evidence.

Argument is clear 73% people has been ignored. 3 years ago, a single school academy in North area was put forward – this has now been ignored.

A. Do think there are arguments but understand you feel they don't have merit.

Q. nature of staffing of special school – most teachers have long day and support staff have shorter day who typically have caring responsibilities and live near schools – how will that translate to an area where people don't live – how will you staff it – MDSA's will not travel long distances and take their time. recruitment and retention of staff will be an issue to an area that doesn't have transport links. No evidence that you can.

A. We think so – have experience of running schools in Devizes area – no difficulties in staffing those schools.

Q. Proposal has displacement – doesn't say that because there is a school to go to – sixth form – transport

Q. Do we have a scale how big site will required e.g. many parking spaces etc? is it 500 – 1,000-1200 in a single main hall – 50 classrooms – is big – can't replicate same culture as here now.

A. Spec is being worked on. Need to resolve tensions. Could split the institution to provide a more familiar scale and have whole community events which are not necessarily whole school.

Q. Will PMLD's be kept in their own isolated area?

A. Choice can be made - not for LA to determine internal arrangements.

Q. LA seems to minimise fears of parents re medical needs – will never be the same social inclusion as they get here and at Larkrise – close relationships with local primary and secondary schools. Vitaly important that mainstream children can learn from our children and vice versa. Will lead to discrimination. Transport will not be available to bring children back to local community due to finances. There is no counter argument for this. Our children need to learn how to behave in community and know they are accepted – this has been forgotten.

Q. Your proposal shows no understanding of social inclusion and being part of the local community – full of platitudes – missed the point. Already heard Chippenham is a growth area which brings more families and facilities – asked LA to think about the needs of the families they serve by putting school in wrong place is not future proofing and providing best outcomes for now and the future. Children with complex needs must learn to be part of a community – part of the school and the local area e.g. walk on the pavement, make sense of their environment. EY and safeguarding is 'think family, think community' – this proposal does not provide that. Not able to provide early intervention. Placing in Rowde is counter-productive to this.

Q. We have different views as to what future proofing is – LA thinks of this as not having to think about it again – but I consider future proofing as sending our children into a ghetto – can be a disaster.

Q. Devizes doesn't offer as much as what is on offer in Chippenham as a local community – not one of the 3 principal settlements in Wiltshire – lack of public transport.

Q. Many children do live near St Nicks School although report says this isn't the case – we need to serve the up and coming areas which are being built. Strong links with many Chippenham schools to share expertise and learn from each other and make movement of children possible. Proposal is not coming up with right provision in right place at the right time.

Q. Staffing and qualified therapists – where will these people come from – how is it going to suddenly appear. Not there at the moment and can't get it now.

Q. Will this site have enough hydrotherapy pools/facilities to enable all children to access all facilities – would site have enough to access all facilities and will it have community access as pools do today. Community use not listed in proposal – current pool is not provided by LA but funded by community so parents, siblings could access pools all together at weekends/after school – pool is used continually – won't be possible at Rowde. Losing a great resource and coming together of family life.

A. Design notes and continuing feedback from you can inform the development.

Q. Social inclusion means you get meaningful support internships, living placements, work experience in your local community.



Economies of scale – why so big in one area when strategic growth areas are in the North. Models cited in consultation are next to urban areas and not rural areas.

Where does it say what parents will do if school is moved – would parents look at Rowdeford or an alternative school e.g. Three Ways – as a parent, would prefer medical needs nearest to hospital of choice for emergencies. Would go to arbitration rather send my child to Rowdeford.

Q. You said you want to get this right at the summer consultation but we all feel it's not right – aware most parents are against the one site school but those votes have been disregarded/minimised. Heads and Governors against it.

Q. This is not resistance to change – already in frame of mind that St Nicks would not stay on this site – on board with that because recognise limitations of site. Its' about the right change – it's the location.

Q. Helen asks - would you feel the same about single school concept if location was different?

A. Audience - 2 principle locations, M4 and up to Cricklade make North area too complicated – reduction of choice is a problem – if conflict arises only choice is out of county school. Won't be able to find a location for a single site school which meets requirements. If go for 3 sites – what about Braeside which is better located than Rowde. Our previous suggestions of options have all been ignored.

Q. Our children are different and we have different dreams. Feel disregarded in our opinions. If you don't understand our children, you don't understand what outcomes could be achieved.

Q. What is centre of excellence? Is it education or centre of resources (people and skill). Is it an aspiration and not a deliverable?

A. Not been defined in the detail – no formula and no distinction between aspiration/deliverable. Enable rather than a promise.

Q. Don't feel we are being listened to.

A. Held this meeting to ensure the spectrum of views are reflected in the report – attaching to the report the transcripts of this meeting so views will be there for members to see.

Q. Who is the decision maker?

A. Cabinet – will take advice from variety of professionals. If legal advice sought, will be available.

### 3.1.4 Audio Recording Transcript – Governors Meeting - 12 February 2019

**Venue:** St Nicholas Special School

#### **PRESENT:**

Members of St Nicholas' Senior Leadership Team, Teachers and TAs

Alan Stubbersfield, Education & Skills Specialist Lead, Wiltshire Council

Helen Jones, Director of Commissioning - Family & Children's Services, Wiltshire Council

Judith Westcott, Acting Head for Commissioning & Joint Planning, Wiltshire Council  
Tim Morgan, SEN Inclusion Support Manager, Wiltshire Council  
Caroline Bell, Acting Education Officer (SEN) MAT Cover, Wiltshire Council  
Stuart Hall, Strategic Director of Parent/Carer Council  
Simone Kermode, School Improvement Officer, Wiltshire Council (minutes)

1. AS – Working together on the project, enough capacity for 2026 and expandable beyond. We looked at alternatives of one two or three schools in alternative locations available according to the number of schools we were looking at, that was a rather broad consultation last summer. That led to a series of meetings in CH reflecting on the info gained through further research through links we had and through consultation responses that led us to the Nov report that you will be aware of. It took us longer than expected as it was complex and competing messages coming back to us so we came up with a proposal for a single school. Now 2<sup>nd</sup> stage in sequence, this is stat consultation because this goes according to prescribed format – last summer’s we call pre-stat as there was no format and something we put into the process. The proposal now involves closure of three schools and opening of new one. IN tech sense they are separate, linked, parallel processes, three schools are marinated the LA may make decision in relation to original proposal to do it, not do it, or amend it. And that will be the decision before Council at the end of March. In parallel of course there is the linked proposal to open a new school- according to the proposal that would be an academy on the expanded Rowdeford site near Devizes. That would be an academy so decision in the end is not one for the LA, in March should it go through the process, the decision from the Councils POV would be a recommendation to go ahead for a procurement process to identify a preferred provider. Which in practice would be an academy or MAT to establish to be the provider of the new school which we would build over the next few years to open in 2023. That’s broadly familiar to you I think, you have read the paperwork, and been to some meetings, there isn’t much more for me to say now because that is not the purpose of the meeting. There are colleagues here from the Authority to listen, note and make note in case Dom’s stuff doesn’t work! So it is over to you for questions, comments, we note what you say; that is our job here today.
2. Person – there were no *intelligible (microphone not switched on)* we have not been given any numbers of how you came to your decision. How did you get to that decision? What were the numbers of the people writing in? The parents etc. etc. I think that should be open to scrutiny.
3. AS – I think that was included in an annex to the November report which you can find online.
4. Person – it was noted that Devizes has a disproportionate number of votes / responses relative to its population so how was it normalised to deal with actual

population across the north of Wiltshire and not simply those people who responded

5. AS – the answer is it wasn't I think – you're anticipating a process that we didn't do, and that was because we don't simply do arithmetical response to consultation there are a number of factors which are borne in mind. I accept your point and we will note that for how we look at the consultation as part of the decision making next time around. There was as you know a high number of responses in favour of a Rowdeford location, but I not the point you make.
6. HJ – that is why we also want to make the school spec consultation events as we are doing. Judith and I have got the job of reporting back to Cabinet on the 26 march on the outcome of the consultation and we will be ensuring that we feedback in that report the different views of the groups of staff, governors and parents / carers depending on what their location is. We suspect there may be a difference of views depending on what setting the meeting is. We are going to ensure that it is made very clear in the consultation back to members a part of the decision-making process on 26 March that they are very clear what specific groups of staff, parents and governors are saying. There will be that segmentation.
7. Person – I know this is a question that is out of context here as it is a governor meeting and I am going to talk about Corsham. The consultation in Corsham, there was a mix of Larkrise Parents, St Nicks Parents and at least one Rowdeford Respective or actual parents, and I don't know how that particular consultation will identify which views were held by which parent.
8. HJ – the general consultation would be representing the views. We are going to try and capture as many views as we can, but we felt that we needed to have opportunities for people to have consultation in diff places so, a lot we wanted to come into the school, some may not. We wanted to offer that opportunity, but we are going to ensure that, and that is why we have done a specific consultation in all schools, in fact we are coming back twice here because of the concerns about the numbers being able to attend the first time around. There will be a mixture of some general comments and some specific. The other thing that we're going to do is we're going to put in appendices to the report the transcript to the meetings as well, so that members have a full, and a written record of the variety of views as well. That is what our job is to do, it is to try and present the variety of views that there are, but we recognise that there will be some different views in Rowdeford, perhaps in Larkrise and in St Nicks.
9. AS – I think part is adding up the numbers and part is about the substance of what is said – irrespective of how many people say it.
10. HJ – I think that is really important, is the substance of what is being said. It seems that what are coming across that we need to address in the consultation and feedback to members, some are for the plan, and some are not in favour. And there are some very clear messages coming back that we need to communicate to members.

11. Person – *Question unintelligible*
12. There are a body of people, who are articulating supporting and who are articulating some of the things we put in the report about the facilities that could be onsite, the investment that is being made etc Some of the things that are coming across against – first of all the argument around community, and is there a community in Rowdeford as there is a community that is being articulated to us and is *unintelligible*. For the people who have concerns about the proposals those are the main concerns so far.
13. Person – the negative list seemed a lot longer than the positive.
14. Person - I just want to reiterate on some of those things, that as a staff governor here, as a staff we are thinking about pupils first and foremost, going back to your point about community, we have a lot of pupils with behavioural and physical needs, and I think in one of the papers I read you were saying parents can take on the responsibility for providing community aspects. A lot of pupils re unable to support their parents in this, and our specialism allows us to take pupils to parks, the local shops, the local church, swimming pools. That isn't going to happen in the location of Rowde; because it will mean going on a minibus you will need staff to drive those buses, to be trained to clamp wheelchairs on – there will be a huge issue in being able to take pupils out into the community.
15. Person – I suppose just taking that one, the path between the school and Rowde itself, does not appear to be wheelchair friendly, you have to cross the road at least once. What traffic calming and improvements will that part of the open environment would be required to allow the community to get out of the school without transport?
16. AS – Whatever is needed. I am not an expert on that, so I can't comment, but we can put speed limits in, there is a full range of thing that can be done at not a huge cost.
17. Person – can we just pick up on the point that the three growth areas are Salisbury, Trowbridge and Chippenham. In growth you get investment; not just in money but in facilities, local support, charities – everything else. Devizes is not top three – Trowbridge and Chippenham are therefore it makes sense to have schools placed in those local communities of growth. The other side of that is, that the growth that we have in Chippenham is going to meant that Chippenham is expanding into the greenfield areas as well as other areas. We keep hearing the argument that there is nowhere in Chippenham to build schools – I totally disagree with that. There was a place found to build a centre for the range to bring 200 lorries a day into Chippenham that was easily found. And they just built Lidl on a site that used to be a special needs place. So I just feel that it is a bit, not very fair to say there is nowhere when we have not seen any evidence of places that have been identified and then to be told they can't use those sites for specific reasons. You yourselves said that Abbeyfield was a great site when you were here, you said that Rowdeford was on a flood plain and was likely not to be chosen, then overnight you have found that Abbeyfield

is not suitable and Rowdeford is. We are getting very mixed messages with no information in the documents being provided by the local authority as to how these sites have been adjudicated, selected or chosen, and why they can't be used. It would help everyone if there was a clearer indication of why schools cannot be built in Trowbridge or Chippenham the two growth areas in North Wiltshire which will provide all of this support for these children.

18. AS – I am making no secret of the fact that I changed my mind and people will now that I was speaking last summer in a diff frame of mind, reflecting on the likelihood of there being a school of one size or another in Chippenham. Abbeyfield was a site mentioned, I have never said it is not suitable, some messages we heard was that it seemed to be some distance from the town centre, that was a factor.
19. Person – No more distance that Rowdeford is to Devizes ... *unintelligible*...
20. AS – it seemed to be about the same.
21. Person – we almost need to start with what is the LA legal obligations to these children? Because if the legal obligation is for them to be in their community, if there is a requirement for choice – if you remove choice and move them out of their community, then it doesn't matter if it costs nothing. It is still not legal.
22. AS – we probably disagree about what the legal duties are.
23. Person – I am not saying I know what they are...
24. AS – On your assumptions, you are right, but I would make different assumptions.
25. Person – before you start the pricing and the model there should be an obligation to be sure that the solutions that you put forward are suitable for whatever the environmental needs are, the disability needs are, the family needs are. Whatever they are they should be covered upfront and then you start looking for a solution that is a best fit for the requirements you have to hit.
26. AS – I guess I would say in response, and it links to the previous point the best fit is – by definition, is a compromise, I am not saying it is the perfect solution, but we have the best available solution. We think we have that. And that is being challenged and will be challenged further that is in question, I know.
27. Person – *unintelligible*
28. AS – Well, the best available in the world if you like.
29. Person – The documents do not state clearly what the benefits are, all we see are financial benefits. There is a nice big £20m lump sum there yet there is no definition of the types of special needs of the children being addressed. They have been lumped into one lump and there is no explanation of how these children will be cared for. There is a general statement about transport, there is nothing taken into consideration of the condition of the children that have to go on that transport. So, what we would like to see is, if there is a clear and compelling argument for a single school in Rowdeford – we would all like to read the evidence for that. Every document I read has no evidence. It just says it will be a centre of excellence, how can it be a centre of excellence when it hasn't been judged or inspected? Anybody can make that statement, you could

build them anywhere. I am sorry, but this does not cut... this is all just platitudes. There is no evidence, there are no clear figures, there is no clear argument to have a single school. In fact, it is the other way the argument is clear by 73% of people that were consulted they want more than one school. They wanted the two or three school option. That has been totally ignored. Three years ago, what was put on the agenda was to have a single school in North Wiltshire, an Academy, three years ago. We have spent three years and a lot of energy in all of the schools trying to academise special needs. Only to come around full circle to have the LA come up again just saying there is a single school needed in North Wiltshire, nothing has changed in three years.

- 30.** AS – There is a degree of disagreement between us of course I think there are arguments for. I recognise that you don't find them, or feel they have merit. I don't think you can submit that the arguments aren't there. You are fully entitled to think they are rubbish, and I take that point from you.
- 31.** Person – I wanted to follow up. *Unintelligible*... over the summer consultation there was support for a single school in Devizes, but as I remember it the people were asked about whether they preferred one, two or three schools and not about the location.
- 32.** AS – I think all of those questions were asked and I think the proportion favouring one school was of the order of 12%. If people have heard me say a lot of people supported one school I don't think we would have said that because it is not what the evidence suggested but there was a lot of support for a school irrespective of if it was one school or one of a number in Rowdeford.
- 33.** Person – OK that is a bit different from how you said it earlier, you phrased it in a different way. The other thing is, and a bit of a separate point, just about the nature of the staffing of a special school. Most of the staffing are not teachers, they are support staff who do not work a full day. They work a shorter day and that is because they have family commitments, and often I think support staff are caring at both ends. They have children and who are still under their care even if they're grown up and they have parents they are caring for, they are used to a short journey to work, they live locally to the schools and I wonder how that will translate to a larger school in a place where people don't live and are you actually going to be able to staff a school of that size in the middle of nowhere compared with *unintelligible*... I think people are not going to want to travel far, people like lunch break supervisors who come in for an hour and a half in the middle of the day. Aren't going to want to travel far so are you going to be able to staff. To get the quality staff in a school that is in such an out of the way location?
- 34.** AS – well, we think so. We have experience of running special schools in the area – one in Devizes, and one in Rowde, there are problems with recruitment in all schools but I don't think they are differentially represented in those two.
- 35.** Person – I suppose that takes us back to the actual proposal, because the proposal has displacement. We are being displaced from this school, but it doesn't say that, it seems to say that there is no displacement because there is

a school to go to, but we are still being displaced, displaced from the sixth form to “somewhere” and it is not specified where. And in the transport section, it talks about mitigation against increased car use should be in the proposal and it does not seem to be there.

36. Person - just wanted to reiterate what (name of person) said about the staffing, again, we have MDSA's and support staff who can walk to work – we have teachers who already commute to Chippenham, that is their choice but obviously they will have an additional 30 minute commute. There is a general feeling that retention and recruitment of staff will be a major issue to recruit in such a rural area without any public transport links.
37. Person – Thanks, can I just pick up on what (name of person) was saying about (not so much the teaching staff) but other staff. We already know that there is a large organisation in Rowde that has gone into special measures because they can't get the staff and are having to use agency staff. Those are the people we would be looking for to have a TA's so I am not sure how you can say that you'd easily be able to staff the... people going to Rowde, because there is no evidence that you could.
38. AS – the evidence I was suggesting is in the two schools that we have in the area.
39. Person – For how many children? We're going to need an awful lot of TA's for a large increase in numbers of children.
40. Person – do we have a scale of how many people, parking spaces, and how big a main hall this new school will have?
41. AS – A specification is being worked on by our premises people, I haven't got those questions right now.
42. Person – But do we have something for now so that we can actually work with a figure during this closure consultation, because at the moment the figure I have got in my head is *unintelligible* parking spaces, a 1000 – 1200-seater main hall, and 200-300 members of staff. It's big – with 50 classrooms.
43. AS – it will be big, yes. And it won't necessarily, I wonder about having a single main hall. I know that would mitigate, or militate against a daily act of collective worship which many schools don't do.
44. Person – but if you're going to give the children here the same experience, they have whole community events, if they don't have a main hall big enough, the whole community events including parents, then you can't replicate the same culture that you've got here today.
45. AS – I think there are competing tensions there, people are saying they're concerned about the scale of operation would not support the idea of a community event in a 1000 place hall. And so that is one view. Your view might be a different view that you would support that, and we will have to try to resolve those tensions.
46. Person – What I am actually saying is I want a school where I can have a whole school community event happen at. If 350 is too big for that then 350 is too big for the school. That is what I think

47. AS – I guess the counterpoint might be that in so far as we have talked before as you will know about splitting the new institution in a way that would provide for a scale that was more familiar to people, then you could have whole community events that might not involve the whole school.
48. Person – But would you also have a full spectrum or mix of abilities, of special needs abilities within that reduced set, or would you end up with a situation where you're ending up with the PMLDs and you're just keeping them in their own isolated area, because that is not necessarily good for them.
49. AS – there will be choices to make there, it might be by age, it might be by difficulty – the split we have at the moment is by difficulty of course. So we have PMLD / SMLD here, and we don't have PMLD in Rowdeford. So that split exists, it could be replicated or a different arrangement could be made. It would not be for the Local Authority to determine the internal arrangements of the school.
50. Person – I had a lot to say at the consultation, and one thing I want to go back to, apart from the fact that I think it is outrageously wrong that the council seems to minimise the fears of parents with children with medical needs. For me the big thing is social inclusion and I am afraid no matter what your answer will be, it will never be the same social inclusion that the children are getting at this school, and at Larkrise. Because they are in the heart of the community. And although there have been promises made in the proposal that of course there is going to be the Rowde community, for 350 children, that is just impossible. Those links that have been made within this community are irreplaceable. You can't replace community links that have been made within this school and the community. We are right next to two mainstream schools, we have really close relationships with them, also with primary schools. I think that people seem to forget that yes our children learn, from mainstream children, however it is also vitally important that mainstream children learn from our children. One of those is being non-judgemental, having a sense of acceptance and mostly those are, those mainstream children. If those children at mainstream school are not exposed to the children that attend St Nicks and Larkrise how are they to know? The community in Rowde and Devizes have got a big benefit from our children and the ones here in Chippenham, and in Trowbridge are going to be discriminated against because actually they're missing out a great deal. And I can't get my head around that. Whatever anybody says it is not going to be the same, because it was said yes we will transport the children back to their communities. That won't happen as there won't be money available for that. It is wishful thinking, actually reality is that a community needs everyone around them including our children. It is not only for the mainstream people but also for our children. When I come to Chippenham which I consider my community because I live in Calne. My child is getting recognised, by the local shops. And say Hello, how are you, it is really nice to see you. She feels a sense of belonging; a sense of belonging is a human need. That is not going to happen in Rowde, I am sorry but it isn't and there is no counter argument for that. It is impossible, what is the counter argument? That you will build a community



around Rowde? Have a coffee shop at Rowde? But you're basically inviting people in, and that is fine, but it is not the real world. It is an environment that is not real life – it is not a real life scenario.

**51.** Person – I would call it “visiting the zoo”

**52.** Person – Yes. And I have no, it is wonderful that it would be, we have a coffee shop as Popular College now and that is wonderful, people from the community can attend. And our children, our young people, are serving coffee and cake, and they're polite to everyone. But when they grow up they are not going to be in a college. They need to go to the real coffee shop. Not one that is replicated in a setting. They need to learn how to behave in the community, and they also need to know that they're accepted. That seems to be totally forgotten. It is all about social inclusion. And you can say “oh you know this is already happening” “we have lots of opportunities where children could potentially go to be socially included but it isn't naturally done. It is, this is, you know the community in Chippenham is amazing and we have so many links and you know, I can't believe that this is possible eradicated.

**53.** Person - Can I just say that I, and probably everyone else here totally agree with what (name of person) is saying, and your proposal shows no understanding of social inclusion, or people needing to be part of their community, learning in the community. It is full of lots of platitude of “it will be like this / it will be like that” and “don't worry whatever we question it will be in the school” but you miss the whole point which is about social inclusion and people being part of the community.

**54.** Person – I would like to add to that, we have already heard that Chippenham is a growth area, that brings with it families, more communities more facilities, I asked the Cabinet and the LEA to think v carefully about the needs of the children that they are trying to serve and future proof for. Because putting the school in the wrong place, without a real community to enhance social inclusion is not going to be future proofing, and the best use of resources to provide the best outcomes, not just for the children now but the children in the future, and I think that needs to be very carefully looked at in terms of the arguments you have heard about social inclusion and the needs of the children. It is vital that children with complex needs learn to be part of a community and that means both within their school – a sense of belonging, any school should provide a sense of belonging, I don't think we're disagreeing with that and have wonderful facilities but our children and the needs of children with complex needs means that they need to learn to walk on the pavement. They need to make sense of the environment around them and people in that environment need to learn with them, and from them, and having a range of facilities on your doorstep is what is in Chippenham. As (name of person) said, those facilities are going to grow, Rowde yes can have a wonderful site, it can be an equal distance if we were in Abbeyfield and getting into Chippenham, but it will not have the range of facilities so that needs to be carefully thought about in future print. In a lot of documents and proposals, early years development, children's centre, Wiltshire

Safeguarding thing, a big theme coming through is “think family, think community”. I don’t think this proposal is addressing that. We are not thinking family, we’re not thinking community. Families need to have access where they feel they can come in, engage if we cannot get families at an early stage we aren’t able to provide early intervention. Your children’s centres, quite rightly, are looking at the local facilities that they can use to work with families out of. We are doing the same here in school really – we are trying to get the families in here, but also we link with local facilities so placing it in Rowde is counter-productive to that. The safeguarding is very much about people living in communities, thinking family thinking communities and on top of that you need to think of social inclusion. I cannot see how this proposal addresses any of that.

- 55.** Person – Can I just add to that, (name of person) has talked about future proofing and I think the danger is that you think of future proofing as we won’t have to think about this again, it’ll all be sorted. I think future proofing is about the possibility of sending all our children to what could more or less be like a ghetto. Putting children where they are never going to be able to come out of a community, because when we want to have to two schools, in five or 10 years’ time you’ll be saying “ah yes but we have this facility in Rowde”. So future proofing can be an absolute disaster for our children as it will take them away from the social inclusion and the community that they need.
- 56.** Person – Also, there was an argument about Rowdeford saying that, you know we have got lovely facilities, outdoor facilities I think was one argument wasn’t it. And I think I said in the parent consultation, we can use Hardenhuish Green, there is nothing stopping us, we are welcome there. And the children, well young people actually, are walking to John Coles park, which is very much in the centre of Chippenham and they’re seen, yeah. Gosh, these children actually exist. And this is my whole point, you could have the most brilliant outdoor facilities at Rowdeford, and they would make use of it, but they are never seen by anyone. And they need to be seen – they, we think that we have done a lot for social inclusion, you know we think that people are accepting but actually that is not the case. Some of the Barnardo’s staff went to a local shop, and they were shouted abuse at, our young people. Now there is no special school in Calne. But that goes to show that actually no, there is not non-judgemental views out there, young people, mainstream children, still look at our children and have prejudice and think they’re weirdos and freaks. That should be prevented, I am going to be in contact with Calne’s local schools to minimise that. That is my effort that I put in here, to serve my community. That actually those children need to be accepted, that should be your job, not mine, to build community acceptance and community inclusion, yet I am doing that because I feel very strongly about that, because I don’t want. I want those children to be educated about disabilities.
- 57.** Person – In our case, they don’t look at her. They look at the wheel chair.
- 58.** AS – Can I ask on your views on Devizes as a community resource?

- 59.** Person – I think I have touched on that. In terms of it doesn't offer as much as is already being offered and more in Chippenham.
- 60.** Person – Also you would have to transport the children there. And we do know that being out in the fresh air, walking to your community is good for mental health to be out there, but obviously our young people can only walk so far. And to have it just outside here like in Chippenham, is the ideal scenario.
- 61.** Person – and you don't list it as one of your three principal settlements here in Wiltshire.
- 62.** Person – Because things about buses, trains, using other facilities that we can get our pupils familiar with. I just want to touch on numbers, where our children are coming from, I think it is cited in the proposal that they don't live near. They actually do. And it is going to increase. There are already two major housing developments within Chippenham going up at the moment, that is by itself going to create children with Special Needs we know that, we need to be serving those families. I think it is cited somewhere about well loved schools. It isn't about being a well loved school, it is about being part of a community and building on that community and the links. I fully support the work that the Local Authority wants to do about sharing expertise – I think that is important but we already have strong links with at least two of our secondary schools and 10 of the town Chippenham schools here we are working together so that we can make sure we are sharing expertise learning from each other, making continual movement for children better, so I fully support that not all children should be in special schools. We don't want to increase the number year on year, we can't keep doing that we want children in the right places with the right provision, and that takes us back to look at where are the best places to put those schools. The proposal on the table is not coming up with right provision, in the right place, at the right time.
- 63.** Person – I want to go back to the things that you have been saying in terms of personnel. That there won't be a problem recruiting. You're also going to be providing us with OT, SALT, but it seems to be that you're just thinking you're going to wave a magic wand and all these people will pop up. I teach seven autistic pupils, I need four staff and an MDSA every day. I need OT support, I need SALT support, it is not there. How is it suddenly going to appear for a school of 300 pupils when I have 7 pupils and it isn't there for them?
- 64.** Person – on a similar note about the scale I guess, I teach in a special school in neighbouring authority and we have a hydrotherapy pool – as there is here – so we have got about 140 children in the school. About half of them get to use that pool in the course of a week. Some of the others can access pools in the community, but for 70 children to access a pool they can do that in a week. Is this all-singing all-dancing school going to have three hydrotherapy schools, which is what it would need for half of the children to access the pool within a week. It is easy to say "it will have a pool" and "it will have this/ or that" but is it going to have enough of everything for all the pupils who need it to access those facilities as the scale of the thing seems not.

- 65.** Person – will it have community access for people from Trowbridge, and from Chippenham as the hydro pools do today?
- 66.** AS – So what I said at the beginning was this is in part about thinking about what such a school should look like and what it should contain. The drawing up of special education has a starting point, in design notes from the DfE and the continuing part of development is your messages to us. So, sufficiency of hydro pools is one of the things we have been clear we wanted and you're emphasising that point. Can I just take professional advice from what you have said – it sounds as though you would recommend more than one pool, rather than a bigger pool – and your suggestion would be for three.
- 67.** Person – But you also have community usage of the current hydro-pools which is not listed in the closure proposals
- 68.** Person – the hydro pool here was provided for the children who, in the past we took to the local swimming pools. Some of whom found them v cold and they needed a hydro pool. But the whole idea was that parents, siblings, could access that hydro pool with their brothers / sisters who come to St Nicks, or don't, on weekends or evenings, and that pool is used all the time. In Rowde people can get here, they can get here by public transport or walk. At Rowde you take your life in your in your hands along that road, whether you're driving – there are accidents all the time. Families are not going to want to go there in evenings or at weekends. You're losing a great come together of different families and it is the family life that people with children with disabilities, the children grow and the families grow and they like the support that they get.
- 69.** Person – Just to reply, my point wasn't that the school should have two or three pools, it was that is a single site going to have enough provision for, 300 children, has that been thought about? The economy of scale doesn't necessarily work if children have access to a school where they are at the moment, and suddenly they're moved to a larger school where they don't. Then that is not better provision for them.
- 70.** Person – *unintelligible*... this wasn't provided by the local authority – this was provided by the kindness of the people in Chippenham because they respect the school, and they wanted to give the school something. That goes for a lot of things this school benefits from the local community, I am sorry but there isn't enough fundraising in Devizes to keep that kind of support for 350 children, they will not get the same support there as they get in Chippenham. That pool was £750,000 raised by local people. That is the type of thing we benefit from in living in this community.
- 71.** Person – I think I want to touch on a number of things that we know. Being a well-loved school and being part of the community, enhancing social inclusion means that you get meaningful work experience, supported internships, you challenge the community to provide supported living spaces in the future. This will be, as is recognised, where the majority of children come back to live or to be in later years. And a lot of parents will be making difficult choices, but they will want their young people in a community that offers the best facilities that

they have already learnt in, not just at post 16. They may make the decision for them to leave home, and surely you want your local community to provide that supported living for them. I also want to touch on the economy to scale. Why does it have to be such a big, on one place, when you know there are strategic growth areas in two areas in the north at least that could meet those needs and still have economies of scale. I appreciate there are models of bigger school, which are in very big urban areas or on the edge of that, and the sites that you have cited in the consultation are actually right next to urban areas not in more remote rural areas. They are part of their community.

**72.** Person – where in the consultation has it worked out what we as parents – I am not talking about parent governors here, I am talking about parents – what will we do if you move our school that way. Because my reaction would be to look at three ways – not Rowdeford. Even though it is further away it is safer.

**73.** AS – Safer – can you expand on that?

**74.** Person – *unintelligible*... I said it at cabinet, I am saying it here, if she has a fit, I do not want her further away than here to the next hospital I want her to go to. Which would be the RUH or BCH. So, if you can't do that, I *unintelligible*... which is closer to those hospitals than Rowdeford.

**75.** AS - Where do you live?

**76.** Person - We chose to come to Chippenham because it is our community school. If we can't have Chippenham I would prefer Bath to Rowdeford, I don't know if you have that in your consultation on what parents would want to do. Would they want to go to independent, or out of county, because if we react in a way that you are not proposing, we could blow your figures apart. I know a number of parents who would choose to send their child to Rowdeford today but are not interested in the Rowdeford you're proposing. You're already blowing your figures away because they will want to go to Mainstream potentially. That may be what you want, but if could mean that in 4 years' time Rowdeford has half the children on role that it has right now of the type of child that you would want today.

**77.** AS – the answer is, we are not predicting what parental preference would do. We are aware that three ways is a respected and popular, and we have a number of Wiltshire parents who have expressed a preference for that and their children go there, mainly from that corner of Wiltshire.

**78.** Parent – I think I have said somewhere, I would probably go to Arbitration before I would let you send my daughter to Rowdeford.

**79.** AS – I can't disagree with your view – that is your opinion.

**80.** Parent – I want someone to take responsibility if she has a seizure that causes more brain damage than she already has. A person that, if that happens, they would be prepared to stand up in court and say I knew this was a risk, I accepted it, I took it, it is my decision.

**81.** Parent – I think Alan, when we went to the summer consultation I liked one thing you said. You said we want to get this right, I want to get this right. This, we all, the majority feel that this is *unintelligible* for the children and for the

future. We know that the majority of parent / carers are *unintelligible* school, those votes have been disregarded, minimised and we do know that parents know their children best and we need to listen to parents because they know what the needs of the children are, and they need to be included and not disregarded and be rolled over, bulldozed over, we don't make this up. There is a feeling... *unintelligible*... grateful getting £20m but if it is the wrong thing to do then it doesn't mean anything. And yes, it is great we need additional spaces, places, but you were right what you said, we need to get it right You need to get it right and it isn't going that way for any of us. We have the heads of the schools against it, we have the governors of the schools against it, and it is not because we don't like the proposal of additional places, but because we genuinely feel that this is harmful. We don't make the children's needs up, these are really vulnerable children, our children are vulnerable, the most vulnerable in society and to just being ignored as parents, carers, governors, heads, is not the right thing to do.

- 82.** Person – this isn't about resistance to change either, people as a rule don't like change. We were already in the frame of mind, and that St Nicks wouldn't exist in the longer term on this site, we were all on board with that as we want something better than the limitations that we face here on this site. This isn't about resistance to change, with the meetings we a been having over the past few years are all about looking ahead, it's not to say everyone wants it to carry on as it is, because we recognise that is not an option. It is about the right change.
- 83.** HJ – You said, it is the location would you feel so opposed to a single school if it was located elsewhere?
- 84.** Person – The single school concept has problems, wherever you put it in North Wilts, you have a 600-square mile area to deal with. Now in South Wilts, you have one town and you have radial roads out from it, so the communication into a single school in Salisbury mean that for south wilts you can just about cover the whole with a single school. North Wilts, because we have two principal locations, and the M4 and all that way up to Cricklade, it just becomes too complicated to get away with one school. Even if it wasn't, the fact that you already have two schools and you're going to reduce choice might be a problem. That might mean that if you have a family that ends up having a conflict with the school, you have nowhere else for them to go apart from out of county. You don't know what this school will be like in 10 years' time, it could be that they have upset so many parents they are at logger heads with it. We don't want to reduce choice really, I don't believe you can get away with a single school site in North Wilts that will fulfil the requirements.
- 85.** Person – can I go back to support what the others are saying, it is about getting it right and getting it right to meet the needs of the children. We recognise it is a range of children, I think I know that the local authority has listened to not having a big super school that is a complete mix of special needs, I think we all accept that. I think we know that as not the right decision, we are asking for

people to make the right decision for all children with SEND across North of Wiltshire. We know that Exeter House and with the provision of additional outreach can serve that area and we know that the town can provide a community. We are asking you to make the right choice, look again and make sure you're making the right choice for the needs of children in the future and knowing that you have two strategic areas that are going to grow, and are already growing beyond what we anticipated now in terms of numbers of special needs and demand across mainstream, resource bases and special schools – that is already happening. We are seeing people moving in from the area. Whether I choose to commute or not in future is not part of this, but I am seeing an estate agent and in the move magazine that they have think about moving to Corsham the other day – on the front page. I know that younger families are moving to Chippenham because of the housing development, the affordability in the area, the work opportunities in the areas. They are moving out of more expensive areas into these areas. So not only new housing but more pull factors... *unintelligible*... so future proofing for the future.

**86.** Person – now if you're putting a third location into Wiltshire, would you go to Marlborough or would you go for Devizes. Now, in Devizes, with the Braeside site that would be better with that being on the edge of town. Than Rowdeford is being in a village. It is just a thought.

**87.** Person – It seems to me that the LA hasn't had a great many thoughts, they decided very early on – three years ago as (name of person) was saying – that they thought they would like to have one school and have never really moved from that and haven't explored other options. I think in some of the papers we put in in the early days, the school and Larkrise as well in the early days we suggested options, but these were all ignored. We gave you options when you came to visit us Alan, but they just disappeared, we never heard any more about them.

**88.** Person – And also, I have mentioned before it was about the cabinet meeting. I think there is misunderstanding of the needs of our children.

How can we convince the other cabinet members that actually what you're hearing is far from the truth and would not be reality now. Because it wouldn't. The children that attend St Nicks and Larkrise will never have the ability to reach that potential no matter how hard you try. So we as parents already feel grief, for our children and now we have been disregarded in our opinions of what we feel is best for them that is really emotional. It is emotional stuff you know because we already have to erase or take away so many options that are available to children who have no disability's and we are angry because I don't think we're understood, I don't think our children are understood and now we are supposed to be carted away to the middle of nowhere so there will be even less understanding about it all. It is a really sad affair actually, it is a very disappointing result. To hear from Cabinet members who voted unanimously without questioning, without even looking at the schools to see how complex

our children are, that for me is the biggest disappointment of all actually, that those people who make the decision don't know the reality.

- 89.** Person – that is right and they talk about making centres of excellence and outcome for children but if you don't understand the children then you don't know what you're trying to achieve to get the best outcomes for them. We have certainly come across this view that they don't get the abilities of our children.
- 90.** Person – Can we go back to the centre of excellence as a question for a second – what is Wiltshire definition of centre of excellence? Is it a centre of educational excellence, or is it a centre where you have the resources that means that is where you have all of a particular type of person and skill?
- 91.** AS – I think the comment earlier is right, it is a general comment, it hasn't been defined in the detail. I think the principal behind it is the bigger mix of resources the better the resulting professional outcomes. There isn't a formula about that, my experience of larger...
- 92.** Person – so that in respect a centre of excellence is an aspiration not a deliverable?
- 93.** AS – there is not a conflict between the two.
- 94.** Person – an aspiration means you may, or may not, become a centre of excellence. If its saying this is where we put all the OTs Physios and SALT for the county then you can say, this is the centre of excellence for the skills set and that is something you can deliver. But that promises nothing in terms of what it delivers to the children – it just says this is where they will be working out of.
- 95.** AS – What it does is to enable, so I substitute the word promise, for enable.
- 96.** HJ – *unintelligible*
- 97.** Person – I am not sure we feel are getting listened to
- 98.** HJ – it is for Judith and I to ensure that we are listening That is what this meeting is for. To ensure we capture your views, and Judith and I when we write the report will need to ensure that the spectrum of reviews is reflected in the report, that is what we are going to have to do. We will be attaching to our report the transcript of this meeting so that your views will be there, absolutely for members to see.
- 99.** Person – who is the decision maker on the proposal to close schools?
- 100.** HJ – Cabinet are the decision maker.
- 101.** Person – so will Cabinet be getting legal advice to ensure they Understand what a legal decision looks like?
- 102.** Cabinet will be getting a variety of advice from professionals, Judith and myself, the person who is taking over the director of education post. If Cabinet seek legal advice then that will be made available to them.
- 103.** Person - It is just this part about granular understanding of who the stakeholder groups are and that the information is being parted against those stakeholder groups.
- 104.** HJ – Yes.



**105.** JW – Thank you all for coming, this has been very helpful, we will draw this all together and we are still hoping to get to the March cabinet so you will see the papers that come out to that as well.

## 3.2 Larkrise – Consultation with Staff and Governors 7 February 2019

### 3.2.1 Meeting Notes

**Venue:** Larkrise Special School

**Date:** 07 February 2019

**Time:** 5pm

**Attendance:** 18 school staff and governors, and 7 officials

#### **PRESENT:**

Alan Stubbersfield, Education & Skills Specialist Lead, Wiltshire Council

Helen Jones, Director of Commissioning - Family & Children's Services, Wiltshire Council

Judith Westcott, Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning, Wiltshire Council

John Hobbs – Education Officer SEN, Wiltshire Council

Philippa Turner – Senior SEND Lead Worker (Southwest), Wiltshire Council

Dominic Argar – Technical Support Officer - Communications, Wiltshire Council

Simone Kermode, School Improvement Officer, Wiltshire Council (minutes)

Emily Wadds – Governor

Jan Winfield – Vice Chair of Governors

Siobhan Cheadle – Deputy Head of Larkrise

Phil Cook – Head of Larkrise

M Humphreys – Teacher

Hannah Steff – Staff Teaching Assistant

Tracey Greatwood – Teacher

Shelia James – Teacher

Mary Seaman – Teacher/Governor

Catherine Pashley – Teaching Assistant

Caroline Owens – Teaching Assistant

Jill Lovell – Teacher

Selina Phillips – Teacher

Sharon Dell – Teaching Assistant

Rachel Bell – Teacher

Becky Churchill – Artist

Claire Porch – Clerk to Governors

Justina Barber – Business Manager

#### **Introduction**

Education & Skills Specialist Lead (LA Project Leader) introduced the process for the meeting.

LA Project Leader: The reasons for recording the meeting is to ensure that all conversations are captured. A document will be produced as a result of the recording, which will go to the Council's consultation meeting for decision- making and transparency.

LA representatives introduced themselves.

LA Project Leader gave an overview of the process.

LA Project Leader: Pre-statutory consultation took place in the summer where we tried to look at a wide range of options available. One, two and three schools in a range of locations were considered. The merging of ideas was a challenge and a specific proposal was decided upon in November. The statutory stage of the consultation has proposed to close three schools and open a brand new one on an expanded site of Rowdeford School. In parallel to the current Rowdeford School, there will be the process of looking at the opening of the new school for the north of Wiltshire.

We are here to hear your views on closing the three schools and the opportunities for a 'phased' pre-statutory stage to think about what the new school on an expanded site can offer. What do you think it should or should not look like? We will go through that process and consider the specification for the new school. What it should have in terms of i.e. access? hydrotherapy pools? access to medical support? We will get more specific about these details over the next 18 months. There is lots of work to be done and a lot of detail to put together and the more detail we can put into the beginning of the process, it will be easier to start work.

**Q: *Why wasn't there a consultation with parents, staff and governors before the plan to build a separate 'super school' was decided? I thought there was one closure, so from the summer when we were so anti the decision (another person added) how did you get to that decision?***

LA Project Leader: – the process evolved from a two school option.

- A site in Chippenham was do-able and then there was a strength of views from Rowdeford and a considerable volume of voices.
- For Larkrise, there was a petition and we looked at how we could do that (*as in keeping it open*).
- We looked at sites but there were planning difficulties - rules are more complex with building a new school
- We looked at Ashton Street, then a split site at Larkrise and a neighbouring school site. –
- There was lots of toing and froing – a lot of debate.

**Q: Why is this (one super school) the best option? Is it for financial reasons? Is the proposal best for the children?**

LA Project Leader: In November, cabinet reports were reviewed with regards to relativities. The best option was to extend the site in Rowde with a new build. This is better than a split site and will allow for a school to run whilst there is building taking place. There are advantages to having a larger school. During the consultation those who are familiar with larger schools are supportive of them, having seen Three Ways in Bath. Some said, 'give us a Three Ways where we are', having seen that model and thought it was good. Most parents have not seen this and are not familiar with what (a large site) they can offer. They offer the good work you do here as well as at St Nicholas and Rowderford. There is loyalty at schools (*minute taker not sure if it meant all schools*). The professional view is that the larger school is an attractive option.

**Q: A super school is okay, close to hospital and part of a community and access to medical provision but your proposal is the country. How is that good?**

**Q: A school that is isolated and away from communities with children never seen and never part of the community – how can you compare this (your proposal) to Three Ways?**

**Q: There is talk about capping numbers at this school yet some parents have seen Three Ways and moved their child here?**

I know of a parent that came from London to come here, to a smaller school.

**Q: A super school will mean our children will become institutionalised in a small village that is culturally devoid and has no community. We thrive on the community. It will be a case of 'out of sight and out of mind'?**

**Q: Is your decision down to the price of land?**

**Q: I have worked at mainstream and a special school and you are saying (the new school) is going to be a centre of excellence? What does that look like?**

It was mentioned (*at the cabinet meeting? minute-taker*) that two schools were good and one was not good, this was particularly insulting to the staff of this school.

A first class education was mentioned on the radio (*for the proposed school*), yet we are already getting that.

It will be less than that (*a first-class education*). We need social communities. Most of the learning takes place out in the community. I am very worried about that and the

new school does not offer any post-16 provision. It will be at local colleges or Fairfield and this does not meet our children's needs.

**Q: My son will be 18 when the new school opens and how can he be at Wiltshire College or Fairfield with severe autism? There is no provision there for him. What provision are you going to have? This school caters well for pupils with severe and complex needs. How will Wiltshire College cope if children have to be in education and work until 18?**

LA Project Leader: We will be responsible for pupils up to the age of 25 and we will work with other providers to develop this (*post 16 education*).

**Q: Why can't our pupils stay until the age of 25?**

LA Project Leader: Do we want adults to be in school in their early 20s?

(there are pupils at university?).

**Q: Every government document states how the government is failing pupils with special needs and how they need to be part of the community. Parents struggle and some are single parents. Pupils need roots in where they live. Ashton Street was not appropriate but pupils need to be in their own community. This is a total flip (*in opinion*) – why? When will consciousness shift and (*Wiltshire Council*) listen to parents?**

LA Project Leader: We know there are issues around funding pupils with high special needs. Here (*at the new school*) we are putting resources in and we believe it will be excellent with you as the staff. There is praise and respect for the work done here, but the building is not fit for purpose.

**Q: If this school's building is not fit for purpose, why not build a new school here where the children can access the community? Whether they have a super school, our pupils thrive in a small community and small classes. They are going to be miserable. Something needs to be done within Trowbridge, Chippenham and Rowde in the right environment for the right reasons?**

Since 2010 there has been space/ empty site adjoining the school which is now an OAP home and over the road (*Ashton Street site?*) should be okay for planning. They never say, when it comes to mainstream that there is not enough land, let's move to another town.

**Q: There are plans to build another (*mainstream*) primary school in Trowbridge. Would you treat (*mainstream*) primary school (*parents*) like this?**

LA Project Leader: We have no choice to do this for (*mainstream*) primary schools, it would not be a consideration.

**Q: Why is it one rule for them (*mainstream schools*) and not for special schools?**

LA Project Leader: They do travel to special schools (*not sure if this is right – minute taker*)

**Q: (*With regards to*) the funding from the 106 Agreement for Paxcroft, you can't presume that there will not be pupils with special needs from the building of 4-5 bedroom homes? This money should come to this school. It is morally wrong.**

LA Project Leader: That is about the Section 106 funding. £20m is being invested by the council for this new school. There is an argument for financial support from house developers as you can't presume these children will not have special needs. This is all factored in to managing places, hence the need to expand special needs provision.

**Q: Yes, but (*expand the special needs provision*) in their own (*local*) community?**

**Q: We have an opportunity for you to show us that you value our children and our community but you are “shoving them out”. What does that say to others? You are happy to have those (*mainstream*) school here? My kids walk past this school but will not be able to attend for their own education.**

(Q – ‘cannot educate our own children’ – minute-taker did not catch this).

This school has spent a lot of time and many years building up a network of business' and organisations with the Church, fire station, police officers, Palmer Gardens (where there is work experience) and the Wiltshire Wood Recycling Centre - that is our community. That is what we mean by what will be lost. Rowdeford will never be able to replace this, there is not the infrastructure there. You can make a school community, but not a real community where pupils 'grow up and live'. Having to always go to school on a bus completely divorces the children from where they live. There will only be one urban centre near. Our special school is in the same place where you do your shopping or go to the cinema – it is a place you are familiar with and when pupils leave us and end up in supported independent living, they know it (*familiar with the area*). This is not the case in Rowde. These pupils are highly anxious, it is a massive step (*to take this change*) and it takes years for them to adapt to (*change*). Oddly enough, every single time there is major structural change, it's our children at the 'chalk face of it'. Whether it is the LA budget or national (*directives*) from the government, our children are like 'straws in the wind', blown from one idea to the next. In 5 years' time when there is a new LA, it will all change back. This is not 'future proofing'. These pupils are not going to go to university or around the world and they are Wiltshire Council's

responsibility for the rest of their lives - invest in them now in the local community where they belong!

LA Project Leader: This is not about investment. Rowde is not culturally void. Rowdeford and Devizes will retain links.

Pupils will go to school in a different village and then come back home (aged 16) and will have to face another change. It is inconsistent and does not make any logical sense.

LA Project Leader: We will explore the issue of dissolving links with the local community activity and businesses – but is it necessary (to dissolve links)?

### **How long does it take to get to Rowde?**

Are you asking how long is it from A-B or with children in wheel chairs with (*bus*) pick-ups, which takes much longer?

LA answered: It takes 42 minutes.

You are clearly not listening, otherwise you would not have asked this question. Yet you have already made the final decision!

LA Project Leader:

### **Q: Why do the community links have to be broken?**

Because you can't walk there (from Rowde)!

As you do not fully understand the whole 'time factor', you need to be here (*at the school*). You need to come into the school and then take a walk outside. You do not understand how our school works. You do not know our pupils or the timings of the day, you have made a uniformed decision.

**Q: (The decision) is 'down to' money. What are the plans for this land (*at Larkrise*) and St Nicholas? To build more houses? You are not thinking about our children at all.**

This (*issue*) is larger than education, it is about human rights. We are not just educators. Children go into town and face hate crime and all manner of things, yet the community accepts us all. Originally there were 45 students here, not now, every single mainstream school has children that should be here and they should also be in this community.

**Q: Why do you keep referring to this area as North Wiltshire, which is Chippenham and Calne? This is West Wiltshire.**

LA Project Leader: We are looking at a bigger planning area which includes the North West, East and top of the plain. We should be clearer about that.

**Q: Have you seen on what is (*being said*) on social media? Rowdeford are defending, with a petition, two schools being built? Is there another proposal?**

LA Project Leader: I have not seen that. People can be slightly unpredictable when they are feeling under threat. We will find out more at the meeting in Rowdeford. There is no other proposal, the proposal is for one school. We will consider all your comments. We said (*?? Minute-taker missed this*) in June and we had more homework to do. Things have moved on to this proposal (*for one super school*). These recordings will take (*your comments*) into account

**Q: You also said that excellent staff will go to the new school but some staff don't drive and don't want to go out of their community to work?**

LA Project Leader: We are looking at where people live and travelling options. We are looking at our responsibilities and HR systems to support the process. We will be managing that process.

TAs and staff, who have child at a school in Trowbridge school, will not be able to get to work on time at Rowdeford.

LA Project Leader: The situation will be looked at on a case by case basis.

**Q: How can you say there will be no redundancies? We have support staff and skilled staff who will not find it viable to continue working in a special school in Rowde.**

Also for parents that don't drive they are fortunate in being able to get from Melksham and Trowbridge, if ever needed. They cannot do this if there is a school in Rowde.

LA Project Leader: We will look at planning support.

That is your response to every question - it is going to be a mess and you are being unrealistic. You cannot easily solve these problems.

Consultations should be two-way with listening on both sides and people should not be feeling under threat. We feel that you are not listening. When we ask questions, it feels like you have made your decision. You aren't listening, you are blocking.



LA Director for Commissioning: It is not our decision, as officers, to make. We cannot answer your questions. Your views will be presented at the cabinet meeting.

**Q: So, we have to trust you, that you will take our views forward?**

LA Director for Commissioning: (*Minute-taker missed the start of this response*)..through the consultation process as well as minuting and recording this meeting.

(With regards to) the film of the cabinet meeting, 'big fibs' were said at that meeting.

**Q: What is the point (of taking our views) if it just for one proposal (that we don't want)?**

The law has been broken with (*regards to the process of*) the debate and signatures for a petition (*minute-taker did not fully understand this*).

LA Director for Commissioning: I have sought advice on this.

LA Project Leader: The legal advice will be appropriately dealt with at the cabinet meeting along with the debate which will happen in same place.

LA Director for Commissioning: A transcript of this meeting will be part of the body of evidence that will go to members in March. They will make the decision. We are here to ascertain your views and communicate those in a fair way to members, not to say we will agree. We will look at all questionnaires that come in and feed back to the cabinet. They will make a decision on a lot of factors... (*LA Director for Commissioning was interrupted*)

We do feel not listened to you, we have just seen you looking at your phone!

LA Director for Commissioning: I was looking at the distance of travel to Rowde by train.

We cannot get our children on a train in a wheel chair! And there is no train station in Devizes.

LA Director for Commissioning: I was looking at the distance by road, I wanted to understand.

My son lives slightly closer but there are pupils from Trowbridge, Warminster and Westbury who live a lot further away.

**Q: Can you see how concerned we are, when we are this far in the process, that you do not even know that there isn't a train service to Rowde?**

LA Director for Commissioning: I just wanted to check the distance myself. I am sorry that you felt this was wrong.

I accept your apology. Can you hear and are you listening to what parents are saying? It would be good if we had access to the concerns and issues on social media from parents. A parent in Warminster has pointed out that her son's journey will be twice the length. There are 13 pupils who live in Warminster who will have vastly extended journeys. 3 of these parents do not drive. 3 buses to Rowdeford will take over 2 hours each way.

**Q: How can parents (*who come from this distance*) attend a (*school*) meeting?**

**Q: As well as every speech & language and physio appointment – how will pupils access those?**

LA Project Leader: If it is a single school, we will want to be thinking about parental access in the specification.

We are debating about the practicalities but it is an immoral attitude to have our children in a rural community and for future generations not to have contact with our community. I, as a teenager, grew up with these (*special needs*) pupils as my parents did this type of work – it is immoral!

We are going back 50 years with just 'sending our children away' to a rural location.

We cannot continue the meeting but staff/governors can email or write to the LA on any other points they want to raise or send the information via Mr Cook.

### 3.2.2 Audio Recording Transcript

**Venue:** Larkrise Special School

**Date:** 07 February 2019

**Time:** 5pm

- 1. AS** – Can you hear me now is that because of the microphone? We have Dom here who's main job is working at the Albert Hall on their sound system so this reason for this is that we have a recording of the meeting so we can be quite sure that we've captured everything that people have said. We have someone making a note of what's said and we've had that in the past but people have raised that question so we want to be quite sure that people are confident we are capturing everything that's said so we've got the digital stuff and the typing is so that when it comes to turning the recording into something written down we are halfway there already; does that make sense? There will be a document as a result of the recording, written which will go with the Council's documentation for the decision making that happens at the end of March, okay, and that will be transparent, people will be able to see what has been said and look at what proposals are being made around that. So that's a bit of process stuff. Dom here has various black box things so that there looks like the Starship Enterprise in miniature, it's actually a microphone and it talks to that thing up there so that's how the system works so we are asking if you want to speak that's the purpose of the meeting and we just to make sure that you are in such a distance or so of the black box that Dom here is carrying.
- 2. DA** – I've got that one recording the whole time just in case.
- 3. AS** – So we seem to be recording about twenty times over it will be helpful that if you are speaking into those things if you say who you are. You are not obliged to say who you are so it's not a problem but it just helps so we know so we can kind of organise it in paragraphs with who said which if that makes sense. Also for recording we've got an attendance register just somewhere which is passing around the room if you would note your presence then we've got a full account for the consultation that have been taken in this process. Okay, there's probably nobody here who hasn't met me before, I'm Alan Stubberfield, when we last met last summer I was the Director of Education for Wiltshire, they've now got somebody else doing that because I was interim, supply if you like, now I'm doing that job somewhere else but Wiltshire Council has asked me to continue with this particular aspect of work I was doing here the process of talking with you, listening with people around the views about the future of Special Education in North Wiltshire, so there's continuity there, I was closely involved in setting up the process a year and more ago and I will be continuing to be involved for the next few months. I have with me one or two other Council people, Dom you know about that's his role, but I guess my colleague to introduce themselves and probably don't need to be speak into a microphone.

4. HJ - Hi, so I'm Helen Jones, I'm Director of Commissioning and I will, Alan's handing the baton over to me for this particular programme, so you'll be seeing a lot more of me in future.
5. JW – Hi, I'm Judith Westcott and I'm Head of Joint Planning and Children's Commissioning.
6. JH – John Hobbs, I think some of you have seen me when I've been in school. I'm SEND Education Officer
7. AS – and on keyboards
8. SK – I'm Simone and I work for the local authority and I'm School Improvement Officer.
9. PT – Hi I'm Phillipa Turner and I work in Children's Commissioning, SEND.
10. AS – So, I think for this meeting we have staff and Governors is that right? Yep. Which are governors? Okay so mostly staff some governors and some are both I guess. You're well informed with the process I think so the purpose of this meeting is not for me to talk really so I'm just kicking this off. It's really for you to have the opportunity to express your views so I'll briefly set that in context. Essentially the purpose of the meeting is to listen to your views in this consultation process. And that started, I mean that started probably a couple of years ago, two or three years ago with the development of our ideas in conversations between Phil and his colleague Head Teachers and representatives of the Local Authority, moving towards Cabinet report which set up the summer consultation where we met here last time, that is what we call pre-statutory consultation, voluntary consultation if you like, to ensure that people are well informed and what we were doing there was to look, try and look at the wide range of options available for the future of special education in the north of Wiltshire and you'll remember we were looking at option for one, two or three schools in the range of locations available in the various locations where the schools are now and we had that consultation. We drew together the thinking around that it took us longer than we expected so over the summer there was a lot of toing and throwing of ideas, challenge and reflection so it took us to November which was longer than we had planned but it did take us that long to come up with what the proposal, the specific proposal was going to be for what is now the statutory stage of consultation with statutory notices around proposals to close three schools including this one and to open a brand new one on the site or on an expanded site of Rowdeford school near Devizes that's the proposal on which there is a statutory process of consultation around the closure of the three schools and in parallel there is a parallel process of looking at the opening of a new school to serve the north of Wiltshire. In a legal sense the two process are separate but linked so we need to remember that we hearing your views about closing schools and there's also opportunity in because whatever that means phased, we are the pre-statutory stage, we are at the last summer stage, pre-statutory stage around the thinking about the new schools and of course if the decision around closures isn't yes we will close in favour of a new school that would take a different track so it's all subject to

decision which are yet to take place, so this is all about what if, what if we close this school and what if we have a new school based on an expanded significantly expanded Rowdeford site over there, we're interested to know what if that happens what you think it should look like or what you think it should not look like so that if we go through that process and come up with a decision around a new school one of things we would have to go is consider the specification for a new school, what sort of things it should have it in, things like access, hydrotherapy pools have come up again and again, access to medical support and so on and so on but those things subject to due decisions we would need to be getting more specific about during the course of we don't know how long it will take, over the next eighteen months or so because subject to that being the answer there be a lot of work because as you can imagine building a big school there'll be a lot of detail to link together and the more we can put into that process at the beginning the easier it is for the contractors that are doing that or the sponsors of an Academy the easier it is for them to start work. Is there anything, I do have a habit of rabbiting on, so I'm going to shut up and say.

11. I have a question, was there a consultation? Was there a consultation with parents and staff and governors before the plan the Council to build a separate super school.
12. AS – That consultation was last summer.
13. Okay I didn't know about it.
14. AS – Right
15. Person – I thought there was only one proposal and the proposal is that there's going to be closure and just one school open so to me when we have the thing in the summer how did you get to the decision to have one school when it seemed that everything was saying that that wouldn't be a good idea, I don't know how you quite got to that decision.
16. AS – Okay, so I think that people might remember that my thinking at the time when we must have met last June or so, I thought it would be quite likely that there would be two schools. In a month's long process things move on and I've certainly said that and I'm quite open about that in meetings we felt that we were probably not going to sustain three. There seemed to be a lot of concern about a single school option and what we were trying to do was to see how we would make a two school option work and we found that that was difficult. We had a site in Chippenham which was certainly doable but there was some mixed views about that. We obviously had a strength of views from Rowdeford about retaining that and out of the consultation there was a very considerable volume of voices speaking on behalf of that case. For Larkrise, we know there was a petition, there was a lot of voices saying keep Larkrise and we looked into how we would do that. We had sites where we could build a new school and I think we talked about that when I was here last. When we looked at that we had concerns or difficulties coming back from planners about would this be doable because when an authority needs to build a school, even when its on its own

land and it is the Council it actually has to apply for planning permission. So with my education hat on we apply to the people with their planners hat on just as anyone else would when building a house or an extension. The rules are obviously much more complex when you are building something like a school and what we did before we got too far along the road was to take an initial view from planners about if we put this in would it stack up. And the new sites looked as though it would be difficult particularly around access to the site. One of them was some distance out of the town at West Aston so there was that issue about it as well. We were left essentially with the option you are familiar with of looking at a split site school for Trowbridge using this location and the neighbouring site in Ashton Street and that was one of the reasons why I as I said there was a lot of toing and throwing, and it took us to November to conclude what was the first option because there was a lot of debate about them that very thing.

17. Person – so why do you think it's the best option? Is that there is no one else at all? Do you think it is the best option because its financially the best option or do you think that's the best option as that's what's best for the children or why do you think that is actually the best option?
18. AS – There is a range of reasons why and they were put in the November Cabinet reports. I can't remember all that off the top of my head. It was to do with relativities, so we are not saying this was absolutely impossible and the Rowdeford site was absolutely perfect. Clearly there is a range of views about those things, we think it's the best option, we thought for example the extended site with the extended new build available in Rowde to us was better than having a split site, having to deal with a building project where you've got to keep a school running in a place where you've got contractors vehicles and all that process going on for some time and the eventual solution of a split site solution would not be as good as a single site solution. We thought that there were advantages to a larger school and I know that there are a range of views about that, but one of the things that came out of the consultation was that parents who were familiar with larger schools were supportive of them. Particularly, we had heard from parents who had seen Three Ways in Bath and some of whom had chosen that and had children, Wiltshire people, who had children at Three Ways in Bath which is a large amalgamated school and they were very happy with that. Some people in the consultation said give us a Three Ways where we are because they were too far away from it. They saw that model and thought it was really good. Most Wiltshire parents haven't seen that and are unfamiliar with the large Special Schools offer and very understandably what they are familiar with is what the brilliant work that Phil, his team and you do here and your colleagues in Chippenham and Rowdeford too. So, there was clearly loyalty, well deserved loyalty, to the existing schools which came back to us in the message from consultation and yes, a minority view that the large schools were attractive that chimed in with professional views. So that came to the fore and we are here now saying what do you think about that?

- 19.** Person – I think it's alright saying that we'll have super school, Three Ways are in a position where they are very close to the hospitals, they are very you know not out in the middle of the country, they are part of the community. It's very easy to get into the middle of Bath etc. so, Three Ways is a bit different I think. The proposal is to put it out in the country, out in country lanes and we don't feel that it is good for the children, for the communities or for the adults.
- 20.** I was going to make a very similar point. I've been a teacher in special schools for over thirty years. Thirty years ago when I was qualifying, children that had a learning difficulty were quite often isolated away from their communities in a country rural setting, never seen and never part of the community.
- 21.** Clapping
- 22.** I think to compare a super school with Three Ways in Bath is ludicrous. It's a city centre site and it's got all the facilities, its inclusive in the community. You can't compare the two and that's my point.
- 23.** Person – I think we are all for a super school actually. Maybe if it was in a community that would be great, you know.
- 24.** Person – I think the other thing I'd say is that I don't think Three Ways is a large school. Its capping at, they are capping their numbers at two hundred. We are looking at three hundred and fifty so I'd say there is a significant difference. I'd also say there are significant number of parents who look at Three Ways and look here and chose here.
- 25.** Person – I've had parents that have moved down from London particularly to be away from the big school, to be in more of the community feel so, you know, I just don't get it.
- 26.** AS – So we felt because of the land we have available at the Rowdeford site and behind it we could.
- 27.** Person – inaudible
- 28.** AS – Sorry I missed that.
- 29.** We are talking about a super school, an institutionalised super school, in a small village that is culturally devoid, no community and that is what we thrive on here at Larkrise. We are just being taken out of site and out of mind. It comes down I'm sure to the price of land and another thing, I've been working in many schools over the years, mainstream, special needs, I'm intrigued by the tag line from Wiltshire Council saying it's going to be a centre of excellence. I've got thirty years' experience I'd like to know what a centre of excellence looks like please?
- 30.** AS – Large
- 31.** Does it? No it doesn't. You have to earn it and you cannot have this super school and stamp it with centre of excellence to sugar the pill for the parents to say.
- 32.** AS – We don't disagree about that and I wouldn't disagree that this school is excellent I think.
- 33.** It's been mentioned, three schools, one of them was rubbish and two were good so that's in black and white,

- 34.** Person – It was also mentioned by Councillor Laura Mayes about failing schools.
- 35.** – and old fashioned.
- 36.** Person – Particularly insulting to staff who work incredibly hard.
- 37.** Person – I was listening to the radio yesterday, maybe, can't remember about, saying that there was going to be first class education and that is what they are getting now. Why is it, why, how offensive that the new school will provide a first-class education that is what they are getting now.
- 38.** Person – It'll be less than first class as currently my students follow a community based learning. They have social communication needs, autism spectrum quite mostly, and most of my learning that I'm doing with them is out in the community. They are not going to have access to that and also, I am very worried about the fact that in the new school you are saying that it won't be post sixteen provision. Post sixteen provision will be in the existing offer that we have now which is the local colleges or Fairfield Community College and it's not meeting need now.
- 39.** Person – That worries me exactly, I mean you could say that the super school isn't going to fit my child because he'd be eighteen when the new school opens but there isn't actually any provision for children like my child. Are you going to enrol him to Wiltshire College and Fairfield, there's no provision for children with severe autism or severe or profound complex needs. What provision are you going to have for those type of children?
- 40.** AS – So we have provision at the college.
- 41.** Here, this school caters very well for children who have profound and severe complex needs, many of them are autistic. How exactly are you going to cater for those children at Wiltshire College when they reach sixteen and it's also national government policy at the moment for children to stay in education, work or train until they are eighteen and why should the children here not have that option?
- 42.** AS – We of course will be responsible up to age twenty-five for all these children using college, using Fairfield and other providers which have been developed across Wiltshire. So, the proposals for post sixteen give us a much wider range of providers and locations.
- 43.** Is there specialist provision in some independent schools just up to twenty-five, here you appear to cap it off at nineteen. So, why can't our most severe children go up to twenty-five?
- 44.** AS – Well we retain that responsibility. The question I think for us all is whether we want young adults to be in school in their early twenties?
- 45.** Person – Well they are. I've had pupils go to university.
- 46.** AS – Okay.
- 47.** Person - Every Government document published since 2011 talks about how the Government are failing people with special needs and pretty much everything says that they need to be feeling part of their community and I think you know, a lot of parent really struggle with really complex children, a lot of those statistics are single parents, they need their children and its very unlikely



that those children will grow up and move to another town. They need to know where they live, they need have their roots where they live. And you know when I think about Ashton Street and when that was closed down and the reason that it was closed down, is that it was deemed that it was not appropriate to have a large space where people from all over Wiltshire came to. They need to have small satellite places in their own community. So, it's a total flip what's happened there?

- 48.** AS – I don't know what was thought of at that time but obviously I can comment what's happening now.
- 49.** Person – We were hoping that conscious would have shifted and people would be more open and actually listening to the parents.
- 50.** AS – I mean the failures in reports in the current decade that you refer to significantly relate to the aspirations of the SEND reforms being not funded, the 19-25 expansion notoriously being an illustration of that. Here we know that there are issues around as we know with other Authorities' pressure on the High Needs Funding Block and here the solution is not under funding but putting resource in, so it's a big investment. So, going back, we do believe it will be excellent because it will have you as staff but it won't have the storage facilities in the corridor for example. And whilst I'm very happy to respect and praise the work that's done here, I think it's despite some of the facilities and what we want is excellent facilities for excellent staff.
- 51.** Person – You mentioned the stuff in the corridor etc, none of us are decrying the fact that this school may not be fit for purpose as it stands now, but what we are saying is keep our children in Trowbridge, build a new school by all means but where the children can access a community and where our wheelchairs can be put away. Things that are in corridors are important to the children and unfortunately, this building isn't the best building anymore for them. It was initially but like everything things change. But the children are still the children of this community, not Rowdeford community and where they'll have a super school that takes three hundred children can you honestly admit that children like these children here, who thrive on a small community, small classes, will do well in a school of 300 children whatever their needs, are not going to survive, they are not going to enjoy their lives, they are going to be miserable.
- 52.** AS – We have different views about that and I'm not here to argue with you but to listen.
- 53.** Person – Obviously.
- 54.** AS – I have seen it done.
- 55.** Person – Yep, it may well suit some places but as we said about Bath but obviously you are pointing out to us the obvious elements in this school that are not good for us, and they're not, but do something about it within Trowbridge, within Chippenham and within Rowdeford for the three schools you've got already. Plough all that money in, brilliant, but within the right environment for the right reasons.

- 56.** AS – Okay.
- 57.** Person – So, the issue around the space here, that was first, that was first going around in 2010 and there was a recommendation there from the Children’s Select Committee that something’s done about it with the empty site adjoining this school. There’s now an old peoples home built on that. Then it was moving over the road and having a split site with the new build over there. The architect’s drawings were done, the planning, I don’t see why there are now planning issues when back then they didn’t find planning issues. In all my time in Trowbridge I have been involved with the secondary expansion, the primary expansion, I have never when it comes to mainstream children heard it said there isn’t enough land, let’s move them to another town.
- 58.** Clapping
- 59.** Person – There’s even talk of plans to build yet another primary school in Trowbridge but you appear to be shying away from the fact that we really need to have another special needs school in Trowbridge. You wouldn’t go shifting primary school children away.
- 60.** AS – The trust is that we don’t have a choice about building primary schools in a local community, there’s just no digressions to it really.
- 61.** Person – Can you explain that so I can understand what you’ve just said please.
- 62.** AS – Well, we would not be considering as the point has been made, we would not be considering a primary school in Rowde for Trowbridge. It couldn’t be considered due to the duty to supply sufficient school places that’s the law.
- 63.** Person – so why should here be affected. I don’t understand. There’s one rule for special needs children and another for primary school children.
- 64.** AS – Yes, it’s the law of the land. There are different expectations and the practice is very different. People do travel to special schools for special centres of excellence.
- 65.** Person – But they shouldn’t. Actually, when I asked why Paxcroft Mead opened, our school just next door, had received funding from the S106 agreement and all of that was being built, a Councillor said to me that we cannot presume that anybody moving into those houses will have a special needs child. So, my question was how can you presume that anybody will have a child? Yet they are building five bedroom homes, four bedroom homes. Statistically, there will be special needs children within those families and so therefore that money, some of that money should have come to this school.
- 66.** AS – I absolutely agree with that.
- 67.** Person – It’s morally wrong.
- 68.** AS – Yes, it is but that’s not something we can affect. That’s to do with the regulations surrounding the section 106 funding. We can’t get special school funding through the section 106 route and that’s why the Council is having to and is willing to make the investment. The £20 million has been talked about, it may be more, it may be less, but a very significant investment which the Council will make, because those developers won’t do it and law won’t let us make them. So, the argument there is about the financial relationship between the

Council and the people that develop housing estates. It's not saying that we presume there won't be children with special educational needs that come from a big house. We know that where there's housing development, there will be a growth of population and a proportion of that will be children with special education needs, which is all factored in to that number of 220 extra places needed hence the need to expand the special school provision we've got.

- 69.** Person - Yes, but expand the special needs provision in their own local community?
- 70.** I just think that you've got this incredible opportunity haven't you. You can do something that shows us and everyone in our community that you value these children and you value the role that they have in their community, and you're just blowing it really. You're just shoving them all out into the middle of a field in the middle of nowhere. What is that saying to everybody else. I live in Trowbridge and I'm really happy to have this school here. My own children go to mainstream school and we walked past this school and I was able to explain to them that these children are just like you but they have special needs and we are going to lose that are we, we are going to lose that community.
- 71.** Person – We are educating the next generation to accept.
- 72.** Yes, these children belong in our community.
- 73.** This school has spent a lot of time and many many years building up a network of local businesses, local organisations, local charities, the Church, the fire station, the police officers, Parma Gardens, the garden centre that takes on young people with SEND when they leave school and sometimes for work experience, the Wiltshire Wood Recycling Centre, the list goes on and on of the network that the school has built up and that's what I would call community. That's what we mean by this will be lost. Rowde village however willing is never going to be able to replace that, not if it worked at if for 10 or 20 years. That infrastructure that makes a community is not there. You can make a school community out of it but you can't make a real community that these children are going to grow up and live in. What's going to happen is that children are going to go to school on a bus, that school is going to be completely divorced of anywhere that they know and they are familiar with. At the moment I agree not all SEND children always live in exactly the same community as the school they go to. If you live in a village there probably isn't an SEN school in your village. But there is one in the nearest biggest urban centre, whether it's Chippenham, whether it's Trowbridge. If you go to a Special School it's probably the same place that your mum or your dad take you on a Saturday to do the shopping. It's where you go when to go to the cinema, it's a place that you are familiar with and it's the same place that these children, when they leave us, are going to end up in supported independent living. There isn't any at Rowde, not for 350 young people coming out, there isn't any. Even if there was, there's no infrastructure to support it. Whereas, here there is, there is housing that is suitable for them. My son came to Larkrise in his time, he then went on to Fairfield and he is now in the process of moving towards independent supported

living. Several of his friends that he went to school with and came through college with, are already in independent supported living and, oddly enough, are still being supported by some of the staff they have known all through their school years and all through their college years. These are kids that get together with their support carers and meet in town on a Saturday. And in the summer they go to play crazy golf in Trowbridge park; in the winter, the cinema at the Odeon. They don't have to catch buses, they don't have to get a taxi to access these things, they are on their doorstep because they are living in Trowbridge, where they've grown up, where they went to school, where they now live. A lot of these young people are highly anxious, they take a long time to adapt to the new. Moving from school to college, from college into your own home is a massive step for them and it will take some of them years to adapt to that. And yet oddly enough every time that there is a major change, a major structural change, it's our children who are at the short face of it. They are constantly having things changed under them because the budget is held by either local authorities or national government. So they are like straws in the wind, blown from one idea to the next. You know there will be general elections soon enough and who knows five years from now, just as this new school is opening, we might have a completely different local authority who don't believe in all of this. What happens then? This is not what I call future proofing. Future proofing is keeping these children in their local communities. These children are not going to move away, they are not going to go to university, they are not going to go and travel the world. They are going to be living in Trowbridge and they are going to be Wiltshire Council's responsibility once they are young adults for the rest of their lives to support them. You need to invest in them now, in their communities, here where they belong.

**74.** Clapping

**75.** AS – Thank you. There's no question about investment, it's about how it's done and where it's done. I think we will be thinking about, I don't think we'd accept the Rowde is culturally void, we think of Rowde.

**76.** Person - There's a village shop and a school and that's it.

**77.** AS – We would think of Rowde and Devizes for example and we would also think, bearing in mind, what we were saying about post sixteen, of retaining links with communities like this one with Trowbridge and surrounding areas where most of the children come from.

**78.** But again you are asking them to go from home to school in a different village and then have yet another change when they go into the sixth form as then they are coming back into a different community again, back into their community again and then another change a few years later when they go to college and then another change again. It makes no logical sense to the child's life to say you are going to be in Trowbridge for all your life expect for this bit here when you are going to be in a village 12 miles away.

**79.** AS – Let me just explore the logic of the question about the need to dissolve the links with local community, activity and businesses that you have here

because the school isn't here. Is that necessary? And my other question, which is slightly dangerous as I don't know the answer to it but, how long does it take to get from here to Rowde in your view?

- 80.** Well that depends, depends whether you are driving a car from A to B or whether you are trying to get several children including wheelchairs and so on, picking up around a town, children who are sometime reluctant or do not understand hurry in the morning, you know, so time for picking up each child, getting them in there and then driving to the school.
- 81.** AS – If I was taking a group of children from a school,
- 82.** That takes a lot longer.
- 83.** AS – In Rowde to Tesco here.
- 84.** Person – It would take you a good half an hour at least, you can walk to Tesco here.
- 85.** Person – It takes 45 minutes apparently and that came from Wiltshire Council. With that question it feels like you haven't and not listening and already made some decision and you're actually not really listening by the fact that you asked that question.
- 86.** AS – I disagree but that's your point of view.
- 87.** Person – My issue there would be the logic of that, so the children get on a bus in the morning to go to Rowde, then get on a bus to come back to Trowbridge, to do an activity and then go back to Rowde.
- 88.** AS – Good point they might not. They might go straight to a community base. So, the question, the challenge to me.
- 89.** Person – What do you mean a community base?
- 90.** AS – The challenge you made to me was, there are excellent community links here and because the school isn't here they would have to end and I'm saying why?
- 91.** Person – Because they can walk there.
- 92.** Person – And they do walk there.
- 93.** Person – They couldn't come straight to a facility in the town because the children that come on the buses are geographically positioned to go on those buses. They're not necessarily in the same class, so you could just say that the bus could go straight to swimming or whatever. You can't do that. We'd walk there.
- 94.** AS – Yeah okay.
- 95.** Person – I also think, I just don't think that you fully understand actually, that if you were in the school for a week or two maybe you'd understand a bit more, but the whole time factor, you have to be here to be able to understand it, you know. (Name of person)'s class they can come in in the morning get ready and they can walk out, you know. That just wouldn't be the case over in Rowde. It would just be taking too long. You don't understand, I believe you don't understand how our school works. You don't understand our pupils, you don't understand the timings of the day, and I just think you are making decisions and they are uninformed.

- 96.** AS – If I hadn't made that challenge then you wouldn't have responded so clearly to me. It's helping us understand.
- 97.** I just think ultimately, what this is down to is money. So, I am just wondering what you would do with this land once the school is gone and is made into a super school in Rowdeford. What is your plan for the land in St Nicolas School and this land here?
- 98.** AS – There's no specific plan.
- 99.** But actually in the end you can, you could use it to build houses, make money, so.
- 100.** AS – It'll probably be housing.
- 101.** You could put all this money into a super school but in the end, I think you are going to be making more money through the Council by building houses and that sort of thing. I don't think you are thinking about our children at all in this. That's my point.
- 102.** Person – This issue is much larger than education it's about human rights and I feel that what you're not understanding is that every single teacher in this school, they are not just educators. By taking the children into town, they will face all kind of things including hate crime. And part of their job and their role is to make the community and the people here accept us all, you know. And this school was built to house 45 because it was believed then that through medical advances we would have less children with special needs. We now know that the reality is totally the opposite. Every single mainstream school has children that should be here. Therefore, those children also need to be in this community.
- 103.** Person – You keep referring to this area as north Wiltshire, since when was it north Wiltshire? I'm not originally from Wiltshire but I have been here for about 20 years, and I have always thought of this area as west Wiltshire. So, why are you referring to it as north Wiltshire?
- 104.** Simply because of the plain and the way we organise our thinking about where the schools are so we don't have an outstanding problem with the number of school places, special school places, we've got south of the plain.
- 105.** Person – But north Wiltshire is Chippenham and Calne and Malmesbury actually.
- 106.** AS – We quite simply look at a bigger planning and yes it includes west Wiltshire and I don't mean to be dismissive at the pride in west Wiltshire. So, its north, west and east at the top of the plain. And I accept your point we should be clear about that. I think we have another meeting at six.
- 107.** I've recently seen on social media a posting from Rowdeford School where we are setting a petition up for the parents to defend the fact that they are being, that they are aware that there may be two schools being built and Rowde won't continue to exist. Where does that come from? Your comment of that please.
- 108.** AS – I've not seen that, I think everyone feels nervous, it's the uncertainty thing that we know about nationally and that certainly affects you and so on and so on for all these three schools. Everyone reacts in slightly different and unpredictable ways when they are feeling under threat. So, why is Rowdeford thinking like that

I don't know. I'll have to find out when we go to a similar meeting at Rowdeford school and I'll have to check on social media. There is one proposal.

**109.** Person – Nothing else on the table

**110.** AS – Well yes but what will be considered in the end is all the stuff that comes out of these meetings.

**111.** Person – Sorry you did say all this when you came in June.

**112.** AS – And I guess in June we had more homework to do and as I said this was being done through August through to the writing of the November report. That happened in various drafts through the summer and into the autumn. So, things moved on and things may move on again. There is a proposal, the closures and an opening. The consultation will mean that all these recordings are written up, taken account of in the next stage of thinking.

**113.** Person – You also said that you didn't think it would be an excellent school because the excellent staff would go with it. We have a huge number of staff as you are aware. Quite a lot of those are support staff who don't drive and don't work enough hours to warrant going out of their community to go and work. What's your response to that?

**114.** AS – I haven't got one, I don't know. We are looking at where people live and what travel arrangements would need to be made. We are looking at the Council responsibilities to its staff. You're all Council staff and that applies in the same way to other schools. Where there are Council workers that are expected to change site, there are HR Systems to support that process. We can talk about that, as I think its early days to know what is going to happen in the end, but we will be managing that process.

**115.** Person – Those parents who have children in Trowbridge who need to drop off one child and then they wouldn't get to work on time, again, what would be their protection?

**116.** AS – We'd have to look at that on a case by case basis to make sure that children can get to school.

**117.** Person – I think that the thing that is upsetting people, there is the promise that there would be no redundancies as if every staff job but as for the practicalities for some staff it doesn't work. And I think to make that statement in the proposal there would be no redundancies, I think that people found that, well I could see from many people that's not the case and I think that is a huge worry for the skill set that could be lost. Yes and many jobs in senior leadership teaching where, yes, it warrants the time to travel but actually the bulk of your staff, the support staff, there's a massive amount of skill there and it wouldn't be viable for a number of them to continue working within the special school environment.

**118.** Okay.

**119.** Person – (Name of person) made a very important point about some staff that don't drive. You also have quite a few parents here that don't drive. I don't drive, I am fortunate enough to get the bus into Trowbridge from Melksham. I live in Melksham, my child is brought to school anyway but I am fortunate enough to get the bus from Melksham to Trowbridge if I ever need to come in to the school

- for meetings, to pick my child up or whatever. In Rowde, if the schools in Rowde, I wouldn't be able to do that and I'm not a parent in that position by the way.
- 120.** AS – Okay so we would need to look at what kind of support was available to help parent in that position. You wouldn't be the only one.
- 121.** Person – I think the impression is that everything is oh yeah, we'll look at that and we'll try to solve that but actually it'll just be a great big mess as they are not easily solvable. I think it's unrealistic to think about that you can solve things like that actually. I just don't think it's realistic.
- 122.** AS – Okay.
- 123.** Person – Consultations are two way conversations and listening from both sides and you mentioned people feeling under threat. A consultation does not mean that people should be feeling under threat.
- 124.** AS – I know and I'm sorry if they do, we try.
- 125.** Person – Maybe, it's because we feel that you are not listening because when we ask you a question it feels like you've made your decision and you are blocking so it's really difficult for us as it feels like you are not listening.
- 126.** HJ – It's actually not, Helen Jones, not our decision as officers to make and this really is, it is not about getting all the answers to your questions. It's about making sure your views are represented in a fair and transparent way to members at the cabinet meeting, and that is what we are going to do. So we want to hear the views so that we can represent those to members but it is not us.
- 127.** Person – But we've got to really trust you to really share what we are saying.
- 128.** HJ – and that is why we have some of the advice that was given to us by families through the consultation, as well as minuting, that we recorded so it was a fair and accurate representation and that is what we are doing.
- 129.** Person – Remember, there was a film of the Cabinet meeting where a Council member did big fibs about the consultation they'd made, we can't forget not seeing that.
- 130.** HJ – I don't know about that.
- 131.** Person – At that Cabinet meeting where they suddenly decided to go for the one school option. What was the point of the consultation?
- 132.** HJ – Well, consultation is about
- 133.** Person – And there is a petition with thousands of signatures. Surely, you've broken the law.
- 134.** HJ – No, the law is not that members.
- 135.** Person – You're supposed to have debate to a certain amount of signatures on a petition.
- 136.** HJ – I don't how about the size of the petition. I believe the people spoke to petitions at that Cabinet but we here as officers what we are here.
- 137.** Person – The petition we've got had 55,000 signatures.
- 138.** AS – And I think we took legal advice on how to deal with the petition and the legal advice, the lawyers advice was that we could appropriately deal with it in amalgamating that with the Cabinet meeting because the alternative would have to be to have a debate at full Council.



- 139.** Person – That’s exactly what you’re supposed to do.
- 140.** AS – And that is the question we asked the lawyers, what do we need to do and it seemed the most sensible thing to do was to have a debate all in the same place rather than rehearse it again at Council.
- 141.** HJ – As Alan has said a transcript of this meeting will be part of the body of evidence that will go to Members in March and they are as political leaders the ones that make the decisions not us as officers. We are here to ascertain your views and to communicate those in a fair and open way to members. It doesn’t necessarily mean that we are all going to agree but that is what the purpose of this meeting is to hear what you’ve got to say, to look at all the questionnaires that come in and to feed that back to members in a fair and transparent way. And ultimately, they make the decision, not only based on the evidence of the consultation but also based on all the other factors that were outlined here today.
- 142.** Person – With due respect, we do feel that we aren’t being listened to and thank goodness this is being recorded as I have sat watching you using your phone during this meeting which, I know we all have lives and things, but it gives the impression.
- 143.** Person – Yeah why are you sat there on your phone?
- 144.** HJ – I used my phone because I wanted to look at the train times between Rowde, so I looked at where you said you lived to Rowde. So, I looked at what the distance was.
- 145.** Person – And that’s fine but the fact that is the impression to us isn’t it that you’re here but are you listening.
- 146.** Person – But you know Children with wheelchairs couldn’t get on the train. None of these things are easy.
- 147.** Person – There’s not even a train station in Devizes.
- 148.** HJ – I didn’t know what the distance was. I was just merely looking at what the lady was saying about the distance of where she lives now and here and for Rowde. I wanted to understand what she was saying.
- 149.** Person – Actually for my child personally it wouldn’t make. If he did have to make that journey because by the time you open the new school he’ll be eighteen anyway. For him it wouldn’t make that much difference journey wise as Melksham is slightly closer to Rowde. But for the children that have to travel from Trowbridge and from Warminster and from Westbury, it’s a hell of a lot further.
- 150.** Person – Can you understand why parents are concerned about putting their trust in the local authority when this far into the process with a proposal like this which is a pretty major change, we discover in this meeting that you don’t even know there isn’t even a train service to Rowde. These are the kind of things that make parents worried and concerned.
- 151.** Person – You don’t even live in Wiltshire, do you?
- 152.** HJ – I do live in Wiltshire. I wanted to check this for myself. I don’t think I did anything wrong by having a look myself at the distance. I’m sorry that you felt that that was wrong for me to try and find out information which is all I was doing.

- 153.** Person – That’s fine, I accept your apology. All I’m asking is that you hear and see what parents are saying.
- 154.** HJ – Absolutely.
- 155.** Person – One of the things which would be really good in a way would be if Wiltshire Council had access to some of the social media concerns and issues that are coming through from parents. A parent in Warminster, you could almost hear the tears really over the text messages, pointing out that her sons journey is now going to be twice the length that it would have been. We currently have 13 pupils in Warminster, all of whom would have vastly extended journeys from Warminster for the parent. I don’t know if any of their parents drive or not but, three that don’t drive, but even the ones that do may not have access to a car during the school day. If anything happens to their child during the school day on public transport, its three buses to get to Rowde, that’s going to take them well over two hours. That’s not a feasible thing to ask of a family.
- 156.** Person – Think of a child in a wheel chair.
- 157.** Person – And of course if all the extended services go to the new site then every speech and language therapy appointment, every psychologist appointment and so on, how do those parents access those?
- 158.** Person – Will the Council provide transport for those parents? Course not.
- 159.** AS – I mentioned earlier on that need to have singular school to specification, that specification also needs to be thinking about how parents access to the school is made possible.
- 160.** All of this is debate around the practicalities which is valid, very valid and very hurtful for parents in the communities. But I still think that, as a teacher of 30 odd years in special ed, it is the immoral attitude of putting our children out in the middle of a rural community, away from anybody to see them, and that the future generations will not have contact with children with learning difficulties. And I know, I know that because I was one of the few people when I was a teenager growing up with people with disability, as my parents were working in that field. And I know the children that I was alongside in school had no contact, and what they thought and how they related and how they didn’t know how to communicate or interact with our young people, and I think that is immoral.
- 161.** Clapping.
- 162.** Person – Are we going back fifty years? Fifty years ago, parents who had a special needs child were told just to send them away and that’s exactly what you appear to be doing now by sticking them out in a rural location in the middle of nowhere.
- 163.** Person – Sorry, I am aware that there’s lots of parent waiting. I know that there is some staff that have things to say, maybe they could do that through the consultation email. If there is anything you want to pass to me I’ll pass on as we don’t want to keep parent waiting if that’s okay Tessa?
- 164.** Person – I think we’ll go speak to some parents as well.



### 3.3 Rowdeford School – Staff and Governor Consultation 27 February 2019

#### 3.3.1 Meeting Notes

**Venue:** Rowdeford Special School

**Date:** 26 February 2019

**Time:** 3.55pm

**Attendance:** 25 teaching staff and governors, and 7 officials

#### **PRESENT:**

Members of Rowdeford’s HT and Senior Leadership Team, Teachers and TAs

Alan Stubbersfield, Education & Skills Specialist Lead, Wiltshire Council (AS)

Helen Jones, Director of Commissioning - Family & Children’s Services, Wiltshire Council (HJ)

Judith Westcott, Acting Head for Commissioning & Joint Planning, Wiltshire Council (JW)

Lisa Fryer, SEN Inclusion Support Officer, Wiltshire Council (LF)

Dominic Argar, Technical Support Officer, Communications, Wiltshire Council (DA)

Sandra Singer, Co-ordinator for School Leadership & Governance, Wiltshire Council (note-taker) (SS)

<b>Actions</b>
<b>AS advised all attendees at both meetings of this Rowdeford Consultation to ensure they capture all their views and concerns in writing and make these known on the Council by the deadline on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March at 5pm.</b>
<b>The Rowdeford HT reiterated this message to all his staff, governors and parents and those parents attending from other schools.</b>

Welcome and introductions by Rowdeford HT. Then general introduction by AS. Wide range of options have been considered by special schools in this part of Wiltshire. Have looked at a wide range of options over a number of months. We are now in the extended consultation stage of discussion – the original consultation formally ended in July/August 2018. Looked at transport, buildings etc. and now have a solution following the consultation. Talked a fair amount about the background to the solution they came to agree on. So we are now with one school solution based on one site with the 3 schools involved. We are now in statutory school consultation about this site – 350 pupils. Some area of concern is that this is a remote site and some parents have concerns if medical or other emergencies occur with the SEN pupils. The consultation for this phase is this Friday and then will go to Cabinet on 26<sup>th</sup> March with full report from last November, encompassing all views from then until present. So the Cabinet decision in March will be: will the November report stand, will parts of it stand or will it

be a completely new report based on all the views received to date, including transport issues/community issues?

SENCO/teacher question – feels very strong community links already exist – do you think you have enough information around the links in this Rowdeford community and all the extra-curricular activities we run at this school? Recognises we are remote – feels there should be flexibility and support to improve the pathways for it more accessible and safe for a large number of children on site. AS response – will need to consider using and accessing the facilities of Devizes as Cabinet will need to be convinced that Rowdeford is the best site.

HJ response– make sure you do write in with all your concerns by 1<sup>st</sup> March. This is very important so they can be captured in the latest report that will go to Cabinet.

School staff - feels Rowdeford would be an excellent site with those improvements and could reassure other parents who have concerns this site is too remote. Rowdeford HT – in terms of footpaths all need to be looked at to be accessible to the middle of Rowde and along the side of the woods. HT is currently raising funds to try and be self-managing in this respect.

Staff member – more discussion on the footpaths – have worked with volunteer groups and Council footpath teams so plans have happened already and still further plans in place and accessibility plan is also robust so confident that would reassure this is a rural BUT NOT an isolated site. This school continues to work on that with all interested parties. School is keen to welcome and integrate all 3 schools on this site and feels that Rowdeford social work/hub for other care and support is already strong and this school is already offering that to the local community and could put it to the wider community. Café and community gardens/animal and play areas have already been highlighted as a possible commercial interest and the school agreed with JW they are very keen to agree this and bring the local and wider community into the school.

Staff feels site already well known to lots and lots of visitors. Previously have run coffee mornings and pop up cafes for both community and residents – very keen to reinstate these.

Staff – links are good but could be better with the community and other other local residents as it is currently difficult to walk from village to the school (Rowde and Bromham) so feels they do need looking at - whatever the outcome of the chosen site. Bus stop situated outside the school and have good relationship with local bus company so very accessible on public transport.

Staff will consider a Devizes Park Run being held at Rowdeford in the future – the school is 3 months into that consultation with relevant parties and is looking pretty viable as an option now. So all very positive.

Governor – it is a unique environment at Rowdeford. Very keen to work with the school and to take the proposal forward with enthusiasm to have Rowdeford as the main site for the 3 school amalgamation.

AS responded that there are some children across the other two schools that have life debilitating illnesses and the harsh reality some will die and so understandably parents of those children are concerned about a more remote site for emergency and ambulance care.

Staff – Rowdeford has never turned away a child with severe learning or medical conditions. Staff are extremely well trained here and an ambulance can arrive within minutes and staff can do all the necessary care as an immediate reaction. Staff do not see this as a barrier at Rowdeford. See it as an opportunity to be all inclusive for even the profoundly affected children. Rowdeford would not try and shoe-horn any children into the 'Rowdeford way'. This school prides themselves on providing bespoke and very appropriate care and learning for all students in their care.

Staff – now have physio therapy room and emergency procedures securely in place – there is a great deal of expertise in this school to deal with the very complex needs' children. Work well with external agencies and are motivated to keep a great attitude of all the adults involved at Rowdeford. Rowdeford is passionate about being all embracing and all inclusive.

Staff recruitment question from JW. The Rowdeford SBM has confirmed recruitment has never been an issue. People want to come and work here and have no statistics to suggest that there is a recruitment issue. AS asked how far people travel to work here? Rowdeford HT responded the furthest staff is an hour's drive and closest is someone who walks from the village – and everything in between.

SEN Governor – in a larger school like this you are in a much better position to have 3 or 4 year group classes, staff who specialise in the specific areas and can offer a richer and varied curriculum.

JW raised the question about the safety of pupils at Rowdeford? Staff responded that the school has outstanding safeguarding practices and has 100% response from staff and parents they feel safe and are safe at Rowdeford. **Rowdeford HT asked that this response/fact is included into the new build provision.**

Staff – real strength here is they can take the children out of class and take them to a calm area outside. This is planned intervention. Can go outside and have some outside time supported by staff.

Staff - school has strong links with Secondary and Primary SENCOS in the area and beyond and strong community and school links with many schools involved– a really good example of how we link with the community and how they use the facilities at Rowdeford. Have never had a child abscond.

Staff – comment from an estate management perspective. Will not be able to recreate this unique environment in an urban environment. Very passionate it will work for everyone at Rowdeford much better than in an urban environment. Many students and parents love the opportunity to be outside and do walks and pick carrots from the garden and other wonderful outside and extra-curricular duties – can offer so much horticulture/forests and everything else that makes this site unique. Fantastic opportunities to make this site a main hub of the local and wider community – so much local produce and suppliers and community resources close by and keen to be involved.

AS encouraged all to write in with their views before Friday (closing date).

Governor/staff - asked about the court case and judgement the 2 other schools have brought against the Council. HJ responded the Council cannot comment on the court case that the other 2 schools have submitted.

Staff – integrated with a wide range of students and the opportunity of being able to extend this school further would be a fantastic opportunity to have the benefit of a remote site but also being able to cope with all the complex needs and emergency care very quickly and make it an extremely strong SEN site for all.

Staff – significant issue retention and recruitment – current model is closing all 3 schools and rebuild new school on one site. HT worries that approach will make it difficult to recruit in the next few years. The idea of growth of one existing school could make it so much easier to provide continuity etc. Not least if people have to re-apply for their job as this would create problems. Staff agency concerns would need looking at.

Staff – think about the 3 schools working together a lot more strongly now and forming links to help all involved. It is already in place but a great opportunity to build and develop that larger teamwork.

Staff have concerns about the one school approach – don't shut 3 schools and build one new – **have one school and evolve an existing site** – so much more value for all 3 schools – want so much to integrate and let one school evolve out of that amalgamation. Concerns about watering down and losing expertise if a new school is built. In the best use of efficiency, value for money, learning environment for all 3 schools to use an existing site. Rowdeford wishes to be at the forefront of all SEN education.

Concern that they must keep all the best people in Wiltshire for all our SEN children. Protecting the expertise we have across all 3 schools – huge teamwork in place and can be built on. Rowdeford is very keen to be involved in that.

Governors - 3 schools and 3 governing bodies – would like to see them merge and work together for a smooth transition. On a side note, there is a 30 mile speed limit sign in Rowde village – but there is a 50 mile speed limit sign just before the school which is ridiculous (and unsafe) and needs to be addressed by the Council.

Staff – one school solution – seems sensible to make that in Rowde as much more central. Only 24% of all Wiltshire SEN children at the moment are educated in their own local community anyway.

HJ – integration is coming through as quite a key focus. The parents in urban schools feel that they could become segregated in a remote area. Member of staff replied saying that Rowdeford has plenty of integration opportunities and work experience opportunities here – Rowdeford always ensures everyone has a place.

Goernors - lives in the village and observes on a regular basis the community comes into the school and all events are hugely attended and successful and all children despite their needs are all involved with the community.

Staff - Rowdeford is not segregated – they have all sorts of cultural and trips out and swimming trips etc. etc. regardless of level of need - all pupils are out all the time. Segregation is a nonsense – it does not happen at Rowdeford.

Rowdeford is already offering full integration within their school and their pupils and that spills into the community and are all learning together. They discuss life skills like which college they are going to and there is no strong argument that coming here will be segregation and isolated. We have all the facilities and expertise to offer the same as urban schools – and more.

JW – how might you come together with the other schools over the 5 year transition? Shared teams? Shared training? Staff response – already have strong links with Larkrise – single project days – working together already happening and confident could build much stronger links there. Great enthusiasm to bring all the schools together and work together for all the students in that 5 year period.

Staff - Once there is a clearer idea of the plan/site etc. it will be much easier for all 3 schools to work effectively together as they will then know what the final target will be. Very keen to increase and develop the already strong links with the other 2 schools.

Governors - very much in favour of workshops being held with all SLT staff, governors etc. across all 3 schools and to work closely with professionals at the other 2 schools



– would love to open their training to that wider group and also feed off their expertise. Sharing experiences. All staff at Rowdeford are very keen to develop further and ‘wear more hats’/extend their skills and services.

The school is concerned about the extended consultancy period and that it will rumble on and on. It causes high levels of anxiety for all staff and students and parents.

AS - closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending – reminded all that the extended consultation period closes on Friday – online on the Wilts Council website.

Rowdeford HT – thanks to the staff for coming and that he really appreciates their input and that it reminds him what a wonderful place Rowdeford is and what wonderful people it has in it. Thanked them so much for their passion. He asked them to please go home and capture everything you have said and write it down and put it to the Council BY FRIDAY!!

**Closed at 5.01pm.**

### 3.3.2 Audio Recording Transcript

**Venue:** Rowdeford Special School

**Date:** 26 February 2019

**Time:** 3.55pm

**PRESENT:**

Members of Rowdeford's HT and Senior Leadership Team, Teachers and TAs

Alan Stubbersfield, Education & Skills Specialist Lead, Wiltshire Council (AS)

Helen Jones, Director of Commissioning - Family & Children's Services, Wiltshire Council (HJ)

Judith Westcott, Acting Head for Commissioning & Joint Planning, Wiltshire Council (JW)

Lisa Fryer, SEN Inclusion Support Officer, Wiltshire Council (LF)

Dominic Argar, Technical Support Officer, Communications, Wiltshire Council (DA)

Sandra Singer, Co-ordinator for School Leadership & Governance, Wiltshire Council (note-taker) (SS)

1. Good afternoon, thank you for coming, sorry we were a bit late in getting started. I would like to introduce a few people, some of them you've met before. We've got Helen Jones who is Director of Education, Commissioning. Sorry I meant to say that we've got Alan Stubbersfield who you've met before. I'll call him a consultant who has oversight for the consultation period. You've met him before, and then Judith Westcott who is the Head of Joint Planning and Commissioning. So I'm going to hand over to Alan who is going to direct proceedings for now.
2. AS – And I'm going to speak into a microphone not because you can't hear me or I can't shout but this he, he used be the soundman for Jethro Tull [laughing] but he got promoted via Gorky's Zygotic Mynci's was it. So the recording is for the purpose of having a record of these events and we've been doing that at the various consultation meetings that have been happening in the autumn so everybody is assured that we have a full account that's been said. For the same reason that Dominic will run around with a microphone. These ones look like microphone that last ones looked like starship enterprise. So if you want to speak you will do if you speak into a microphone and the rule is about that far apart from your mouth for those who are not use to being on the stage. Right, you know I'm Alan Stubbersfield. I must have met some of you and if not all of you at last summer's meetings here, looking at the wide range of options that were being considered for the future of Special Schools for children with cognitive difficulties in the northern part of Wiltshire. And at that time we were looking at if it should be one school, two schools, three schools and with those options looking at the various locations that combination of number of schools could be in. And it was fairly wide open as we wanted to capture the range of

views and the range of possibilities before narrowing things done. And last summer that was the appropriate thing to do because at that stage we were at the exploratory stage of consultation, in the trade we call it formative and that took us to the end of the summer term. The consultation closed at the end of July and at the end of August I, because I was responsible for leading the project at that time with colleagues, was pacing up and down quite a lot with thoughts of one school, two schools, three schools, looking at the various factors to do with transport, to do with locations, to do with the nature of special educational needs, the nature of the buildings, and so on and so on, to come up with the best solution. You know what solution we came up with. It wasn't in fact what had originally been in my mind when I was speaking to you last summer. I was quite unsure about this being used as a location because I was thinking in terms of building for the future - special provision in the north to match what we have in Salisbury, Trowbridge and Chippenham. And there was a couple of things that caused me to pace up and down in a worried state about. One, in a practical sense, was finding a Trowbridge site which would do the Trowbridge end of such a proposition. We went into the detail and we didn't think we could. And the other was about the future of pupils of this school. This school is not the same as the other two, and it's not the same as most schools for pupils with cognitive difficulties because its origin is in moderate learning difficulties, merging into complex with various syndromes and so on, spread to severe learning difficulties. I was persuaded that this school had a unique proposition to do with the children who don't fit well in mainstream and whatever our views are on inclusive mainstream schools and what we would like them to do. What we found was that in Wiltshire the presence of Rowdeford had evolved what we felt was a good solution and you were telling me this last summer and I was like I will think about it, and that is exactly what I did do. So we came up with the one school solution based on this site with the closures of three schools as you know from the documentation last November. And that would mean a significant change here. We have in our view got the space, we've got the wherewithal to make those changes and we've got we knew from the consultation the strength of view in the consultation about the future of special education on the site. So that took us to the November report with those proposals. We are now in what we call statutory consultation which is a specific proposal for a school on this site for 350 pupils to be future proof, to be human scale, family scale if you like, because we have listened to the concerns about a so called super-school and the notion that that would be daunting, unfamiliar, inhuman scale even. And we listened to concerns about travel times, travel distances and transport. We listened to concerns about what happens to deal with medical emergencies when you are in a location which many people perceive to be remote and the other area of concerns that we are interested in. Because people are talking to us about this with a range a views, about the importance of links with community and the way in which a school in a place like this provides for experience in community for a lot of pupils. 350 of course

is very big. We used to and I heard it again in the consultation responses last summer, used to provide for community links locally here and we know to that we have a special school in Devizes not very far away and they are doing the same kind of stuff. So, those are the issues that are emerging now in the consultation, the consultation closes in this phase on Friday so that's quite soon and thereafter there will be a report done for Cabinet meeting again towards the end of March, 26<sup>th</sup>, and that is potentially crunch time having you know the members of the Cabinet decide whether its crunch time or not but the report is intended to go on the agenda, picking up from last November, picking up the views from consultation, saying this is what we've heard, these are the issues. And there will be a recommendation from officers to the Cabinet whether they want to go forward with the proposal which was put in November or to amend it or to not do it. So, the options open to the Council in relation to the school closure proposals are that in the light of the consultation and what you say everybody says between now and Friday to take forward what was put in the November report or to do a version of it so parts of it, in formal terms to amend the proposal or to not do it and leave things as they are or go back and think of something completely different. So, the options are open and it is important that we are aware, so the whole thing has been an evolving situation. I described how my own thinking changed over the summer period up to November and those changes are natural as you hear what people say and reflect further professionally on the issues. I don't think I need to say much more. You'll be well informed, you've come here because you have an interest, you'll have read paper work, you'll have seen what's in the press, you'll have your own views anyway. And the purpose of the meeting is to record those to write them down and to emerge smiling, hopefully. So, issues, transport issues, community issues, keep the school don't keep the school, the mix, the size.

3. I just wondered one of our, I mean I do think we've got amazing, we make the very best of our community links and I wondered firstly, so it's two parts to the questions really. Do you feel that you have enough information around the links that we have with the community and the amount, I know that (name of person) who's sat behind me gave a list of how many extra activities that we do out of school as he oversees all the kind of risk assessment, so he could say you know during this period we've done 75 trips out and things like that. So my first question is have you got enough information about our community links? And the other one is that as a school we are kind of a bit, you know we are where we are, we know that we are remote. Would there be any plans in the future to improve things like the pathways around schools so that we could get better access to the village itself?
4. AS – I'll do those in reverse order, part of this process is for consultation, is for you as consultees to say to us it will work if you do this, do that, do the other. In other words, what we are doing is to generate ideas for a specification for the school because there are two decisions in parallel following March one is about closures but the other is about opening the new school and what's that

going to look like. So don't say will there be, say I think there should be so you tell us what you think there should be to make it work. So I think if your saying there should be paths then.

5. We can't take them, we can't walk them into the village because the pathway ends if you look when you go out you'll see that there is a footpath and then its ends and you'll have to cross them over the main road. So, we don't let that become a barrier so for the Christmas carol service for example we bus the children to Rowde church which is two minutes up the road, but it would take five minutes to walk because the pathways aren't good enough to walk. So, I think that this would be something that would really strengthen, as we are remote, and this would make the people that are voicing a concern to think but yes, we have links, we have a village shop, we have transport that we could use that could open up a world of opportunities. We could walk them to the Rowde Cow which isn't that far away.
6. AS - Yes and when I think about the practicalities of using the community of Devizes, which is not that far away in the scheme of things would help as well, because Cabinet would want to be convinced that the community facilities that can be enjoyed from this location are a match for what those other schools already have.
7. HJ – Alan, can I just come in a second. As Alan said, please will you write in and say we would like new paths because this will open up, exactly what you said. We do not have enough evidence around community links. Judith and I are writing the report, we don't know what you do and it would be very helpful for us in terms of, and I don't want to predetermine what Cabinet are going to conclude, neither as an officer do I want to sway the views of Cabinet, and I'm not trying to do that here. But what I am suggesting is that there are genuine concerns about what some parents feel about what would be segregation and isolation. If you evidence, as you have said, an analysis of community links and what you do, having that sent in to Judith and I as letters as part of the consultation would be very useful because we haven't got that evidence.
8. Person – Can I just say in terms of footpaths, not only footpaths out the front of the school but also footpaths that connect at the end of the woods as well because there's not easy access. You can get to the far end of Rowde but not the middle of Rowde from that footpath, so we would need that as well.
9. AS – We have to think about being non-ambulant pupils as well.
10. Person – Yes exactly but we are in the process of raising money to provide walkways all the way to the end of the footpath over the next 12 to 18 months.
11. AS – So, that's a footpath that goes into the village that's not along the road?
12. Person – Yes that's right.
13. Person – It's just around the accessibility of the site really in terms of the past five years. At the end of the woodland, there are public footpaths that lead us to St Edith's Marsh and kind of into the back end of Rowde village and we have worked with volunteer groups and we have also worked with the Council's footpath team and improved both of those footpaths that link that end of the

school. So, that's already happened and there are plans in place to continue to improve those footpath networks. Of course, they aren't full accessible but we have got an accessibility plan that we have worked on in the past two years that hopefully you may have seen, no, okay. So, that's something else we can put in and that includes how we have looked at the whole site and how we would make that more accessible. It includes a boardwalk project in our woodland that would allow much better access to our woodland and link in with our footpaths at the end. So, lots of the work has already been done and is easy to give to you. So, that might reassure some people that even though we are rural we are not isolated. We do have really good links and we are continually working on that not just for our pupils but for the community as well.

- 14.** Person – Can I just pick up on what (name of person) said and say that I don't think we are exclusive and I don't think that we are secluded either. And I would like that message to go back to people and I also think that we would be keen to be seen as not just in terms of our outward facing links to the community but in terms of inward. It would be nice for people to recognise that we want to invite them into our community that's here, and that we want to integrate both things and thinking in terms of social care going forward. In terms of being a hub for other areas of care and support for particular need, we already have speech and language therapists that come and are regularly based here. I think we would like to be saying that we offer that support with the community and wider and we can do that from this site. I think that that is something I would like to go back.
- 15.** JW – In the proposals we specifically put the idea of you having a community café here which would be open to the general public and the thought of having community gardens so that people would be able to come and potentially help with the gardening, potentially even move towards a garden centre that would add a more public, commercial nature to it as well. Is that something you would welcome? Is that something that would be positive?
- 16.** Person – We've been talking about that as a school for quite a number of years and there are lots of opportunities such as a shop, café, like you say gardens, you can have an animal area, play areas all on site. This would bring the community into the school and that is something that we would welcome.
- 17.** Person – We've also got a track record with the garden fair, the summer fair, which sees huge numbers of the public already come onto our site and is really well known. Getting all those members of the public mingling with the children at this event anyway. So, that would be perfect to have those kinds of facilities.
- 18.** Person – Can I just say, years ago we used to run a really successful, (name of person) would remember this, we used to run a really successful coffee morning, several through the year, pop up cafes and I did it for a number of years and I know you did it before with Ilene Burns, I know you've done it but we used to invite the local elderly residents from Angel House and they would come in and the kids would do it as part of their projects. So, all of those things are things that we very much could do. Sponsored walk, we have people come

into the school. What I think we need to remember is the accessibility plan that John mentioned, that we did send in initially, maybe what we need to do is make sure that we've sent everything in.

- 19.** Person – Just adding on to the point about how we could link better with our community and things that are out of our control, there are amazing ideas that have been discussed today and have been recognised. As a local resident living a mile away from the school and as a teacher within the school, some of the barriers are outside of our control. It is barely possible to walk to school from a local village because the state of the footpath and the pavement outside the school, access to Rowde and to Bromham and beyond is impassable at certain times of the year, let alone if you were accessing that with a group of students. So, that would be an issue I assume for future planning or highways. It is very very narrow, I've tried it and you can't push a buggy to school. So, those things need to be developed to move it forward. I would also like to make an extra point as life skills co-ordinator. We do access our community, we are talking about Devizes here and Chippenham, and Bath and Calne. We explicitly teach those skills via life skills days, or life skills lessons, or trips out or have access to regularly, talking two three times a year to different year groups using public transport. There's a bus that stops outside the school and we contact the bus company and they are really flexible. They'll stop right outside the school and let groups of students on and that is something that we are doing and will continue to do.
- 20.** Person – One more kind of community thing that we have been developing recently. There is a park run, ambassadors are coming on Thursday to look at the possibility of developing a park run here, which would be a park run for Devizes that would support and involve the whole community. That's kind of three months in now and it's got to the point that a park run ambassador is visiting the school and it looks pretty viable and that is something we are taking forward. If a new school is developed here and the size of the site is increased and that will add to the quality of a park run through the year. So, that is something that we were already planning.
- 21.** AS – Sorry to interrupt. I'm not sure what a park run is.
- 22.** Person – So, there are around 300 parks runs at present around the country, its international, its non-profit making fitness and exercise getting outdoors.
- 23.** AS – That's why I don't know about it.
- 24.** Person – nine o'clock every Saturday morning. Turn up at a park and go for a run.
- 25.** AS – No thanks.
- 26.** I think everybody recognises that we have a unique environment at Rowdeford and we've had many long debates in the governing board on the way forward and the proposals that have been put forward. But we need the people that are making the decisions to recognise that as a governing body, and everybody else in SLT, that we are very keen to work with the Council and the end proposal, if that involves Rowdeford, to take it forward as we don't want to lose

this environment and it is so fabulous and it will benefit so many people. And I don't know how many of the parents have got concerns and we do recognise those concerns but I don't know how many of those parents have got concerns have actually been to this environment themselves. So, there could be concern that could be taken away if they came and saw the school themselves.

- 27.** AS – I think the strongest concerns and the strongest voices that we hear in the current phase of the consultation are from very concerned parents with children who have the most profound difficulties. Who are non-ambulant and have life limiting conditions. Sadly many will die relatively young and some may die at school age. So, things that are medical emergencies in what is perceived in a distant location from home and from hospital are really really sharp for those people and we need to think about. We want to hear about your experience. I think some of those experiences, I understand that there are children with medical conditions here and it is useful to know your experience with that sort of thing. For the great majority of children and for those with the most severe learning difficulties, I think people see real opportunities from the learning environment, things like sensory gardens, experiences and so on. The tricky one if I'm honest is around the most profoundly disabled.
- 28.** I oversee a lot of the transitions coming into the school. Our school accepts students from a massive wide range of areas and parents love it. In terms of getting students in, we've never turned away a child based on medical reasons. We have children here with life limiting conditions that will die at a very young age, possibly even at school age. The Devizes ambulance service is available to us and can be here in minutes. We have trained staff available for those students and I presume growing a school to deal with PMLD will come with specialists who would be able to maintain a child's state until the emergency services can get here. We don't find this to be a problem and when we discuss this with families that are involved, because we've got more than one. That is not a barrier to them and they love it, because also, why shouldn't those children experience the outside space, to experience the joy of getting into the woods. We don't see it as a barrier for the school, we actually see it as an opportunity to broaden the horizon for our students and not isolate students with PMLD or medically life limiting conditions into 'you can just go into the city centres where we can deal with you', no that should not be the way we move forward at all.
- 29.** Clapping.
- 30.** Person – I just want to add for the record another community link. Every year students have their work exhibited in the local village hall. They do the flower show, we've had students have their work exhibited in Bath as well, and at the moment I am working with a workshop in Warminster to have an exhibition of our year 10 and 11 work. I just wanted to say that but then the conversation moved on quite quickly.
- 31.** Person – Sorry I was just going to carry on from (name of person) comment about working with children who are more profound. I think one of the biggest



concerns of the parents and carers who have children at Larkrise and St Nicks with more profound needs coming here, is that they were worried that we are just going to shoehorn them into the Rowdeford curriculum. We are not going to do that at all. We recognise that these children need to have a bespoke curriculum, that these children need bespoke care plans. You know, all of those sort of things we pride ourselves on at this school, working at the individuals level and what they need, and what health needs they have, what academic needs they have, what care needs they have. So it's not about trying to shoe horn them into what we do and just giving them more of Rowdeford. It's actually yes, bringing them into this space, but it's about creating and developing a bespoke approach that meets the needs of those children.

**32.** Person – I just wanted to say as well, that when we first took it on we didn't have any young people that were wheelchair users at all. We didn't have a physiotherapy room, we didn't have any of those things. And young people were doing physiotherapy sessions in the assembly hall or whatever spaces that we could find for them. Actually, what we have done is turn this into a massive strength for the school and now it's actually well known amongst the therapists that we've actually got this area of expertise in this school. We have a trainer, we have a TA who is a manual handling trainer, so she can deliver training to anyone on site as and when they need to ...very complex needs children. And what I love about this school is that everything that's comes our way, we rise to that and we make sure that we draw on the external agency relationships that we have, and we go okay we don't know about this, we need to know about this and we need to push ourselves forward. And you're looking at a group of people that will welcome any child into this school and make sure we get rid of any barriers we possibly can to include them. And I just wish that some of those parents with those, and I understand that it is a very worrying time for them, I just wish they could come and see some of the things that go on here, some of the attitudes of the adults that work here. And those other schools also have those passionate people, and that's very difficult to have to leave these people behind maybe, but hopefully some of those people will move to the new school. But I just think that Rowdeford is passionate about making sure that we include people. So, if we can give a message of that we won't leave anybody behind and we will welcome anybody that we are faced with and any challenges we have, we will fully meet those as much as we possibly can.

**33.** JW – I just wanted to ask you that, one of the challenges that has been put to us, is that recruitment might be difficult here. I am wanting to know what your experience as staff is here in terms of coming to work here, if you think it's been tricky to recruit? The other question that has been put against us is safety. How you feel in terms of the safety of pupils? Two very different things that I should say that I am asking you about here. The safety of pupils, particularly those with ASD who decide to go for a run, and maybe not the park run, and how you feel this site and how you guys generally might cope with that?

- 34.** I have worked in a number of different schools and have been here for just over a year. Recruitment in this school is never an issue. We usually have to fight them off with a stick. People want to come and work here and we've never had any issues in recruiting staff, and that goes for ancillary staff, part time, etc. People do want to come and work here because we are so close to Devizes and there aren't any issues with getting staff who want to work part time.
- 35.** AS – Can I just check on that point? Clearly, close to Devizes. What kind of distances do people travel to work here? Obviously, we are talking about an existing group of staff who go to work in those towns and one of the things we are hearing is that they don't think it will be worth coming this far. How far do people come to work here?
- 36.** Person – The furthest we have is about an hour's drive and the closest is somebody that walks from the village.
- 37.** Person – A lot of them live in Trowbridge, Chippenham, Swindon and Warminster.
- 38.** Person – And I moved all the way from Cornwall to work for a unique school.
- 39.** I have worked in special needs in Hertfordshire for a long time and working in quite small schools, where you have a full age range from three to 19, where you have 10 children in a year group which include PMLD, ASD and they would all be in the same class. We didn't have any problems, but in a much larger school you are in a much better position for grouping children, particularly PMLD children, because you might have three or four classes in a year group. And then you could have an ASD class where you can tailor the curriculum to their needs and a PMLD or a group for children with physical difficulties and it's a much more economical way of working, because you have your groups of staff that can specialise in a way in particular needs.
- 40.** AS – Thank you.
- 41.** Person – Can I address the safeguarding issue that you mentioned? We have been recognised as having outstanding safeguarding practices and that includes site security. We do annual questionnaires' with staff and students and parents. They say they feel 100% safe and they are safe. So, yes, we've got a bigger site but we take measures to be able to control that so it's safe for all of our children. And 50% of our children are ASD so we are used to people that want to get out and we deal with it.
- 42.** Person – It is just worth saying as well to you that you factor that into the new provision.
- 43.** Person – I was just thinking actually, one of the strengths we have here is the fact that we can take young people outside when they are anxious and feeling worried or their behaviour is starting to become challenging. So, I would say to those people that worry about the outdoor spaces and children wanting to abscond, again I have worked here for 17 years, I can count on my hand the amount of children that have tried to leave the school premises. What we do is use it in a much more proactive way, in that we have that as a planned intervention. If they are finding something difficult, they can go outside with an

adult and be supported in a positive way. I can understand why parents would be concerned about the open site, but we actually use the site for behaviour management really.

- 44.** Person – I just want to come back to the community links as well. I know we have gone on from that but I just want to briefly talk about it. The Plus programme here, which is a link with the other secondary schools in the local area. I work with currently between 12 and 15 schools that's been extended in primary as well. So, I don't know how many we've had through the books this year. I think it's about 11 primary aged children as well and that's another really good example of how we link with the community. And I think that the majority of those students who I have on the secondary Plus programme spend the majority of their week in a mainstream school in isolation. And when they come here they feel safe, they find that the fact that they are in the brilliant outdoor environment that they have got here, they never absconded, they never want to and they feel safe. They are learning and it's just that brilliant link and I can see that, as the school grows getting bigger and stronger. It's something that I am really excited that we can expand in the future.
- 45.** Person – I also have a unique perspective as a surveyor and I was a Royal Chartered Surveyor and I look at this from an estate management point of view. You can never recreate what we have here in an urban environment. You cannot get the kids stimulated like you can here with learning outside the class room. In every bit of press that you pick up and specifically kids with learning difficulties and autism and being outside and having those sensory stimulations is unbeatable. It cannot be recreated in an urban environment. You can create the safeguards and what you need to look after these kids with profound medical needs here. We have got these amazing opportunities in terms of estate management of a garden centre, we could get kids here into learning how to cashiers, we could get all these professional and interactive community benefits from those. That's a fantastic benefit, I didn't put it in my report but I wish I had done.
- 46.** AS – You've got until Friday.
- 47.** Person – It was absolutely amazing, and of course if I was a mum of a children with profound difficulties I would want them as safe as possible. But I would also want them to experience being out in a garden. I would also like them to see a carrot being pulled up, maybe even pull their own carrot out and say hey look. That's an experience they will never ever get if you confine them to an urban environment. We've got links with swimming pools here, we've got links with the Jubilee wood here, we can go out and look at birds, we've just done the RSPB bird watch. You're not going to get that in the urban environment. We spent all day walking today and we sat down and said to the kids what is your highlight and lowlight of the week and today 60 percent of the class said their highlight of the week is coming here. I get to see other parents whose kids do not get the opportunity in mainstream school and are struggling in isolation and things like that.

- 48.** I've been involved with the school for over 20 years and I'm a governor as well. I've seen the school evolve over the last 20 years in a massive way and to have so much space it would be a shame to not utilise it. There are a couple of things, one is that on the Facebook go fund me Larkrise and St Nicks are trying to raise enough money to put a court case in against the judgement. So, how does that work and how do you stand with that?
- 49.** HJ – We can't comment on that unfortunately. As you can imagine lawyers have told me not to comment on but it is their right if they wish to challenge the proposals of the Council and that is what they are fundraising it for.
- 50.** Person – I just want to go back to, you mentioned about rights there. The rights of all students to experience freedom no matter how limited and how trapped they may be within the conditions they may have. But the freedom to go out, to explore and to be integrated with a wide range of students, and to do that in a safe and secure manner, I think would be remiss of us to not look at. And I think the opportunity to build a bigger school here would allow for all students to experience the joy of outdoor learning, the joy of being to work alongside each other when appropriate, the joy of having specialist staff who are really keen to work with them no matter if they've come from Rowdeford or from the other schools. But also to make those links because we are closely linked with the respite home and I know a lot of those parents. We also have quite close links with hospices. Let's not forget the values that we extol here have as much relevance to students that have PMLD, whether they have SLD, MLD or whether they have a wide range of mental health issues. Those values that we offer and really teach explicitly will be key to ensuring that, yes it's going to be a bumpy start, but if we can make a new community, a better community and a stronger community that can have much more influence on Wiltshire as a whole in accepting the various needs of SEND kids and are worth their rights to outside, inside, every environment.
- 51.** AS – Is there any particular bumpiness, picking up your phrase there, that you can tell us to watch out for and plan for so as to smooth it out?
- 52.** Person – So, I think that one of the most significant in terms of the bumpiness and the brave new world is actually in terms of retention and recruitment potentially. The current model is talking about closing all three schools and with a new school being built on this site. I worry that that particular approach is going to make it difficult to recruit and retain staff over the next few years in the build up to that. I think that idea of, and I know that I said this to you privately, and the rest of the staff have heard me say this before as well, I think the growth of the school rather than the closure of three schools. Opening a new school would allow you to provide much more continuity in terms of staffing looking forward it could potentially, if they are talking about school closures in three years with everyone thinking that I will need to reapply for my job. Is that actually going to create problems if staff leave in the next few years. I think that the growth of a school would actually mitigate against that issue.
- 53.** AS – Okay, thank you.

- 54.** Person – I was just going to say that one possibility with regards to the bumpiness may be due to the access for the transport and traffic, that would need some looking at and some tweaking.
- 55.** AS – Okay.
- 56.** Person – Going back to the three schools shutting scenario. We all actually work quite closely with the schools. I work closely with the SPN's in both Larkrise and St Nicks. What about taking a three-school approach and doing some staff swapping? Having more integration so that we are all working together and that by the three schools working together we are making the one school work going forwards in the future. I feel that this will help with the retention of staff and also help with the fears of some staff that would like to come and see what's happening.
- 57.** Person – I wanted to use this work, evolution, because I think that this is what we are all talking about. When we heard that the one school approach was a possibility, we were really excited about that. But what I think our concern is that you are talking about shutting three schools and opening one new one. What we want to achieve is an evolution. What we want to happen is for all three schools to come together and evolve into that new school by 203. At the moment, it sounds like you are going to shut down three schools and open one new one. There is so much value in all three schools and if we've got the opportunity to work together to do the things that have already been talked about. We already do those bits, give us the opportunity to do more of that so that we can amalgamate and evolve for the start in 2023. Otherwise we do stand the chance of losing expertise, watering down what we have already got there. And why close a school that is already very successful. Let us evolve and become that new school, to keep all the good things that are here and at the other two sites. So, I think that is what we want. And I think that's in the best interest of efficiency, learning, value for money, all of those things can be achieved. It's the learning environment that we can create. I've just pulled up our mission statement there, to be at the forefront of specialist education, that is the schools mission statement, so that's what we want to achieve. And we want that in whatever this becomes, and we want to bring Larkrise and St Nicks with us. This new school is at the forefront of specialist education, that's what all three schools want and especially what we want.
- 58.** Person – My point is following on from that and the danger is in all this is that in Wiltshire we've got everything we need to meet the complex needs of young people, we've got high levels of expertise, we've got the compassion, we've got the care, we've got the drive. What we need is to ensure that we keep the very best people within Wiltshire. And in this time of uncertainty, we don't want people looking elsewhere and thinking that they'll have to move on or re-apply for jobs. It's a very difficult situation for people and I think protecting the expertise that we have within all three schools, because the one school solution requires that. It requires huge team work between all of those three schools, recognising what each of them does so well and what each of us has to learn

from each other. I think what we have as a school are staff that are willing to learn from the expertise to get the very best outcomes for our young people.

- 59.** Person – I would just like to expand upon that if I can. You've obviously got three schools with three governing bodies. Just with closing the three schools just with the staff also applies to the governing bodies as well. You've got three sets of governors all with their own sets of experiences and disciplines and if we can work together and merge together it becomes a much smoother transition than trying to force people to do something because they have to. The other point is that outside the school, talking about access, you have a 30 mile an hour speed limit in the village which goes to 50 miles an hour before you get to the school gates, which is bizarre and ridiculous so that is something else that will need to be looked at.
- 60.** Person – Can I talk about the actual positioning of Rowdeford in Wiltshire because I have only just moved here a year and a half ago from Bristol and looking at the map actually if you are looking at a one school solution central to that is Devizes and Rowde. In terms of parity from every area of the county to get to the centre is Rowde and that seems to make sense. And actually the arguments that are being put about how children should be educated in their local community, well if you look at the number of children that are currently educated in those three schools in their community it comes to 24 percent. So, actually at the moment only 24 percent are educated in their current community. But actually by having a central location that would give more parity for all children. And it actually means that you have a bit more flexibility with even taking people from Salisbury if we need to, and they are the better fit for Rowdeford, there's still that flexibility to come to the north of the county.
- 61.** HJ – Another question from me is that, I thought the argument you gave around integration and integration with other children was one that we hadn't thought of and integration is coming through as quite a theme, particularly with parents whose children are PMLD, who say that because the school is in a local community the children are seen more and therefore it breaks down stereotypes. Therefore, it supports community integration. I just wondered about that as well about how you ensure that your students are not segregated, and I just wondered if you had any views about that?
- 62.** Person – I know it's gone now but when we had the boarding school upstairs, my son works at the local youth club in Bromham and our students went there and they didn't have anybody stay with them. He looked after them with the other adults in the youth club and they were treated no different. Also, I have to say about work experience here, all our year 11s, not one of them did not go off on work experience and this has gone on for years out in the community, and if they need to go with a TA they go, but every single one of them goes on a week's work.
- 63.** Person – Just talking about integration. I'm a relative newcomer to this school as a governor, I live in the village but one of the things that happens regularly is that the community come to the school. It's not just the people going out of

the school but them actually coming to this school through all the events throughout the year. And the pupils here have the opportunity to be involved in that and they do get involved in it to a huge extent, no matter what their ability. They serve teas and coffees, they help around the school during the garden fetes or whatever is happening. The communities have such an involvement that come to the school as well as go out of the school to get integrated.

- 64.** Person – Can I just add to that. We have a walk that goes every year along the canal. We are happy to be out and about. We have made numerous examples to everyone about the kind of things that we do where we bring our students out to be part of the community and to share in the community around them. So, I don't think that we are segregated and we are very well seen. We've just put on performances as part of Shakespeare in schools, which was at the Wyvern Theatre. We are regularly running trips out and just as a day to day thing we regularly run swimming trips for every single member of our student body regardless of their level of need. We get everybody out and that's into our immediate local area. So, I think that the idea that we are segregated out here is nonsense.
- 65.** Person – Moving forward from that, I think that all the plans we have spoken about just here today about having a café and all the planned trips out, surely that answer the question about segregation. We've shown you what we do and talked to you about what we can do. And I also just want to say about integration within the school, we have pupils that look and move and have needs that are very different to the pupil sat next to them, let alone the community, and we have such a good opportunity. And we have some very interesting conversations about why a certain person might need something. I think it is important to recognise that this happens inside and out of the school. We are not hidden away, and we don't hide certain students. Everyone is talking, and everyone is working together. We've given you lots of examples of what we do in the community.
- 66.** Person – In terms of preparing for adulthood, we know that all our students are going to go back into their local communities, so we ensure that all of our students need post-16 transition work to really enable them to get to the local college appropriate to them. We ensure that through our life skills days we go back to where they are going to go next. It doesn't seem to me to be a strong argument that coming here prevents them from becoming a valuable part of their communities at home. Our values-based education is all about community and taking the values that we have here and take them back to the home. So, we can do that and we know that we've got students that will be going to Swindon college, that will be going to Salisbury, they'll be going to Fairfield and all sort of other wonderful places. And we explore that fully with them with the support of the professionals working with children and we make sure that if they are going to be placed somewhere we will work to get them there, to support them in that transition back into the community and wherever they are going to.

- 67.** AS – We have about five minutes, you can hear the mob outside.
- 68.** JW – I did just want to push a bit harder about this idea about how you might come together with the other schools. We've got 5 years to work on this. Do you have thoughts about how we might be able to build that so we could start creating shared teams or if there's shared training. Is that something that you would welcome?
- 69.** Person – Over the years I have linked up with many schools, Larkrise being one probably a few years ago now. I've brought students over from Larkrise school and they've had access to the technology room which they don't have access to in Larkrise. And we had days where they built a clock or a car or a single project in a day. They've really enjoyed and got so much out of those days and I think that has been a fantastic session for them. The staff that have come with them as well have said how much its proved, and self-worth they have got out of it, that they are producing something to take home.
- 70.** Person – I have regular SENCO cluster meetings but at the moment it's very difficult to do that because as a Rowdeford representative going into those special school at the moment but actually we've put all that on hold. So, if anything once we have a clear idea, I think all of the schools are happy to work together.
- 71.** Person – So, St Nicks hadn't been running DofE. We have a new DofE co-ordinator and she came over here. We worked together for a day, helped set up DofE at their school and then they came to our site, they stayed on our site, ran all of their walks with a wheelchair user and the wheelchair user used the yurt to stay in overnight, was fully supported and they did all their walks from here and completed their bronze award, and they are coming back again this year. Those links are there and we want to increase and develop them.
- 72.** Person – There are a series of, once the way forward is known, there is a series of facilitated workshops with governors, staff or whatever would be a tremendous help in making a smooth transition for everybody involved including the people like yourself who are trying to move this forward. I think if that process was enabled it might help smooth out some of the ripples that maybe bouncing around.
- 73.** Person – We already work quite closely with professionals in other schools and we would want to extend that again. We offer a consultancy service and we are able to offer training and are quite open to offer our training to the other staff. Equally, we'd like to gain from their expertise. We are not the experts in PMLD yet and neither would we want to be the only experts in anything. We have to broaden the areas of experience of every single professional. I don't think it would be right to say that I am a PMLD specialist and that is all I will do or I am an MLD ASD specialist and that is all I will do. We have to be able to expand it and we already have a number of people here that are very very welcoming and want to get other people in.
- 74.** AS – A couple more comments and we'll have to finish.



- 75.** Person – Can I just say that I would be really concerned about an extended consultancy and that is what worries me about the legal challenge - that this will rumble on and on. I think it needs to be highlighted, about the levels of stress and anxiety that this process has caused for all those people involved and the students who are involved that have heard rumours, who have seen different press releases and other things and for this to continue on and on would be really damaging. Not only for those levels of anxiety but also for the staff body and then putting three groups of staff and trying to get them to work together. So, it does worry me that this could go on and especially with the legal challenge.
- 76.** AS – Thank you all and remember it doesn't finish today, the consultation closes on Friday. It's helpful to have written contributions and you can do that online on the Wiltshire Council website. Then we have your words. Transcribing this whole recording and what's being typed is going to take forever and we will do that but it is a case of the more the merrier.

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## SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (22 May 2019)

### APPENDIX 4:

## TRANSCRIPTS AND NOTES OF PARENTS MEETINGS

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PLEASE NOTE some names and person identifiers have been removed or redacted from transcripts and meeting notes to protect the identity of those individuals, as no written permission to share their details were obtained at the time.

## 4.1 St Nicholas – Parent Consultation 21 January 2019 Meeting Notes

**Venue:** St Nicholas Special School

**Time:** 5pm

Attendance: 9 parents and 6 officials

### **PRESENT:**

Members of the public

Alan Stubbersfield, Education & Skills Specialist Lead, Wiltshire Council

Judith Westcott, Acting Head for Commissioning & Joint Planning, Wiltshire Council

Tim Morgan, SEN Inclusion Support Manager, Wiltshire Council

Caroline Bell, Acting Education Officer (SEN) MAT Cover, Wiltshire Council

Stuart Hall, Strategic Director of Parent/Carer Council

Simone Kermode, School Improvement Officer, Wiltshire Council (minutes)

Apologies: Helen Jones, Director of Commissioning - Family & Children's Services, Wiltshire Council

Parents requested that they sit as one large group rather than the opportunity to talk to a facilitator in small groups of 3.

### **Questions/key statements from the parent/carers:**

- **Build a school in the Pewsey area** and create a 'diamond' of schools?
- **73% of parent views ignored** when these parents know what is best for their children? The one school option is not an option for the majority of parents. Not all the needs will be best met by one school.
- **Lack of trust in the LA's decision-making process.** If all councillors were to vote then St Nicholas' would have more support to stay open?
- **Discrimination against the population of Trowbridge and Chippenham** who are entitled to share their community with our children?
- **Lack of parental choice** - mainstream children have a choice to go to school in their town, SEN children don't get that choice. More pupils will go to an out of county school or will be home schooled.
- **Academy?** First time this has been mentioned and why was there never a consultation on this status? Why isn't this new iconic school being spearheaded by the LA? Is this just a way for the LA to wash their hands of the new school? Will the academy only provide minimum standards?
- **Is £20m sufficient** for 428 pupils (mentioned in the Nov meeting) to be cutting edge when you consider the cost of a hydro pool and hoist etc? More likely to £40m which could pay for two local community schools.
- **More cost effective to RBs at mainstream schools?**
- **Keep the school as it and increase provision in other ways?**

- **Impact of increased travel time** – there will be no choice when travelling time is such a huge issue. It is already taking pupils 45 minutes to travel 6 miles with too many pick-up stops? Care plans show that vulnerable children with complex medical needs have life limiting conditions and the fear is that increased travel time will impact on children's health and shorten their lives even further.
- **What are the reassurances for emergency medical back-up?** Ambulance service and access to the RUH (ambulance currently travels via parent's house for medication).
- **Shortage of physios and OTs in the new school** when we don't have enough physios and OTs in Virgin Care now?
- **Specialist medical support** for a child who, i.e. can only use their eyes to communicate?
- **More mental health** support for pupils.
- **Child not coping in large groups.** Design is important to create a small nurturing environment.
- **Disregard for the loss of strong links with Hardenhuish Secondary School** is being ignored.
- **Pupil access to school on a flexi timetable for medical appointments who can currently attend for a part of day** and for parents who do not drive.
- **Experienced staff and TA's lack of access to Rowde?** A longer commute to work can be detrimental to the health of staff.
- **Rowdeford is such a remote sight**, isolated from the community on massive hill. Being part of a community and a mainstream secondary school is key.
- **Disregard for the loss of connections with own community** in Chippenham.
- **Option for dual placements?** One at a specialist school like Rowdeford and then with a local school/hub?
- **Work together more** to find common ground so that we can make the right decision together. We need choices that feel harmonious, and agree to make compromises.

## 4.2 St Nicholas – Parent Carers Meeting 12 February 2019

### 4.2.1 Meeting Notes

#### Welcome and Introductions

Following on from summer consultation informed subsequent report in November – turned full range of options into a focus on a particular proposal subject to consultation.

3 school closures and 1 school opening – LA decision maker for maintained schools through Cabinet meeting at end of March.

Opening of new school is more complex process – LA not decision maker – but will make recommendation – decision rests with Secretary of State – identification of a provider – probably a multi academy trust to run from 2023 subject to confirmation of Secretary of State.

Purpose of meeting is to hear your views and take those into account for the meeting in March.

Recorded and typed to capture all views.

Over to you:

Q. LA think that parents are trying to stop this from happening – we are not, but our children cannot speak – my son is devastated – he says ‘the nasty people are wanting to take my school away’ – when he started here he was non-verbal – he goes to Hardenhuish and takes part in activities – this school as given him a sense of belonging. My son desperately needs this school to stay where it is – he can walk to Morrisons and John Cole Park, walk into town – Rowde is not safe – nearest safe pathway is too far – traffic is horrendous – so important that LA think we are being dogmatic and argumentative – we are not, we are speaking for our children. Rowde is too far out. Devizes is not a mile away – its further – none of our children can walk there. LA don’t realise they are isolating our children – in hubs they will be segregated – my son mixes with all children. You cannot imagine what it will do my son and how he feels about his community. LA have forgotten we have other children – my other son has an EHCP in mainstream – if there is an emergency, how can I be in two places at once. Journey to Rowde is not a nice journey – we live near main roads to Chippenham and easier. You need to re think what you are doing for our children and next generation – if you segregate them you will do more damage.

Q. Location issue – last time we met I was relieved as I came away with the impression the planning issues would not make Rowde suitable and that Abbeyfields would be better. I share those views about the journey – this school is part of the community, e.g. church, library, networks – connectivity to community. Consultation document says site is two miles from Chippenham town centre but Rowde site is further from Devizes. Stats are being used economical to support the proposal. Majority of parents supported Rowde site but there are more families at Rowdeford than Larkrise and St Nicks – be careful of statistics. Made clear P16 provision was not part of it – but

statutory consultation now says Poplar College won't stay and Wiltshire College will take over. That terrifies me. How has this been taken into account?

Q. I was at summer consultation and left feeling positive – got the impression the mega school would not be considered and open discussion as to what we would want – wasn't until went to the online survey it was different. Rowdeford had started their petition to save their school, I felt Rowdeford doesn't cater for the primary age – I don't know what I clicked on as found confusing. Also at the time, money was not an object, we want to get it right but now it seems it is down to money and LA have chosen cheapest option without considering other factors. Outcome of summer consultation seemed to focus on quantity e.g. more votes for Rowdeford but of course they would because there are more students there and because they put out their petition which I signed. At no point did I realise St Nicks was under threat of closure – want it recorded I am very much opposed to closure of any special schools. Needs to focus on quality – we didn't have a petition so looked as though we didn't care about our school but we felt reassured by LA we were not under threat. Evidence presented to Cabinet – some of it is flawed e.g. references to Threeways but its' like comparing apples and pears – its' an urban environment but we are a rural county. The whole of BANES is closer to the RUH than any of the schools in Wiltshire. Key concern of parents is medical risk and being so far from A&E – my son has been rushed to A&E – 23 mins on motorway whereas its 40 mins plus the drive for ambulance to get there - -narrow, lots of HGVs, traffic, twisty road – strikes fear in me that my son would have to pass down these roads on the bus with their medical needs. Ambulance station on site?

Q. Safety on road – some Sheldon students have been killed on that road some years back – why would we want our children travelling on that road – its' not safe. Its' too narrow and twisty, slippy. One road in and one road out – shut last week due to an accident. Can't put another road in as green belt. Main roads in Chippenham are safer and are main roads – no issue travelling here. Why would you risk our already at risk children mentally, physically to put them in a minibus out in the middle of nowhere - my husband was led to believe he was not at risk – we have been misled that our school was safe or that we would have another site at Abbeyfields. We need more choice and more special schools. You are looking to build 5 new primary schools – why do they get the choice and our children don't. We need more special schools. Don't close Larkrise and St Nicks but give us another school - that's what we need so we have choice. I don't want my son to move from the community he is embedded in here – they feel they belong and don't take that away from them because if you do, you don't realise what you are doing.

Q. I didn't come to the summer consultation. I live around the corner about 5 minutes away – we bought the house because my son loves the school – he skips into school – really happy with it and thought he was sorted until he was 19 – our dream was that [name of child] would be able to walk to [secondary school] with his brother longer term – we have based our whole life around the fact our son is at St Nicks in the middle of Chippenham which part of his education is to go out for walks in the community. By moving him to a school outside of the place where we are, you are reducing his activities he does as he gets older at 16, then he will have to reintegrate back into his local community. The difference in walking around the corner for 10 mins, he'll go on

a bus about an hour – adds 2 hours to his day. His brother or sister doesn't have to do this - impact on his behaviour – he will change schools at 13 which I am anxious about anyway – impact on learning, development, behaviour. Consultation was slightly naïve – looking at population in Chippenham and Trowbridge are big enough to sustain special schools. 3 school option did not seem properly costed despite it was the most popular option (72%). Not been convinced by consultation enough detail has been given. Eldest son going to [secondary school], he gets picked up from school with [name of child] – he goes into the playground and mixes with the other children – if he was sent out to another school, he is being segregated from others and his brother will become self conscious.

Q. Talking to my daughter who said 'why don't they just build another school'. I said they want to build a new school but somewhere else – she said but Mummy I won't be able to see [name of sibling] so much as he'll be on the bus all the time and I love my little brother. I realised, how this is affecting her as well.

Q. Our children have gone to Springboard and formed a family bond because we are all in the same boat trying to get the best for our children so have gone from Springboard to their local SEN school and stayed within that community. What worries me is that you are saying Rowdeford will take from 3 – 16 so what will happen at Springboard? You're taking them to a small village at Rowde and Devizes. Here on their doorstep you have a specialist opportunity group and SEN school on their doorstep. We have supported each other – this is a family and community which looks as though it will be destroyed.

Q. We live near Corsham in Rudloe – 12 miles for our daughter to go on bus each day each way – not the only one on the bus so will be longer for her – in a wheelchair and needs help with her communication – if she is tired it impacts on us at home because she can't cope – how can you have more children travelling to Rowdeford. Don't feel we have been listened to – the most important people in this is our children. We have to speak for them. Asked [name of child] if she wanted to lose her school but she said 'no'. They have done wonders for her at this school, I was told she wouldn't walk but she is making steps which is amazing. Don't know how she will cope when the transition time comes.

Q. Attendee – I got the strangest feeling and found an incredible pulsing heart at this school – these children accepted me – I discovered I am Aspergers' but these children accepted me. We need to show you on video how they show the love they are getting here, how they say no, passionate thing I am 100% here, need to show you a different approach – not one size fits all. I totally get that connection – I have been disconnected in my life with relationships. I connect with their highly strung nervous system – understand they need someone who knows them. I skim off the surface of their stress when I come in. We could create something phenomenal which will show the rest of England. They need structure from their parents and their school. We end up with children having more seizures, more fits. They teach inclusion. If not, they end up like me, with Aspergers' who sits on the sidelines. We need you to be in a feeling place.



Q. Transport – many are worried about the travel time – no way she could have coped with a journey at 3 – completely wrong. In terms of asking children their opinion – consultation said that some of the children said they quite like being on a bus but not in their best interests. Feel let down by the WPC – never twigged we were talking about 1 school – was feeding into a centre of excellence and feel as though those comments are being misconstrued to promote 1 school. If I had known I would have expressed my views differently. Worried about viability of Larkrise and St Nicks in the interim – staff who haven't got means to go to Rowde we will start to see loss of fantastic, long serving experienced staff – happening already. It has taken 3/4 years to express her opinion working with the same staff – worried my daughter will be deprived of those staff with whom she has built a relationship with.

Q Wider ramifications with us as parents and families - already stressed. What's going on here has a knock-on effect with those around us – staff will leave in droves because there is no security for them. Might be able to transfer to new school but might not keep their job. Transport staff know our children. To change something so pivotal by changing their route, routine, struggle with transition. My concern of ripple effect to everyone else to family, staff, morale to children. We are saying all this, you are recording it, but are you going to take notice of it – we are not saying it to be dogmatic but because we are passionate we need more special needs schools.

Q. In a normal primary school there are a few weeks where they are doing part time and parents pick up through the day – how will parents do that if school is further away. Could be coming from Cricklade, Malmesbury – what provision will LA put in place to make sure those parents are not significantly disadvantaged. Transition is doing 2/3 weeks of doing half days. Hope you re consider taking from the age of 3. What happens if that parent doesn't drive? Worried you are not going to take our comments on board.

A. Alan - difference in consultation between now and summer as there is now a level of detail. I thought last summer we were looking at 2 schools – I am clear I changed my mind. Its' been an evolving process.

Q. Did you change your mind or was your mind changed for you? How do we get the Cabinet to read and listen and consider it – what evidence is there this has happened? How do we know the Cabinet have read everything? Legal guidance is required to make legal decision?

A. Helen – we are duty bound to ensure report is (very different now as is statutory) to make sure all views are taken into account. We are looking at ways in which we can assure you that all the documentation has been read. These are elected people, in a role they understand the importance of their role as community leaders. Looking at ways and means to reassure yourselves that all views have been read – methodology to do that we are still discussing.

Cabinet will have range of professional advice from educationalists, along with legal advice should they require it. At this moment in time, can't tell you how we are going to provide that advice to members – how we ensure the full view – committed to ensure full voice is communicated to members.

Q. Format of Corsham was very different – no recording and no transcript – not as clear cut you will have full view of what was said there.

A. Alan – I am satisfied - will take legal advice.

Q. Attendee - what I am hearing is cognitive approach but what these children offer is a physical approach – this message isn't coming across because you are not experiencing these children – I propose we show you what experiential learning is and not sitting behind a desk.

Q. Speech therapist signed our petition but was given a gagging order by her boss not to support. I've talked to a range of people working with young children who all say I support what you are doing but I can't do anything and can't support you – one charity Manager said don't sign it in your name but in your husband's name. I'm worried about repercussions from funding from LA.

My friend works for WPCC but is afraid because it's under the remit of LA for fear of repercussions – Stuart does not represent all parents and I feel very angry about that.

Is whole of consultation process being undermined.

A Helen - in terms of stakeholders we will reflect on how to communicate. There is no gagging order. We will talk to Virgin Care and we will bust any myth they may hold. This has not come from the LA.

Q. On line survey needs to be more flexible because some text boxes are character restricted.

Q. Consider limited transport options to the Rowdeford site.

A. Helen - consultation closes March 1<sup>st</sup>. Meeting on Cabinet is 26<sup>th</sup> March. Paper to be published around 16<sup>th</sup> March and supporting documentation. Full council meeting next week which some people are attending because of the petition.

## 4.2.2 Audio Recording Transcript

**Venue:** St Nicholas Special School

**Date:** 12 February 2019

**Time:** 4pm

1. AS – Welcome everybody to this consultation. Hello again to those who saw me last summer. Whether you did, or you didn't, a reminder, I am AS – I was last summer interim Director of Education for Wiltshire. I am not doing that anymore, but I have been retained by Wiltshire to continue with the special school's project and to continue with these meetings so there is a degree of continuity in that project. So, I was involved in the consultation, looked at places in all schools last summer, in the planning which led up to that and following that a lot of thinking about the information that we had from the discussion in these meetings, from the feedback. From the data we had, and the professional evidence. All of which went into the mix in thinking about what we were going to do subsequently. You will know then that led to the report in November which turned a wide consultation on the full range of options which we felt there were in the way of one, two or three schools, in the one, two or three locations or areas available to us. So, the November report turned that breadth into a focus on a particular proposal now, and you will know the proposal is for 3 school closures and one school opening. We are consulting as decision maker, the LA, being responsible for decisions about closure of maintained schools, which these three are, and that is a decision which the LA can make through its Cabinet meeting at the end of March. In relation to the linked proposal for a new school – that is a more complex process in which the LA is not the decision maker but has an important role in consultation again, listening to what you say and weighing the evidence and professional opinion and other views to come forward with a recommendation rather than a decision. The decision lays with the Secretary of State (SoS) and the process would be for the identification of a preferred provider which would probably be a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) as a provider for the new school. To run that from 2023 subject to confirmation by the SoS as to whether the provider is the preferred option by the SoS. That is a fairly lengthy process and slightly more complicated. The purpose of this meeting is to hear your views, so we can take those into the report into Cabinet in March. For that purpose we have microphones – if you can't hear me let me know – this is being recorded and we will be asking you if you would mind holding a microphone fairly close – about a hand-width from the face – so we are sure, and you are sure that we capture everything that is said, that will be recorded and typed up. The process of typing this up is very lengthy, we will be starting that now, it is a duplication process but it means when it comes to typing up the recording we have something started already. I will let my colleagues introduce themselves. *Introductions as the listing above.*
2. HJ – I am here as I will be taking over the project when Alan has done with his part. It is important that I hear what you're saying for transparency purposes.

3. AS – So that is the sequence of events that have led us to this point. The purpose of this meeting is to hear your voices, so I am happy to hand over to any points from you which I will make a note of, and my colleagues will record one way or another.
4. Parent – Hello, my name is [parent] I am a parent of a child here at St Nicholas' school. There is something I want to say, I think the council thinks it is us parents trying to stop this from happening. We are our children's voices, a lot of our children either can't speak or can't communicate in a way that would make you all understand how they are feeling. My son is absolutely devastated, he has turned around and said the nasty people want to take my school away. When he started at this school he was non-verbal, this school has done wonders for him. It has given him a sense of community. He goes to Hardenhuish (HH) and does Boccia there. We have sports day at HH where the whole school goes. This school has given him a sense of belonging in a world where, perhaps, he wouldn't have that. So, for me, to save this school yes, I am his parent, yes, it is me going up against Wiltshire Council with other parents, but I am going up for my son who desperately needs this school to stay where it is. We go to Morrisons, they can walk down to John Coles Park. I have looked at where the site is at Rowdeford, the paths aren't wide enough for wheelchair access. It is not safe enough, I wouldn't even dream of letting my son walk anywhere around Rowdeford, or Rowde should I say, because Rowdeford school to the nearest safe pathway it's too far. I wouldn't let him do that. The actual traffic there is horrendous, it is so busy, I know because I have done the journey myself I go to Devizes quite a lot. For me, it is so important, that you, I think the council think we are just trying to be dogmatic and argumentative, we are not. We are speaking for our children. They belong here, in their community here, not somewhere out in the sticks. Rowde is too far out – Devizes is not a mile away like we were told or led to believe in the last meeting in November. It is more than a mile, and there is no way that any of our children in this school would be able to walk from Rowdeford school to Devizes. At the moment they can walk to Morrisons, they can walk to John Coles Park, they can even walk into town. We have so much embedded with the community here it is so important, and I don't think the council realise the enormity of what they are doing. They are isolating our children, they are segregating them. Because when you actually put them into Rowdeford you're having hubs – in those hubs you're having the children who are supposed to be with them or them. Here, my son integrates with people like (names another child) who is in a wheelchair and he doesn't bat an eyelid – he does not bat an eyelid, because to him that is normal. If he sees a child having an epileptic fit he doesn't think "oh my god what is that" he says "OK that is someone else having some issues". We don't get that in normal circles. I tell you what, I have seen someone having an epileptic fit and everyone was going "oh let's have a look -what's going on" instead of saying "that person needs a bit of space – let's give them space." This school it, I have never felt so much part of a family as what I do here, and what my son does. To rip that away from him is unbelievable, you cannot begin to imagine what it will do to him, to his mental

state of mind, as well as to how he feels in the community. Everybody who is say here feels so passionately about this. Also, the council have forgotten that we do have other children, I have a younger son who is at a mainstream school. He has an EHCP as well, he is SEN. I tell you what I am not joking you if you put (name of child) on a school bus from my house to Rowdeford, with how long he will be on that bus. If had a medical emergency for (name of child), or for (name of brother), I have to be in two places. I can't be in two places at once. And Chippenham is nearer to my house than where Rowde is. The actual journey to Rowde is not a nice journey. At the moment we are on the main roads to Chippenham and there are no issues. We don't have to go any back road and it is so much easier. For me, all I am going to say is you really, really need to rethink what you're doing for our children. For the next generation, they are the next generation. If you isolate them and segregate them, you are going to do more damage than you could ever imagine. Thank you.

5. Parent – Hi, I am (name removed) I am also a parent. I would like to build upon the location issue I think. I think, Alan, last time we met, I was relieved really because as part of that discussion I came away with the impression that there was no way the site would be Rowde because of the planning issues with the flood plain. And that Abbeyfield, the site next to Abbeyfield was a pretty good location to site a school. I share those concerns about Rowde being not part of a community, and the fact that the children would have to get on a bus to access any of the things they can currently access, so as Alison said, this school is absolutely part of the community – Morrisons, the library, the local church, local schools. Networks, connectivity – connection with that local community. Although I read what is said in the consultation document about the community at Rowde, I don't think that you will be able to access the same sort of services as we have been able to access in Chippenham. The consultation document makes a lot about the fact that the site in Chippenham is 2.2 miles from the town centre. If you measure the distance from the site in Rowde to the town centre it is more than that. It is three miles. So actually, if you think, the paper is going to try and present the fact in such a way to make it applicable to that circumstance, there are some things that are being a bit economical – some statistics that are being used in a way to make the case for this. I think that the meeting minutes as well, refer to the parent consultation, a majority of parents that had responded felt that Rowde would be a good site if it was a single site. If you look at the number of children attending, double the number of children attending Larkrise, or St Nicks so you would have double the number of parents in favour of that, so again, we need to be careful in how those statistics are being used. Another thing I want to say is that it was made quite clear that 16-18 provision wasn't part of the consultation exercise. Yet we find now that the statutory consultation document comes out and there is a proposal that Poplar College will not continue as it has been. There is talk about Wiltshire College taking over 16-18 provision – that terrifies me basically. I have seen very little consultation or information on 16-18 provision – in fact I have seen nothing other than the three lines that are in here. So, I would like to know more about how that is being taken into account. I will hold it there.

6. Parent – My name is (name removed), my son (name of child) attends St Nicholas, he started in September. I was also here at the Summer consultation with you Alan. Like (name of parent) left feeling positive. We got the impression that a mega school, as it was called, wasn't something that would be considered and it was much more of an open discussion about what would we want in our dream school, rather than specific options – it wasn't until I went to the online survey and saw the options. But again, it didn't make it clear, I admit that I was quite naive and I found it quite confusing, because it didn't tally with the consultation meeting. The option was to make one new school in one of these sites, or we make two new schools, or develop three schools. To me seeing that, we create one new school, I thought that was in addition to the existing school. Again, that was me being naïve and new to the school, my son just starting. Also, to pre-empt that, Rowdeford had started their petition to save their school – I thought perhaps they know something we didn't, we thought it was something we didn't. A process parallel to this consultation. They directed us on how to answer the consultation – saying click near Devizes anytime you can. So again, I thought Rowdeford doesn't cater for primary aged students, I can't tell you if I clicked Rowde or if I clicked for the three-option site. I might very well have clicked on yes, we need another school in Rowde. We need more specialist places, yes let's have a school there that can help add to the current schools. So, I wanted to point that out that I found it confusing. This consultation, also that at the time we were also told that money isn't an object we aren't talking about money – we want to get it right is what you said. Now it seems that it is coming very down to money, and the council has chosen the cheapest option without considering other factors. Again, also in the report from the outcome of that consultation it seemed to focus on the quantity of the responses. As (name of person) said there were more votes for Rowdeford – of course there would be, there are more students there and they also put out this petition which I also signed saying to respond this way. I didn't, naively, feel that St Nicks was under threat of closure. At no point was there a discussion that schools were under threat of closure. I want to very much, on record, I want to very much oppose the closure of any specialist schools. We need more specialist schools, not fewer, we're parents. We deserve choice just like any other parent of a child. Back to the quantity vs. quality, I hope that this consultation or representation period will focus on the quality of responses rather than just the votes or "oh they have done a petition". Again, I thought that was noted in the outcome, the petition from the two other schools. We didn't have one, so it looked like we didn't care about our school, whereas I felt assured by the council that we weren't under threat of closure so why would we need a petition to save it? Of course, when that report came out, we were there straight away to start a petition. Also, I would just like to say that you talk about evidence presented to the Cabinet. I find some of their – I don't know where it has gone awry, but some of their evidence is flawed. Cllr Mayes seems to be talking about Three Ways in Bath, but you're comparing apples and oranges. They're a very urban environment, yes, they consolidated into one single school, yes that works for them but we are a very rural county.

7. Person – The whole of BANES is closer to the RUH than any of the schools in Wiltshire.
8. Person – That is a key concern of parents, the medical risk. For myself, my son has epilepsy and difficult to control epilepsy, as well as ASD, he is non-verbal. He has had to be rushed to A&E a few times, we have an ambulance station around the corner from school here in Chippenham and it is 23 minutes on the motorway from here to Swindon Great Western – whereas it is 43 minutes from Rowde. The ambulance also has to get to Rowdeford and as other parents have said it is quite a tricky drive there. Even I find it tricky to drive from Calne to Rowde – it is very narrow, you're passing a lot of lorries. There are a lot of HGVs heading to the Hills recycling centre in Calne, there is also a biomass site in Bromham. There, it is very twisty, I have hit the curb. It strikes fear into me, my son having to be on a bus passing these HGVs at speed. Also, if he had a seizure and they have to pull over quickly to deal with him, or other children on the bus. There are children on the bus that have oxygen, or that need head supports because of their mobility. Going around twisty turns, yes, to me one of the big things is the medical risk of being so far from A&E so I hope that is something the council will consider. Whether or not they put an ambulance station on site, or, I just don't know.
9. Person – Just reiterating what you said about the safety of the roads. A couple of years back there were some Sheldon students who were killed on that road – on the bend right by Rowdeford school. It is not a safe road. Why would we want to risk our children actually traveling to a school where it has such a dangerous way to get there? It is just not safe, I am an adult and I drive to Devizes sometimes through Bromham, and then Rowde and up to Devizes and I am sorry, but I don't like that part of the road – it is too narrow, it is too twisty...
10. Person – ...If it is dark or raining...
11. Person – ...If it is slippy, if there is snow, or ice or anything like that...
12. Person – ... There is one road in, one road out, last week, it was shut because of an accident, the Rowdy Cow couldn't open because the road was shut.
13. Person – As you said it is one road in, one road out, it is not, you can't even because of the greenbelt area you can't have another road to go there. I can't see how this is a viable option for our children.
14. Person – Then of course, if you're saying that, parents trying to get there because their child is having a medical emergency. They will not be concentrating on driving – they are concentrating on what happens when they get there. Or worse, travelling home after they got there with a child that is not well, but not ready to go in an ambulance. They are still not concentrating on driving. They are concentrating on the child in the back of the car. None of these are good on a road that is twisty and that they are not familiar with because it is not in their local community.
15. Person – As I said the roads here to Chippenham are main roads. My son certainly doesn't have to go on a back road from Calne to Chippenham. You know there is no issue with travelling here. It is main roads. For me, I don't understand why you would risk our already at-risk children, you know mentally, physically by putting them in a minibus to a school that is out in the middle of

nowhere, isn't near a hospital and is a dangerous road. I am sorry but also to reiterate what (name of parent) said, I wasn't here in July, my husband was here – he came home and said to me “we are not at risk. School is staying open”. Even he was led to believe there was no risk of our school closing. I remember so vividly him telling me that. So, we have all been misled. We have all believed our school was safe or that we might have another site over by Abbeyfield so that you can take the pressure off some of the children who can't get into Larkrise or can't get into here. We don't need schools closing we need more special needs schools. We need more choice. Now you said in November that you're looking to do five new primary schools. So why is it that our neurotypical children can have choice of what primary school they go to in their own towns, or nearest town? Why do they get the choice, but our children don't? Why? What is so different? Our children can't speak for themselves as I said earlier, they haven't got the mental age that they are. So, for me, we're standing here and saying we need more special schools – not less, don't close St Nicks, don't close Larkrise, don't close Rowdeford. Keep them all open and give us another school. Spend that £20m on another school that is what we need. We need more choice. I tell you what, when it is 2023, my son is 13. He is going through transition stage, I don't want him to move from this school that he has known. From the community that he has here. I am not just saying for me, I am saying for everyone here, we do not want our children moved from the community that they are embedded in. They are part of it, they feel they belong. They belong. Don't take that away from them. Don't. Because if you do, you just don't realise what you're doing. We need more schools – not less.

- 16.** Parent – Hi, I am (name removed) and my son attends St Nicholas. He is just coming up to eight years old. I didn't come to the consultation in the summer partly because (details removed to protect identity). So, I live just around the corner, about 5 minutes away. When we brought our house our thinking was (name of child) absolutely loves St Nicholas school. He skips in the door in the mornings, so we were happy that we thought his education is looked after until he is 19 years old. He is one of three children, my eldest is just about – we have put in an application for him to go to Sheldon school for next year. You know, our dream is or what we thought would be reality, was that (name of child) soon – sometime in the near future, would be able to walk around the corner, with us, to the school. Which for an adult walking is about four minutes? Then longer term, potentially as he gets older he would walk around the corner with his brother (name of other child) who will be at Sheldon, and if he doesn't get in there HH. So, we have based our whole life around the fact that our son is at St Nicholas school which he loves, he is at school in the middle of Chippenham, where as part of his education involves going out into the community. So, one of the activities in his class is to go out for walks. So, as (name of parent) was saying they go out to Morrisons, to the park, these are things that really affect our life at home. These are things that really impact our life as he gets older. (Name of child) has a genetic syndrome. He is non-verbal, he has autism and severe LD, but he does have a chance at having a small amount of independence I think. As he gets older, by taking him, if he is moved



to a school that is outside of the place where he lives, then you're kind of reducing his ability... it is particular to him. He is fixated on the activities he does. But if he is building up a life in the middle of, say Rowde, it means as he gets older, say as he comes to 16 and his education ends there, he is going to have to reintegrate back into his local community. So that is one of the things that makes a massive difference for us. The other thing is we have got the difference between him walking around the corner in let's say 10 minutes and him going on a bus, which is I think about a 25-minute drive to get there, without stopping, that is me driving – he will be on a bus for let's say, realistically, an hour, which adds two hours onto his day. Now that for any kid, his (sibling) doesn't have to do this, his younger (sibling) doesn't have to do that either, the impact that will have on his behaviour, my husband is putting him to bed at the moment as with the others. That is difficult enough as it is. You're gonna hit, he is going to change schools as he is hitting 13 which I am anxious about anyway and it will have a massive impact on his behaviour and everything and .... *Inaudible*... So, yes, I mean when it comes to the consultation, I was probably slightly naive about what would happen. I look at the population in Chippenham and the population of Trowbridge and I am thinking "these two towns are big enough to have a special school". That is the kind of feedback I get from everyone I talk to about it to. Chippenham is expanding, it has so much building work going on in all these places, building new supermarkets, multiple housing developments which is why there is a need for more special schools places. It seems when I looked at the consultation document that came back the three-school option wasn't fully costed in that. It just felt to me like, given that this was something the majority of people said they wanted as part of the consultation – 72% I think said it was something they wanted, it wasn't even costed out. That felt like it was dismissed without it being given enough thought to be honest. So yes, basically my issues are on a personal level-this will have a huge impact on my son's life. I have not been convinced by the consultation that enough detail has been given to the three options.

17. Person – You want the same family life for your son and your other children.
18. (Name of parent) – Yes, that reminds me of a different point, which is the fact that, so yes, my other son going to Sheldon he at the moment every day when he is picked up from school, (name of child) comes with him. He is at Monkton school at the moment, so (name of child) goes into the playground with (name of other child), with all the other kids around Monkton Park school know (name of child) and are brilliant with him. If he is doing some of his unusual behaviour, then that is fine, and they are all used to it to be honest. It just feels like if he was sent out to another school, not only is he being segregated from the other children he is seeing every day, it also has an impact on (name of other child). I am starting to notice that, (name of other child) is 10 now and some of his friends, some of his friends are better than others let's say, at dealing with (name of child) unusual behaviours. I think if they're completely separated then (name of other child) is going to become slightly anxious to be honest.
19. (Name of parent) – I wanted to add to that as well, something I thought about this afternoon. Sorry, it is (Name of parent) again for the recording. Just talking

to my daughter today, she said mummy why don't they just build a new school, for kids with special needs. Sorry my daughter who is eight and attends mainstream school. I said that they want to build a new school, for all children like your (sibling) to go there from here, from Chippenham, from where daddy works in (town in north Wilts), from Trowbridge, from Devizes, from Calne, all to this one school. And she said but mummy I won't get to see (name of child) as much because he will be on the bus all the time, and I love my little brother and I like to play with him and it just, it suddenly occurred to me how much this is affecting her and will as well in the future. And like (name of parent) here, I had hopes after taking (name of child) to a specialist nursery and a pre-school and having other supports and hospital appointments and all this back and forth driving, I thought it will be wonderful when (name of other child) hopefully gets into HH which is right next door to St Nicholas school. I thought there would finally I can take them both and drop them off at the same place and my daughter will have some normality as well. I know that HH often hosts the sports days for St Nicholas, and her friends know (name of child), having him around has opened up their eyes and they're accepting of him. Also, his peers, I would love for him to be going to the same school as my daughter, but I know that is not possible for the moment, but it might be in the future. Or maybe somehow dual enrolment where he can go there once a fortnight where he can have that normality for her, and him. We used to go to playgroups with a lot of his peers, and we still see them. We still meet up with them and he gets invited to birthday parties still. How long is that going to continue if they don't get to see him. His peers will be at HH when he is here, I just...

- 20.** Person – Also what we have all forgot to say is, a lot of our children have gone to Springfields opportunity... sorry, Springboards opportunity group. We have formed a family bond because we're all in the same boat. We are all trying to get the best for our children. Our children have gone to Springboard opportunity group, to the local SEN school, in Chippenham. They have gone from Pewsham, where the opportunity group is, to the SEN School in Chippenham. They have stayed within that community. I have known (name of parent), because both our boys, in fact – both my younger boys were at Springboard. I have known (name of parent), his daughter was at Springboard, I have known (name of parent), her son was at Springboard – I have known the majority of people who are here. Their children have come from Springboard opportunity group in Pewsham, to this school. What worries me is, you're saying that Rowdeford will take from the age of 3–16, what then happens to Springboard opportunity group and the children that are there? You're going to take them out of Pewsham where there was a local SEN school on their doorstep to go to Rowde. Which is a small village. Not being funny but I haven't seen much in way of community there. You have a couple of pubs, you have the Rowdy Cow, which is quite a walk for our children – I wouldn't even let them walk it but there we go. Then you have Devizes. Here on their doorstep you have a special opportunity group at Pewsham and a special needs school in their doorstep. I have been fortunate enough to call the people here my friends for such a long time, because we have worked together, we have lived and supported each

other with what our children have gone through from a very early age and what they're still going through. This is a community, this is a family, and it just looks like it is going to be destroyed and that isn't what we want. We don't want that. We want the opportunity for them, just like any neurotypical child does.

- 21.** Parent – Hi, I am (name), I am a parent of a child here at St Nicks. We live in (name of village) near Corsham. We have worked out, one way it is 12. something miles for our daughter to travel on the bus, so that is double that each day. But then she isn't the only one on the bus so there is more travel for her. So that is going to be tiring for her, she tires very quickly. She is in a wheelchair, she can do a little bit of walking and needs help with communication. But if she is very, very tired it is an impact on us when she comes home. She can't cope. I just don't know how you would cope with more buses and travel to Rowdeford, with more children, how that would work. I just don't feel we have been listened to as parents and to be honest the most important people in this is our children. Our children that are like you said earlier on, we have to speak for them. I did ask my daughter, (name of child), if she wanted to lose her school – no was her answer straight away. They have done wonders for her here, I was told she wasn't going to be able to walk with support. Which is amazing, her communication is slowly coming. The other thing that worries me is that by 2023 she will be 17, she will be in that transition and like you said, that scares the hell out of me, I am sorry, but I don't know how she would cope. Mentally she is behind so I just don't know how she would cope in that situation. It is a worry for me. I don't know what else to say, sort.
- 22.** Person – my name is (name removed), and I have been at school somewhere between 10-11 years. When I came here it was the strangest of feelings I got, it was "I am going to be here a long time." I didn't know why I was going to be here a long time. But I found this incredible pulsing heart in this school and I found an incredible acceptance in this school. I found that these children, and I didn't understand what I was going through at the time, but these children accepted me. I am Asperger's and they accepted me. This I only discovered about three years ago. But what I got from these children and this is what we need to film and show you guys, because we can't talk this. We need to show you these incredible children of these mums and fathers – we need to show you on video how they say no. How they resist change, because they know it is not right. How they show the love they are getting here. I think it is a passionate thing that I am 100% behind now. We really need to show you a different approach, that there isn't one size to fit all. I said recently, we don't wear the same shoes, we don't wear the same glasses, we don't eat the same food, we live in different places with different families but I totally... I am almost in tears with some of these mums. No I don't have children with Asperger's, I think my son was on the spectrum, but I totally get that connection. My whole life because of Asperger's I have been disconnected in relationships. I struggle to have relationships with men because I was abused as a child. Because all of that puts my nervous system into a highly stressed state. The reason I connect with these children is because I connect with their highly stressed nervous system. I understand their nervous system. I understand that they

need a parent, they need someone who knows them. These parents need that security that when their children come to school that they have a teaching assistant and a teacher who has been with them constantly. So that their minds are at rest, and then we begin to heal. What I do here, I just literally skim off the surface of stress when I come in for these kids to try and put them back into balance on a daily basis. I believe that we together as a school and as a county, we could create something quite phenomenally different to show the whole of England. I genuinely believe that passionately. For the last 10 years I have been working with neuroscience and epigenetics, because I wanted to belong. You take these kids out of this community and I can't even begin to – it just finishes me off. They need the structure, not just from their parents. They need the structure from the school and their parents. They need to be able to be with their brother and sisters. Take them away from what is consistent, that gives them less stability. We end up with children having more seizures, children more ill in hospital, parents who don't deserve that. We deserve to give them an education where they can come to school they can play with their friends. Even more so these kids who have the most special gift in all the world – they teach inclusion. Just like (name of parent) was saying – you go into the playground, if they can mingle with other children. If we separate them they end up like me, the Asperger who sits on the peripheral all the time. All the time. Because they want to be included, I couldn't speak with emotion. What I have learned now, is I don't have to sit in a corner. That is what these kids have taught me – that is what you gorgeous parents have taught me and all the teachers at St Nicks accepted me. They didn't understand what I was doing – but it is very simple what I do now. What we need to do is, we need you to be in a feeling place, where you see how these children communicate. They speak with sounds, pictures, tones. Because I was so traumatised as a child, I read body language, I read pictures, I read tones. I know I would much rather work with these kids any day than most adults. Because they're authentic, they're genuine, and if we don't watch out the rest of our children... I have seen it, I have worked in other mainstream schools, resource centres, secondary schools. We have got children who are self-harming. We have got mental health out of the statistics now. If we don't start teaching a new programme - which is "who am I - I am this most beautiful individual who just wants to be joy and happiness". And that is these children, coming here. I have never seen a better smile in all my life. We wipe it out of our children. None of this is done intentionally, I promise you, because as I have watched and observed for the last 12 years, it is normal to want to belong. To have a normal relationship. I have watched, and I have learned by observing. I am glad I have Asperger's, I am glad I was abused, I am glad that those things happened to me. Because if I can share with you this stuff. I know about the nervous system, these parents won't have to have their children go to a school and no, they shouldn't go on a bus and be shook up, and their nervous system for a whole hour. I am shaking just at the implications of these implications of those children having to go on that bus. I am shaking, I am worried about the parents and how they're going to have to drive if they're worried about their kids going to hospital. I can't cope

with that personally, so I am stepping forward. And I will give you all the information on epigenetics, on neuroscience that I have studied with people in Canada because I passionately believe in these children and these parents and their heart. Thank you.

**23.** Person – So three more points I would like to make. Picking up on transport, a lot of people are worried about the journey time. I think back to my daughter aged three and four and there is no way she would have coped with the journey from here to Rowde. To think about children that small having to make a journey of that distance is completely wrong. Just in terms of the, asking children their opinion, there was a comment in the minutes I think that made me particularly smile – I think some of the children said they quite like being on the bus. My 14-year-old neurotypical son who hasn't got any special needs, likes playing his X-Box for 3 hours a day but that doesn't mean to say that it is good for him or I should let that happen – so the same would be for our children being on a bus for that period of time. It is not in their best interests really. I think a number of people feel quite let down by the WPC. I was at the consultation meeting in November, about 18 months ago, at that time, it just never ever twigged. Maybe I was being naive, but it never ever twigged that we were talking about moving to one school. We were talking about a centre of excellence, and I was feeding in comments about how that could be established and how great it would be in terms of outreach into units across the county, to mainstream units. I feel as if those comments are being misconstrued and misinterpreted, in order to promote one centre of excellence. If I had known at the time, then I would have expressed my views differently as part of that consultation. The final point I want to make, my daughter is the same year as (name of a child), so she will be too old to go to Rowde as she will have moved onto sixth form. I am worried about the viability of Larkrise and St Nicks going forward in that interim period of time. Particularly for long established staff like TAs who perhaps haven't got the means to get to Rowde. They will start to look for other work, for other jobs. We will start to see a loss in some incredibly fantastic, long serving experienced members of staff.

**24.** Person – I think we have already haven't we?

**25.** Person – Yes, we have.

**26.** Person – That is true. It has taken – my daughter is 11 and she finally has a voice. She can't speak, she is non-verbal, but she has a way of communicating. It has taken three or four years working with the same people to get her to the point now that she can express her opinion. She told the classroom staff the other day that she was embarrassed because she was wheezing; you know this is a child you look at and think there is no cognitive ability in there at all. Yet she has reached this age and found this mechanism for communication. I am just really worried that, the staff she has been working with over that period of time, who have built up that relationship with her, she will be deprived of them at a really critical point in her development.

**27.** Person – I'd like to add to that as well. What I am worried about is a couple of things. Exactly what (name of parent) said. I mentioned this before. This has, wider ramifications and has a knock-on effect with not only us parents, but our

families because of the stress it puts us under. We are already under stress with our children being poorly, or not being able to communicate. So, we already have countless hospital appointments. We are already under that stress. What is going on here adds to that stress. It has a knock-on effect with our families. That has a knock-on effect with other people, friends, staff here. I am really concerned that staff will start leaving in droves. There is no job security for them because they are going to be going to a bigger school. They might be able to transfer over to that bigger school but that doesn't mean to say they will definitely have a job at the end of it. These are members of staff that know our children. It is also the transport staff – they know our children. They know (child), they know (child), they know (child) comes with you. They know our children, they know (name of child). They highlight to me when (name of child) hasn't been right on the bus. To change something that is so pivotal to our children's needs by changing their route – which a lot of them will struggle with transition. It took my son when he first came here four weeks of going part time before he could come here full time. Because he struggled to transition from Springboard where it is small to a school where it was a different atmosphere, it was different people, it was different learning all over again. My concern is the knock-on effect, the ripple it has, if you take this school away the knock-on effect that has on everybody else. To family, staff, morale and the children most important. The other concern I have, and I have been quite vocal about this, we are saying all these things to you – you are recording all of this. But are you really going to listen to us? Are you really going to take on board what we are saying? Because we are not saying this for the sake of being dogmatic and sticking our heels in and we just want you to save our school. We are saying it because we are genuinely passionate about saving this school, about saving the special needs schools that you're looking to close, and we are genuinely passionate about that we need more special needs schools. We don't need less, we need more. And doing a massive school – my son would not cope with 350 pupils, I can tell you that now.

- 28.** Person – In a normal primary school, when a child starts they have two or three weeks where they're only doing part time education. That generally means that the parents are picking up part way through the day. So, you're saying here, that when you start in reception if we're only going to have morning and evening transport, how are the children going to be picked up part way through the day? Or do part days while they get established at a reception class at a school? They could be coming from Cricklade – or Warminster, or Malmesbury. It is, how does it work for them? What provision is the council going to ensure is in place to deal with those parents to ensure they are not significantly disadvantaged or their children's education isn't significantly disadvantaged?
- 29.** Person – I actually brought (name of child) here when he was doing his four weeks of transition – he was initially doing half days. Then he decided to start doing two or three days in the week, by then end of the four weeks he was coming full time. The transition as Duncan was saying, in a mainstream school the transition is, they do 2-3 weeks of half days. I can't see why if you're going to look to take from the age of three, but I really hope you will reconsider that

as well because I think three is way too young to be putting a child in a school. It is different in a nursery environment, but when it is in a school well – that is something I don't even want to think about now. But there is transitions, there has to be transitions because that is what every child deserves is the transition. Just because it is a special needs school doesn't mean that they don't deserve transitions. Then, as (name of parent) says, what happens? Do the parents have to, and what happens if that parent doesn't drive? Do they then not allow the child to do the transition when they're out at Rowde? It just really, I am really concerned that we have said so much to you and have asked you to take on board all of our things and all of the comment we have said, and I am worried that you might not do that, and we will end up with the same outcomes. And I am really worried about the effect that will have on all the children, all the parents and all the staff. That ripple effect is going to be felt all the way through all of the community.

- 30.** AS – I think there is a difference between consultation last summer and now because we're getting into a level of details about a specific proposal and that is helpful as it is concrete. Last summer it was much more open, and as you reminded me and am very clear – at the time I thought we would be looking at two schools. My view is I made no promises, but I talked about what I thought was likely, and I have said the same at Trowbridge because I did say the same there. I am also clear that I changed my mind. This has been an evolving process and continues to be so.
- 31.** Person – Did you change your mind, or was your mind changed for you? Is what I wonder. Because I do wonder, you might take on board all of our comments here and all our consultation and present to the Cabinet in a fair and unbiased way. I am confident that you will. How do we get the Cabinet then to read it, listen to it, and consider it, what evidence do they have to show that they have actually considered it? And listened to what the stakeholders have to say?
- 32.** AS – It is not for me to advise you on tactics.
- 33.** Person – Can I read a line from the Annex B closures “the decision maker will need to be satisfied that the proposal has met the statutory requirements. The decision maker must consider all the views submitted during the representation period, including all support for, objection to, and comments on, the proposal.” So, that means the cabinet must read everything. How do we know that they have? Is that something that you have to sit down in a room with them, and go through it page by page, or do we have to trust that these people who are voting on our children's future have done the right thing? Have considered the views and have come to a decision that is fitting the statutory requirements.
- 34.** HJ – First of all we are duty bound to ensure that the report, and as Alan said this is the statutory phase of consolation, and we have to ensure that all views are represented. All that the views of people who are supportive and also those who have significant concerns and are not supportive of the proposals. We are looking at ways in which we can assure you that all the documentation has been read. There are ways, actually there is an element of which – these are elected

people, these are people who are in a role. They understand the importance of their role as community leaders and community representatives.

35. Person – Do any of them have special needs children?
36. HJ – That I don't know, and I can't talk about individual personal...
37. Person – *Inaudible*....
38. HJ – ...but we are also looking at ways and means in which we can assure yourselves that all the views have actually been read and all the paperwork has been read. Now the methodology that we have to do that, we are still discussing but we are looking at ways you can be assured.
39. Person – OK but it comes back to this line – “The decision maker will need to be satisfied that the proposal has met the statutory requirements.” There is a requirement there as far as I can make out that they have legal guidance that they are making a legal decision – then they can't make it.
40. HJ – As I said to you Cabinet will have a range of professional advice at their disposal to guide them through this. Be that professional advice from educationalists, like Alan or Helean, who is now the Director of Education, and legal advice as well should they require it. At this moment in time I can't tell you exactly how we are going to provide that advice to members but we absolutely will be looking into how to do it. And as I said we will be looking at how we ensure that members have the full view of the representatives who have attended the meetings, been online etc. so we are absolutely committed to ensuring that the full voice gets to members.
41. Person – OK, and I am going to add one more thing. I went to the Corsham consultation as well as the one here – that was a different format to this one. There wasn't recording there, there is here. Here you're going to have a transcript of the meeting, they have notes that were made at the time. So, it is not as clear cut for Corsham that you will have a full set of everything that was said by every parent.
42. AS – I am satisfied about that myself as I think I distinguish from what you read between having all views – on the one hand which I am completely comfortable about. On the other, every single articulation of those views. Which I don't think is required by the law. That is not for me to say as I am not a lawyer, and it may be challenged. The council expect to be challenged so it is going to be very careful and in so far as I make that distinction and might advise the council so – they won't be taking my word as the law. They will be taking legal advice.
43. JW – I am aware that time is moving on so I know you want to say something so please do, but I am aware that we have kept you longer than we said we would so if you would like to speak... OK and (name of parent) can speak after that and then we can bring to a close if you're all happy.
44. (Name is removed) – I just want to simply flip this around, what I am hearing is a very cognitive approach which is written down, or audibly heard, what these children offer is a very physical approach. They are human beings, we don't learn anything by reading, we have to experientially learn. What I am hearing is that perhaps this message isn't coming across in the right way because you're not actually experiencing how these children are. You're not going to understand it from words on a page. Because you only know what you know



in your life, these parents know because they have had to live with it. That is experiential learning and that is totally, totally different. So, I am proposing that as parents and as a supporter to the parents, school and to you as a county because I want this to work out in the best way, that perhaps we need to show you what experiential learning is – what emotions really are. Because it is very easy for us to sit back and sit behind a desk and it isn't being judged in any way. You're doing a super job, you're thinking of finances and you've got boxes to tick. But this is about real life and human beings, that is what I wanted to say. Thank you.

45. Person – Quickly wanted to ask something else I thought about this afternoon speaking to a friend who is a speech therapist who signed our petition but was then basically given a gagging order from her boss and was told not to express her views. I am a chatterer – I talk to a lot of people, I have a lot of friends, and if they're not friends – I chat to everyone. I have talked to a lot of charities, the district inclusion centres, therapists. A range of people that work with young children who all say, I think what you're doing is great, but I can't do anything to help you – I can't do anything to support you, by signing my name. I know one charity their manager said if you want to sign the petition, sign it under your husband's name. Also, when I asked the speech therapist, have you done the online survey for the consultation, she said she didn't know and didn't think she could get involved. I said no, you do need to do that as that is your way of expressing you... yes. Is there a way to engage people who are stakeholders? She said she signed the petition as a parent but also in her professional capacity she didn't think it was right either. I can't tell you the number of times, and I get personal messages from people I don't know who recognise me and said "I think what you're doing is great, but I can't do anything as I am worried about the repercussions of funding from Wiltshire Council"
46. Parents – my friend works at WPCCC and she has said she cannot say anything for fear that her job is under the remit of Wiltshire Council. Stuart from WPCCC does not speak for all of us families, he does not understand, and I am very angry about that. It is almost like they have been given a gagging restriction on being able to air their own views because of repercussions...
47. Person – ...from the council, and I think you're missing an entire voice there. Of professionals who understand what children...
48. Parent – If WPCCC are not able to help Wiltshire Council define good consultation then the whole consultation period is being undermined to the detriment of all.
49. HJ – in terms of what you're saying about stakeholders, I will reflect on how we can communicate.
50. Parent – I will do my part as well to try and publicise the online survey.
51. HJ – There is no gagging whatsoever.
52. Parent – This is coming from the manager of Virgin Care, and charities – I don't even want to name them in case there is negative repercussions.
53. HJ – we will speak to...
54. Parent – *inaudible*

55. Parent – ...or if there is a way to encourage them to do the online survey but be able to say that they work in a professional capacity.
56. AS – You're speaking here to the people that are responsible for the contracts we have with Virgin Care for example.
57. HJ – We will talk to them and we will bust any myths that they may have but this is not anything that has come from the council whatsoever.
58. Parent – But if you're going to do it anonymously, using the online survey, then the online survey needs to be more flexible of what can be given into it. Because the "other" box seems to be tech limited.
59. Parent – One final point I want to make when we were talking about parents. These schools are reliant on parent volunteers often to help with events, daily activities. So, I wondered if people who put together the proposal have considered that, the limited transportation options to the Rowdeford site.
60. HJ – Thank you.
61. AS – OK all this goes into the box.
62. HJ – Consultation closes online on 1 March – the meeting of the Cabinet is 26 March and we have to get a paper to be published around about 16 March and supporting documentation. I know some of you know as well that there is the full Council next Tuesday and some people are attending.
63. AS – That is to do with the petition.
64. Person – Am I correct in thinking though it won't just be a discussion about our petition, but that Cllr Mayes will table a motion – that is our understanding, so that Cllrs can have a full debate about the petition?
65. HJ – I don't know, sorry I am not sure about that process, I am not democratic services. I can find out what is happening, but I can find out what the process is.
66. AS – I would have thought there will be some discussion on the petition and if there is an agenda item it will be on the forward plan which will be on the website – so you can go onto the democratic services tab and check on there. Thank you.

## 4.3 Larkrise – Parent Consultation 7 February 2019

### 4.3.1 Meeting Notes

**Venue: Larkrise Special School**

**Time: 6pm**

#### **PRESENT:**

Members of Larkrise Special School's Senior Leadership Team,

#### **Parents and Carers (15)**

Alan Stubbersfield, Education & Skills Specialist Lead, Wiltshire Council

Helen Jones, Director of Commissioning - Family & Children's Services, Wiltshire Council

Judith Westcott, Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning, Wiltshire Council

John Hobbs – Education Officer SEN, Wiltshire Council

Philippa Turner – Senior SEND Lead Worker (Southwest), Wiltshire Council

Dominic Argar – Technical Support Officer - Communications, Wiltshire Council

Simone Kermode, School Improvement Officer, Wiltshire Council (minutes)

Mr Cook introduced the LA Education & Skills Specialist Lead.

Education & Skills Specialist Lead (LA Project Leader) gave an overview of the process for the meeting. The meeting will be recorded, there will be minutes and a transcript. We met before in the Summer and I am now working for the Bristol LA and have stayed on to develop this project.

LA representatives introduced themselves. LA Director for Commissioning explained that the LA Project Leader will be handing over the 'project' to her.

#### **Introduction**

LA Project Leader: You are familiar with the story that we talked about last summer when we met last July. Through the summer holidays and early Autumn, we have been thinking about the different views from the meetings held. It took longer than expected as there were so many ideas to take on board. Last time we said that the likely outcome would be to keep this school and the one in Chippenham but this is not what was decided at the end of the day. We reviewed the practicalities of a two school option and this developed into a one school option. There is some controversy about this and that is why I am here and the meeting is being recorded for the cabinet meeting, that will take place at the end of March. The proposal is to close three schools and open one school as replacement. There is a technical complexity with pre-statutory consultation. We are now in the statutory phase with giving formal notices and saying what the proposals are. You can respond to these now and on-line.

The LA will look at developing ideas on what the new school should look like? A specification on the new school, if we go down that line, will be required for providers who will pitch for the bid. The Secretary of State will choose from those bids.

Meanwhile, we are here to hear what you think of this 'sort of stuff', prior to the cabinet meeting on 26 March.

**Q: What happened about the full council meeting before the meeting on 26 February?** (*minute-taker – not sure if I have the right date*)

LA Project Leader: I do not know about that as I work in Bristol.

Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning: The petition, presented at this meeting, will be acknowledged but will be tabled for the March meeting (*not sure if this make sense – minute-taker*).

**Q: If the full council of 98 members and cabinet go against the proposal, will it (the proposal) get sacked?**

Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning: You get a hearing but you cannot make that decision at that meeting.

LA Director for Commissioning: My understanding is that the decision is not made, views go to the cabinet on 26 March.

**Parent/carer:** We have seen what your cabinet does and we don't like it.

**Parent A – Parent Governor:** We went to the last meeting with the petition and that was ignored. The cabinet just wanted one school.

LA Director for Commissioning: We have explained about the petition.

**Parent A – Parent Governor:** You will do the same on 26 February? You are right, council will see. (*something about the petition – minute taker could not understand*).

**Parent/carer:** We were ignored before and watched (*on the video*) cabinet members rolling their eyes when emotional stories were being told by parents/carers.

**Parent/carer:** They (*cabinet members*) were bored by our stories. We put in the time and effort for our families (*to tell our stories*) but they got bored, they did not listen and then they were quick to put their hand up to make the decision (*to vote for the proposal*). Only 11% did want the one school (*proposal*).

**Q: Where is this 11% (against the proposal), we cannot find one person? Maybe they are made up of a few Rowde parents? We think, they are thinking - are the council being truthful? We asked the question but got nothing back?**

LA Project Leader: That is why we are going through a consultation process and a full account of the process is being recorded. This will be used as part of the decision-making process.

**Q: You say the decision is pre – statutory, this is just a tick box. They are just words, no matter how many protest (against the decision), you will not change your mind. You have already made your mind up. (more was said here but missed – minute-taker). We watched the online video (of the cabinet meeting) and there**

was no 'humming and harring' (*about the decision*), they put their hand straight up (*to agree to the proposal*). It is a disgrace and where will that be recorded? The consultation (*process*) is just about legal tick boxes, it does not give us the opportunity to say what we want to say. If I say anything, will it make a difference?

LA Project Leader: Things did change, my view went from having two schools to one school.

Parent B (has a son who has left School)

**Q: I have watched and read a lot about (*the proposal*). Why is the one school so much better? I have no problem with having a centre of excellence but why would one be so much better than a number of centres of excellence? Is it more about procedure and management with (*not taking account of*) the interest of local families and seeking local solutions. Why one centre rather than two or three?**

**Parent/carer:** It's all about (*saving*) money.

LA Project Leader: No, the council is ambitious to do something completely different.

**Parent/carer:** But you are using our vulnerable kids, in a centre of excellence, as a punch bag (*as in being used as an experiment? minute-taker*).

LA Project Leader: A one school option was seen as the best alternative to a two school option having looked at the split site in Ashton Street.

**Parent/carer:** But Ashton Street is a much bigger site and I went to a secondary school in Sheffield and their split site was miles apart!

LA Project Leader: I am just trying to explain what you are up against.

**Q: About money, we are aware that St Nicholas could make millions of pounds for housing. Are you trampling over (*the needs of*) our children for a housing development or do you already have an idea what you are going to do being doing with this land?**

LA Project Leader: Not specifically, it could be housing and that would only bring in tops £3m and this is not worth a lot to the council when the council is spending £20m (*on the new proposal*).

**Q: Is Ashton Street marked for housing?**

LA Project Leader: It has not been marked for anything in the consultation. All options are open as we need loads of housing and we are also short of mainstream schools.

**Q: We have heard that they (*the council?*) want to build houses by shutting this site and they want to extend Paxcroft (*Primary School*)?**

LA Project Leader: I would not know about that.

**Q: We have 150 kids and we have kids going ‘out of county’ and ‘out of county’ kids coming here. Why is that, it seems weird?**

LA Project Leader: There is a shortage of places in Somerset and children are going out of Trowbridge when this school is full or the nature of the children’s needs are not met in a local school. It is hard to believe, so I don’t specifically know why we would push children away.

**Parent/carer:** But you are (*pushing children away*).

**Parent B** (has a son who has left Larkrise): We are seeking more choice for families with children of special needs. Is one option for the whole county considered appropriate? Is it okay to ship children with special needs long distances but not (*expect the same of*) mainstream parents? No parent at Paxcroft would be expected to send their child to one (*large*) school (*a long distance away*). Wiltshire’s massive strength is that it has (*choice with*) a number of special schools and resource bases and there is (*also*) a degree of choice with Three Ways or Critchell. Having excellence in one building (*is not of any benefit to SEN children*) as young as 4 with parents who don’t drive. Transportation to one (*site*) is not an option. I just feel that this switch (*to the decision of one school*) would not be expected from any other (*mainstream*) parent. This (*proposal of one school*) is inappropriate and it would be ‘laughed out’ by (*mainstream*) parents but they would be able to cope with the (*long*) journeys better.

Parent with a Son at Larkrise

**Q: I have submitted a freedom of information request to find out how many non-SEND children are expected to make a journey that takes up to 2 hours on a bus? Considering the geographical areas of pupils, how far are they expected to travel if they do not have SEND requirements? The response from the council was that, ‘we do not have that data available’. What is the answer to that question? My son has severe disabilities, he is non-verbal, has delayed development and cannot walk far (*he is often sick from bus journeys – minute-taker*). It is 20 miles to Rowde from where we live which would mean 2 hours there and 2 hours back. It takes (*currently*) 7-8 pupils one hour. How long will children be expected to be on that bus? When are council going to listen?**

LA Project Leader: The answer is, we do not hold the information (*about journey times for non-SEND children*).

**Parent/carer:** That’s because it does not happen.

LA Project Leader: My son had a three-quarters of an hour bus journey to a mainstream school as we lived in a rural area. I did not have a choice. Though this is not the same for you.

**Q: So our choice is Salisbury or Rowde with our town right in the middle. (*Spire FM said new school will look like a prison – minute-taker could not hear all the details*). We both work as parents and as we have a carer for our child who does not**

**drive, we use taxis and where feasible, trains. This would be impossible for Rowde. One of us will have to give up work or we would have to move. Would that be best for our child?**

LA Project Leader: We do not want a prison (*for the new school*) and we want access for parents.

**Q: What about ambulance and fire services? These things need to be thought about as well as the impact of the extended journey on children with special needs?**

LA Project Leader: It has been thought about. We do not use transport for children with MLD.

**Parent/carer:** That's not the same (*as a child with complex special needs*).

Parent with a son at Larkrise

**Q: You ignored my question about the safety of my son on the bus with the increased danger - that issue is more important than any other.**

LA Project Leader: I cannot disagree with you.

Parent with a son at Larkrise

**Q: Where is the duty of care?**

LA Project Leader: ECHPs can include stuff around transport.

**Q: Why should children be travelling this long distance in the first place? Some will only be 4 years old? These children do well and learn (*better*) when they travel locally.**

Parent with a son at Larkrise

**Q: My son will end up having to do 10-12 hour a day! Many adults and mainstream pupils would struggle to do that. This is discrimination against the disabled and there are legal challenges when it comes to that.**

**Q: Have you looked at these vulnerable children's care plans?**

LA Project Leader: No.

**Q: Have the council (*looked at these vulnerable children's care plans*)?**

LA Project Leader: I think they do.

**Q: Pupils have seizures on transport and need medication. They might need hospital treatment – there is potentially disastrous consequences for our children who have a shortened life span due to their seizures.**

LA Project Leader: If they need those (*support*) plans (*to manage journeys*), they will have them.

**Q: But a child (*who suffers*) with seizures on transport, with a whole bus of children, could potentially die?**

LA Project Leader: The longer the journey, the more risk.

**Q: (*If a child is having a seizure on a bus*) and the road to Rowde is blocked by a lorry, how can you access that child? By air ambulance?**

**Parent A – Parent Governor:** The air ambulance at Semington is nowhere near Rowde.

*(parents were talking over each other – minute-taker)*

LA Project Leader: And if the air ambulance is grounded? I cannot answer that question.

**Q: My daughter has severe epilepsy and is disabled. We live close to the school. We walk and don't drive. We are not on the statistics, so has the extra money needed for the bus journey (*to the new school*) with 1:1 support been taken into account? And we are not alone, there are more kids in the same situation.**

LA Project Leader: We are hearing about pupils with medical issues and we have to make the proposal work.

**Q: What if (*the proposal*) does not work and children are taken out of school and home educated?**

**Q: As you can hear, young pupils with PMLD are (*currently*) supported as much as possible in their community. (*The proposal of only*) one potential school means a long journey for the majority of parents, so we need to look for a compromise? Why is (*the proposal*) an all or nothing (*solution*)? Yes, we are open to a new school, a centre of excellence, but why not at least look at Larkrise and St Nicholas in terms of PMLD education? Perhaps, children can go to a local primary school and then maybe move at the age of 11 when some can then undertake a longer journey? We still have a year to work towards a solution and can think about what will work for the majority of parents? My concern is that the council is reducing choice and even limiting it.**

LA Project Leader: For post-16 we will offer a range of services from providers.

Parent A – Parent Governor

**Q: Who are those (*post-16*) providers? Wiltshire College and Fairfield College are not suitable (*for pupils with PMLD*).**

LA Project Leader: I cannot say the names exactly.



**Parent A – Parent Governor:** My child is severely autistic (*and will need specialist post- 16 provision*).

Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning: (*Minute-taker missed the beginning of this response*). There will be 20 different providers working with us and alongside Wiltshire College and Fairfield College.

**Parent A – Parent Governor:** (*Minute-taker missed the response*).

**Q: Taking children out of their local community to a village they don't know and then bringing them back to do some sort of post-16 education means that they will have lost the connection (*with their local community*). Currently, my child is being taunted for being different (*and this moving back and forth will not help the situation?*)**

LA Project Leader: Dependent on the age of the child, there might be a different solution for transition. If a child just has 2 years left at school, they might not go. Transition process needs more detail.

**Q: Do you need to know how long the transition process takes for our child (*with PMLD*)?**

Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning: For Post-16 education, children can come back to integrate with their local community.

**Q: Why can't our younger children do this (*integrate with the community*) in our school here? They will live here and spend their whole lives here (*minute taker – missed some of the question on children needing 5 years to get used their home town*). All children are known in their community.**

**Q: Kids should be brought up in their own community. Why put them somewhere they don't know and Laura Mayes even said that?**

LA Project Leader: We do that (*message-taker was not sure what the response was in reference to?*).

**Parent/carer:** Our kids are being pushed out (*of their local community*) and we are angry as cabinet have not heard anything we have said. Our kid's safety comes first.

**Q: What will the new school offer? My daughter visits (*the shop*) Home Bargains, goes swimming, has been horse-riding and meets carers and local people in the town. So how will she learn to shop and swim?**

**Q: I have looked at the facilities closest to Rowde. The swimming pool, supermarket and shop and even a café is not within walking distance. Access to the community will have to be via transport which will mean more time on the bus and more money (*cost*) for the LA.**

**Q: What is the upside for the council when the roads are already busy with traffic and now you are looking to triple the amount of transport (*on the road*)?**

**Q: It will need 50 minibuses for 410 kids, including those out of county, to go to the new school?**

LA Project Leader: Those pupils who are out of county will probably carry on going at that school. We will keep the pupils we know.

**Q: If children go to the 'super school', what if they don't get on? Where can they go? There will be no option and no choice to go anywhere else?**

LA Project Leader: They can go to another part of the school. There will be more choice in one school.

**Q: So, you will just move my child from one class to another?**

**Q: There will be one huge school on the Rowdeford site? Why is the HT of Rowde (*ford?*) saying that there will be three individual schools?**

LA Project Leader: There will be three buildings but only one school. There will be small scale schools within the one school making there a choice within the school. (*Strategic*) landscaping will make the school (*schools within the one school*) feel accessible.

**Q: This (*one large school*) would be totally overwhelming for children. How are they going to learn life skills like shopping at Tesco and Asda and swimming at a local swimming pool? How are they going to learn these and apply them back to the town they live in?**

**Q: Our children are being discriminated against when they cannot choose a college or school? Why can't our children stay on after the age of 16? Even mainstream pupils can struggle with transition and our children have more challenges to face but will be dumped. The best post-16 education for our children is in a school that they know, nurtured by people they know into their adult years. Why do they need to go somewhere else where they will struggle to fit in?**

**Parent/carer:** It (*the new school*) feels nothing short of an institution.

**Parent/carer:** 'Centre of excellence' is just a 'sound bite', it is meaningless. State of the art equipment does not make a school a centre excellence.

Parent with a Son at Larkrise

**Q: Fairfield Farm College is for able pupils, not for mine and ours. My son will never live independently. He has a mind of a 4 or 5-year-old. What are his options after 16 when he can barely walk, cannot think for himself, is a danger out shopping and always has a carer? He cannot be left alone for more than 5 minutes and cannot adapt to anything else other than being here (*at this school*) up to the age of 19 years old.**

Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning: Your son's situation will be addressed.

Parent with a Son at Larkrise

**Q: His (*my son*) needs need to be addressed now?**

Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning: There will be charities and providers who will want to work with your child.

Parent A – Parent Governor

**Q: Are these post-15 providers experienced and what can they provide?**

Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning: I would like to give your more ideas of what they can offer.

**Q: What is the range of (*post-16*) provision now we are in the statutory phase? You should be able to say, 'the post-16 provision is this for those children with these needs, offering colleges and Fairfield'. You should know what the provision is by now! So, you do not have a plan?**

LA Project Leader: We don't know for some (*children?*). Post-16 provision will be addressed in the ECHP.

**Q: If post-16 provision is not suitable for our children at other colleges, can the door stay open for children to stay on at Rowderford? Can you put that option in the proposal?**

LA Project Leader: It is not in the proposal yet. The details of the child's ECHP will lead on what we have to provide in the plan.

**Parent/carer:** With our children (*needs*), us adults need significant support. We can strongly argue that us parents take the brunt of the care and support for our children. Our school enables parents to get together and learn from each other. With a school being far away and pupils attending by bus means parents will not (*have the opportunity to*) meet. St Nicholas and Larkrise parents are strong friends and attend school events. Parents are supported together. You will have to think carefully about partnerships and working with parents to keep parents strong enough to support their child's needs into adulthood. I have a support network at my child's school – it an amazing school! Do not underestimate that (*parental support?*) - it is important.

**Parent/carer:** The council forget how much we parents suffer. It is a depressing life, it drains you and this is our world, it is emotionally and physically draining (*looking after our children*) and this place (*our school*) is our saviour. When we see teachers in town they interact with my child like they are their family. This is school is a 'home to home'. Staff know our pupils as well as we do.

**Parent/carer:** Staff here are exemplary and they know our kids better than ourselves sometimes, as they work with them all the time. Staff have known our children all their lives and then we are expected to send our children to Rowde – how many children

will go across? Our children are excited to be here and if the staff don't go then our children will have to get to know new staff and peers. This will (*negatively*) affect my son and that is why parents are worried. None of this is taken into account. They (*the children*) are just (*thought of as*) a number (*to the LA*) and the LA wants to ship them off to an institution, as they know these children cannot fend for themselves. My child has no danger awareness and the LA has no idea what impact this has on our family. The LA does not deal with these children's melt-downs and anger and there is no support from council. Now the council are making the situation 10 times worse (*by moving children to a different school a distance away*).

**Q: At the CAB (?) meeting Laura Mayes was patronising us by saying that parents don't like change. Yet, we are open to a compromise but the LA are not listening to what we don't want. Let's have a show of hands – who wants it (*the new one school*)? (*no hands were put up*). There is the distance, medical issues and community issues. We sound like we are personally afraid of change but we want to keep what we have got and expand on that. We do not want one school and no one is listening to the people that matter.**

**Parent A – Parent Governor:** The council is opening a school that no one wants. You have had the consultations and listened to parents. Who has come back to say they want it (*the new one school*)? You admitted that only a minority want it.

**Parent/carer:** There are 137 pupils at Rowdeford, 95 pupils at Larkrise and 85 pupils at St Nicholas, which is over 300. This does not leave a lot of spare places.

**Q: The LA will only consider (*delivering the provision as stated on*) the child's ECHP?**

LA Project Leader: Yes, it is important to do so.

**Q: As ECHPs are decided co-operatively between the school and parent, how are we to in-put into that if we struggle to get to parents' meetings? We only live 10 miles away (*and will struggle*) so how many parents will be able to get to Rowde for these meetings? We will have to make special arrangements (*with our employers*) to use annual leave, which we need for when our child is ill. How can transport and post-16 decisions be fairly decided with parents face-to-face? We need to make decisions together (*with the school*), not on our own. When we have multi-disciplinary meetings with experts, we (*the parents*) are the expert of our child, not the experts or the LA. There needs to be development on updates between home and school and how is this (*situation going to be*) good for the child?**

**Parent/carer:** We will not be able to build good relationships with the teachers (*in the new school*). Here we are an extended family. We see teachers crying now (*here at this meeting*) and know they care about us and our children.

**Parent A – Parent Governor:** These are passionate remarks but we do not feel listened to.

**Parent/carer:** The only time you (*the LA*) listen is when you want our votes.

Director of Commissioning: This is why we are here (*to listen*).

**Q: We said all of this last year when the LA Project Leader said that we could have this school (*continue as a school*). Now that decision has been turned on its head and the council said we could have 3 years for talking (*a debate*) but now it's only 1 year. What is the legal challenge on that? We are going over old ground but I have one more question. What will happen to the 20 children who need places for September when St Nicholas and here are full?**

Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning: We will create a plan.

**Q: Are you pre-empting the cons to the proposal and drip feeding the proposal as a final decision to us?** (minute-taker did not understand the question)

Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning: We are looking at all options.

**Q: Will you listen to parents?**

Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning: Yes.

**Q: Why are you against split-sites? Why is the decision not to have a split-site shrouded in secrecy?**

LA Project Leader: Due to the extra cost.

**Parent/carer:** My child attended a school in Devon. His first school was a comprehensive built in 1964 which was not fit for purpose. A new comprehensive (based on old secondary modern/ grammar school) continued but at the age of 13 /14 pupils were bussed across town between 2 sites, 2 miles apart. We lived with it. Using Ashton Street (*as a split site*) is not rocket science.

LA Project Leader: We are not saying it is not do-able. Yes, some schools worked in the same way. However, since the 1960s and 1970s these schools have been got rid of as they are difficult to organise and now there are fewer of them.

**Parent/carer:** The Ashton Street split -site is not miles apart in this instance. There are no fears of children crossing road as staff would be able to take care of that.

Parent with a Son at Larkrise

**Q: The new site will contain Rowdeford School and plans for an expanded school onto a massive amount of land. What is the value of that land if it was to be sold off (*for housing*)?**

LA Project Leader: It would not be worth a lot. The land at Rowdeford cannot be changed to housing due to planning laws.

**Parent/carer:** The top and bottom of it is that we do not want that option (*of one new school*). We want to keep this school open. After all the months of discussions and consultations it is pitiful that you can only come up with this option. You are wrong (*with your proposal for one school*) and unfortunately, we do not have the option to send our child anywhere else.

**Q: You (*the Project Leader*) changed your mind to support this proposal for one school?**

LA Project Leader: I wanted the two school option but changed my mind with the work undertaken over the few months.

**Q: After hearing everything, you now think the ‘super school’ proposal is the best option?**

LA Project Leader: Yes.

**Q: A parent asked you at St Nicholas, what had changed your mind (*about the original suggestion of having Larkrise and St Nicholas open*) since July?**

LA Project Leader: There was not one specific thing, it was the best of the balance.

**Q: So you personally changed your mind (*about the original suggestion of having Larkrise and St Nicholas open*)?**

LA Project Leader: I am here to do a job. I am freelance and I can decide who I work for (*not sure if there was more to this response – minute-taker*)

**Q: We are saying that this proposal is not the best proposal for our children and your duty is to take that back to the LA?**

LA Project Leader: Yes, I will take that (*your feedback*) back. I hear what parents say and I know what teachers and headteachers are saying. I need to come up with viable solutions but it's not down to me.

**Q: If it is a school of excellence run by an academy, does this mean the LA will not have to fund it further?**

LA Project Leader: Whether the school is maintained or an academy, the LA will borrow money to pay for that school. (*minute-taker not sure of the meaning of this*)

**Q: Did the LA look at a range of things (*options*)?**

LA Project Leader: Yes, from the consultation, position of sites were viewed with planners. Sites that were thought to be good, did not stack up for planning.

**Q: Did you consider building a school at the back of Dursley Road?**

LA Project Leader: We looked at West Ashton as well.

**Q: Why are mainstream schools (*given priority*) over special schools?**

LA Project Leader: Rowdeford is in the countryside and so is West Ashton.

**Q: Can you build another road or access road to make it easier to access to Rowdeford?**

LA Project Leader: We can already access the site at Rowdeford.

**Q: How (*can you access Rowdeford*) when it is a country road?**

LA Project Leader: We can build a gate. (*minute-taker, not sure if I got the full answer*)

**Q: If there is access (*for a school to be built*) at West Ashton and Dursley Road, why are you pushing our kids out to the middle of nowhere at Rowde?**

LA Project Leader: Trowbridge needs a primary school and secondary school and building those outside Trowbridge is not an option.

**Q: How come we do not have a choice of special school sites, (*like mainstream pupils*)?**

**Parent/carer:** You said that houses cannot be built on the land at Rowdeford. You answered your own question – the decision made is down to money at the end of the day!

7.45pm: Mr Cook (HT) closed the meeting and advised parents/carers to go online (on the LA Consultation website) and convey their comments on there. Or parents/carers can bring comments to Mr Cook and he will ensure they are passed on to the LA.

### 4.3.2 Audio Recording Transcript

**Venue:** Larkrise Special School

**Date:** 07 February 2019

**Time:** 6pm

1. PC – Can we make a start please. I am just going to talk very briefly at the beginning and I will hand over to Alan. This meeting is being recorded and on the back of that a transcript can be made so it's completely accurate in terms of what was said. It'll be great if you say who you are before you speak and if you forget that's absolutely fine as well. The reason for the recording it that there's an accurate transcript. It is a local authority meeting so the only other thing I've got to say is there are some people here who are very confident at speaking in public, some people have quieter voices so if we could all be respectful of that and give everyone a chance to say what they want to say and there'll be a whole draft coming through as all the doors are open, I will go and close it in about ten minutes when we are confident everybody is here.
2. AS – Thank you. I think you've all probably met me before last summer. You might not have met my colleagues but you know I am Alan Stubbersfield and I use to be Director of Education for Wiltshire, somebody else is doing that job now but I'm doing the job in Bristol actually, but Wiltshire have asked me to stay on to work on the special school developments that's why I'm here tonight and that there's continuity in the project. To continue that there's two colleagues also from County Hall and I'll ask my colleagues to introduce themselves.
3. HJ – I'm Helen Jones and I am Director of Commissioning and Alan will be handing this programme over to me when we hear what you've got to say so I can understand your views as parents and carers.
4. JW – I am Judith Westcott and I am part of Helen's team and the Head of Service of Children's Commissioning.
5. SK – Hello, I'm Simone Kermode, I work at the local authority and I am in commissioning and I minute-take for them.
6. DA – Hi, I'm Dominic Argar and I am the multi-media officer at Wiltshire Council and I'll be recording the meeting. If you don't mind, if you pop your hand up when you have a question and I will come to you and pop a microphone in front of you when you ask any questions.
7. AS – So, I believe we have an hour or so to hear what you have to say and make a note of that so it goes into the thinking in the next stage of this process. I'm going to talk for as short time as possible to set the scene and then open it up to you here. So, you are familiar with the story that we were talking about last summer. We must have met around last June, between June and September.
8. Person – It was July,



9. AS – Okay, towards the end of the summer term then. Through the summer holiday and the early autumn, a lot of thinking was done about all the meetings that happened here and at the other schools, picking on the different views from those places, and it took us longer than expected because there was so much to take on board. It was complicated, different ideas came up you know. You may well remember, when I was here last time, I was probably saying and I was thinking about the outcome, that there would likely be two schools, one school here and one in Chippenham. That's not what came out of it at the end of the day, a lot of it was to do with consultation and a lot of it was to do with the practicalities of how we would actually deliver a two school option in Trowbridge and Chippenham and looking at the options before us we came up with a single school option as you know. There is some controversy attached to that which is why I am here to say this is me, let's hear what you've got to say. We've talked about being recorded and being taken into account in the next Council meeting, that will be a Cabinet meeting at the end of March and that will be looking at the proposals to close the three schools firstly, secondly to open the new school as the replacement. There's a technical complexity with what we call pre-statutory and statutory consultation for the closures. Last summer is what we call pre-statutory. It was in effect something the Council didn't have to do but wanted to do. It is now in the statutory phase which is what it has to do, which is to do with the formal notices which are around and about, saying what the proposals are, so you've got something in black and white to respond to. And of course there is a consultation online which I would urge you to do as well as attend these meetings. That's the statutory process around the closures of schools and that's a decision for the local authority because the local authority maintains schools with local authority staff that we need to think about as well and care about. The other side of it is the opening of a new school. The technicality is, is that that's a parallel process that's not directly part of the statutory notices, although it's linked because we have to say what we are going to do with these children that attend these schools, and the answer is the new school. The process we have to go through there is to develop what that school will look like and contain, technically what the specification for the new school will be because subject to all the decisions, which has not yet happened, if we go down that line we would need to publish a specification for providers of a school to say that is something I would like to pitch in for and there would be a pitching process for people who would want to deliver that school and Secretaries of State would decide which of those people would do it and off they would go. All that's going to take a long time. For the moment, the key thing is to hear what you think about that sort of stuff so that can be feed into the 26 March Cabinet meeting over the road at County Hall. There's not much more I want to be saying as this meeting is about what you say and how we listen and take note of that. Over to you unless you want me to carry on.
10. Person – There's a full Council meeting being called before that on the 26<sup>th</sup> February.

11. AS – So I don't know about that partly because my day job is now in Bristol rather than here. So, maybe somebody else can answer that question?
12. Person – So I believe the Friends of groups are sharing their petitions at full Council and that is the right thing to do that it goes through to that Council meeting. It's not a point of long debate but it can be presented at that point, that will be acknowledged and then identified as part of the consultation, so the full debate will happen in March so you won't have a long time for that discussion as it will be tabled for the March meeting.
13. AS – So, the February meeting is parallel to this, so it feeds in to the March.
14. Person – The Councillors and the Cabinet, if they decide to go against what you are or the Council has proposed will it get sacked?
15. Person – They won't make that sort of decision in that meeting. You get a hearing but they won't be making decisions in that meeting.
16. Person – But if Councillors go against it you have to stop it.
17. HJ – My understanding is that the decision has not been made by Council. Whole Council will hear the views of petitioners, it then goes to Cabinet which is the decision-making body on the 26<sup>th</sup> March.
18. Person – We've seen the things your Cabinet does and we don't like it. They've already done that to us once already and they'll do it again.
19. Person – As I said earlier people went to that meeting with petitions that were signed by thousands and it was completely ignored. You have a Cabinet that have appeared to have made a decision for a one school.
20. HJ – Obviously, at the other meeting you did raise that with us and Alan, obviously explained that the decision about petitions is around the.
21. Person – So are you going to do exactly the same thing this time on the 26<sup>th</sup> February?
22. AS – We don't know, that is up to the Council members and you are right to say all the Council will be able to have a view of the petition, they will hear what the petition have to say at the Council meeting, that won't be ignored but its.
23. Person – That's how it felt.
24. Person – I watched Cabinet member roll their eyes when people were telling stories about their children and I watched Cabinet sit there and go like this at each other and I wasn't the only one.
25. Person – They behave disgustingly.
26. Person – They were bored of our stories. We put in time and effort to be there to represent the children and the parents and families that couldn't be there and they were bored of our stories. They were sat there, they were talking amongst themselves, they weren't listening, it wasn't going in, the minute they asked for the decision to be made all their hands went up. They didn't take on board anything we said. They didn't take on board from the last consultation that only 11 percent wanted one school. And nobody has explained to us where are that 11 percent and where are the people in support of that proposal because we cannot find one person. Where are they all? They are all sitting quietly, they are all sitting quietly. Okay maybe there is a few Rowde parents that are quite happy

and think they've saved their school. We even think they are starting to reconsider and think actually the Council aren't being completely honest enough. Where are these numbers on paper? Where are they?

- 27.** Person – There's no proof of anything and we've put forward questions, we've put forward freedom of information and we don't get anything back.
- 28.** AS – The consultation was part of the paper work that went into the Cabinet meeting that got us into this stage of consultation. So, there was fifty odd pages of reporting including an Annex which was the analysis of the consultation last time. That's why we are recording now and why I have to speak into a microphone so there will be a full account, nothing missed out, that is part of the decision making so that's where the numbers are.
- 29.** Person – Can I just make a point about your consultation process. I'm a parent of one of the children here. Consultation process, your words, there is a pre-statutory, there's a statutory and then a decision. Those are tick boxes only in words, there's no idea of ever changing your mind and you can use these words. As you said pre-statutory and statutory. Statutory means its legal it just means you've got to go through the steps, you've got to go through the motions, you've got to have a record of it and it doesn't really matter how many people protest against it or however many people complain about it. You make up your mind as a Council but when we complained about it, you go well we went through consultation, we went through this and we went through that. I've been made redundant in my life and the biggest joke of all is that they consult the employees about the redundancies and the changes. It doesn't mean a damn thing because they've made their mind up and they are going to kick you out anyway. There's no comeback because they have statutory rights and they have gone through those processes. The meeting where they said they have already made up their minds to the parents, well I looked at the minutes and some of the online video of it and I've got to agree. I wasn't there, but it was a case of oh well we've already made our minds up because I watched the video of it and the minute it was put to the vote all of the executive hands went up in an instant. There was no thinking about it or um-ing and r-ing or anything. It was here we go we've done it, thank you, tick the box. The second point about the consultation, your online one is a disgrace. I filled it in recently, you've got one question that says please pick three of the items about your concerns. Three. There was seven or eight there and one clicked other and in the box, all of the above. Where's that going to be recorded? I feel strongly that about seven, eight or all of them but I was only restricted to three and the system wouldn't let me do it. So, this is a point of order. Your consultation thing is about a legal tick box, no more no less, and it sucks because it's not even giving us what we want to say about it.
- 30.** AS – Well you can say what you want here and we will take.
- 31.** Person – Is what I say here going to make a difference though?
- 32.** Person – Well it didn't last time.

- 33.** AS- Well I don't know. Things do change in the last process and that's why it took until November. In the way I just said. My own view changed from a two school to a one school. You don't agree with that but I am saying that things moved on and things still can move on.
- 34.** Person – My son came to Larkrise, he's now left. I've watched and read quite a lot about it. It is still not clear to me why the one school solution is some much better. I have no problem with centres of excellence, I think already in Wiltshire there are some centres of excellence but I cannot yet understand why one centre of excellence would be so much better than a number of centres of excellence within a rural county. It baffles me why. What I suppose I want to ask you is one centre of excellence more about procedure management? Because I can't believe that it is for the benefit of and in the interest of local families seeking local solutions. That's my concern about the whole thing. I do not understand why one is better than two or three.
- 35.** AS – In very blunt terms is boils down to.
- 36.** Person – Its money.
- 37.** AS – I don't think it does as I have been involved in discussions in County Hall where these things have been talked about. I think the Council is very ambitious to do the best and something future proof.
- 38.** Person – You are not using our kids as punch bags because that is basically what you are doing.
- 39.** AS – Well.
- 40.** Person – Well it is. You've got vulnerable kids in centres of excellence which you've already got here and St Nicks, so why make something up that we have got already?
- 41.** AS – There's no argument that your staff here aren't excellent. I think my point was that and I'm saying it bluntly, let's have it out on the table, the one school option was seen, I'm trying to answer your question, as a better alternative than the two school option. Principally because the two school option would have meant a split site using this and Ashton Street and I know it's been thought about before.
- 42.** Person – It's a much bigger site, it's just across the road and it is a much bigger site.
- 43.** AS – Okay.
- 44.** Person – I actually went to a secondary school in Sheffield which was a split site just outside of the city centre. You attend sixth form right on the edge of Sheffield that is what you call a split site.
- 45.** AS – Okay but I am trying to explain where the Council is coming from. So you know what you are up against.
- 46.** Person – Just going back to the talk about the money. So, obviously we are aware that this site, St Nicolas, and Ashton Street site are all going to be worth millions and millions and millions for housing. So, why is it that you are trampling on our children just to get more money for housing developments?
- 47.** AS – I think we.

- 48.** Person – Or do you already have an idea or the Council already have an idea what they are going to do with this and St Nicolas.
- 49.** AS – Well, specifically they don't, well it probably would be housing. The value of those sites is the topside of three million which in Council budgets is not very much and it wouldn't be worth the Council going into a big fight for that kind of money. Its wanting to spend £20 million or more on the whole project. So, its big spend and some saving if you like.
- 50.** So, is Aston Street marked for housing? Will you build houses on the Ashton Street Site?
- 51.** AS – Well at the moment its marked as, well because we have not concluded this consultation it's not marked for anything.
- 52.** Person – Do you have that in mind?
- 53.** AS – Well all options are open in the end. So, I'm not saying that nobody has ever thought of housing for this site or St Nicolas or Ashton Street or anywhere because basically we need loads and loads of housing. So, any space land is probably going to be housing. Or we also know that Trowbridge is also short of space for mainstream schools.
- 54.** Person – So I believe that you are going to put 300 houses on there, that's what I was led to believe, shut this site and possibly extend Paxcroft school so you can have a school big enough to cater for those.
- 55.** AS – I can't imagine that you would get 300 houses on Ashton Street but that's not something I would know about anyway.
- 56.** Person – That's your secondary school project, right? Where you could get about 150 kids. We've got kids from around the county and you've got kids out the county coming here. People come from in from Crewkerne Somerset coming here, when we've got kids from Bath and Avon.
- 57.** AS – My guess is that, I don't know the cases.
- 58.** Person – Well I don't expect you to know names but it just seems weird.
- 59.** AS – Yes it does and it's got to be to do with shortage of places in Crewkerne and shortage of the particular kind of spaces we need because this covers most things. But if some child is going to be going out of Trowbridge it must be because the particular, this school is full so that's an issue for us or it's the nature of the needs of the child will not be met in this school. That's hard really as this school meets all kinds of needs, I don't know the specifics of the situation but we wouldn't do that unless we were pushed into a corner as we don't want to send children away. Not that they want to send children away from Crewkerne to Trowbridge.
- 60.** Person – Sorry, its Parent B again. I may be speaking out of turn but I am actually seeking more choice for families with children who have families with special needs. My concern is that I cannot think of another group for whom one option in one half of the county would be considered appropriate. So, you're right there are new schools needing to be built. What I am concerned about is that children with special needs are considered to be okay to be shipped long distances. It isn't something that is being offered to mainstream parents, you

know. Nobody is suggesting to the Mead that suddenly their children have to go to Rowde for the appropriate schooling and that Rowde will become the only choice in Wiltshire, and that's what I am really worried about. Apologies, obviously Salisbury as well. I feel that Wiltshire has had a massive strength. We've had a number of special schools, we've had resource bases. Therefore, parents have had a degree of choice, even if that choice is going to Three Ways or Critchill school. But we are looking at taking what I think could be a number of centres of excellence and choosing to put it all in one building. And for instances the very youngest children, to think that for those at four are going to be happy, particularly with parents that don't drive, with transporting the children to the one option because actually they aren't being given the opportunity to look at a Larkrise or to look at a St Nicks. I just feel that if we switched it and expected any other parents with another group of children to say that this is appropriate for you, it would be laughed out. You just wouldn't do it for mainstream families. And yet I would argue that those were the children who could cope with those journeys better.

**61.** Clapping.

**62.** AP – parent C and my son (name of child) comes here and I am going to reiterate what Parent B is saying because I submitted a freedom of information request to the Council and my question was how many non-SEND children are expected to make the 20 mile journey that my son would have to make against the number of SEND children that would be expected to do it? How many would be expected to take up to two hours on a bus whether its SEND or non-SEND? And I wanted to know the geographical areas and the distribution of these children around the county of Wiltshire, or this half of Wiltshire, and how far they would be expected to travel if they did not have SEND requirements. I didn't expect a lot and I was actually disappointed by that standard. The answer was we do not have that data available. The Council's response was that answer. I have thought about appealing it but I just know that it'll fall on deaf ears again as that's exactly what the Council wants. What is the answer to that question? If you could put it in simple words, my son has severe disabilities, and he cannot always handle journeys of up to an hour to get here. Just the other day he got ten minutes, we got a call from the bus driver saying we are going to have to bring him back as he's been sick. He was right as rain before he went, he was right as rain afterwards because often he can't cope with the temperature on the bus which is difficult. In that time the passenger assistant cannot be sat next to him for the entire journey and there's choking hazards involved here, there's safety of the child involved here. None of these are taken into account as the passenger assistant has got their hands full with other children on the bus. Is this going to be a safety matter if he has to go 20 miles? We live in a Wiltshire town, 20 miles to Rowde. That's an hour, potential two hours dependant on traffic there and two hours back. Here is on a bus of about seven or eight people and they take an hour to get here. If they are going 20 miles are they going to fill that bus up with more children? Are they going to pick up more people along

the way? How long is he going to be on that bus? The Council could not answer me on how many mainstream children with SEND difficulties are expected to do it. Exactly what Parent B was saying, and I want that answer. So, when are the Council actually going to listen?

**63.** Clapping.

**64.** AS – So, you would have had the answer. We don't hold the information because we don't hold the information.

**65.** AL – I don't believe that. I don't believe that.

**66.** Person – That's why it doesn't happen because you don't.

**67.** AS – I could speculate on an answer on how many mainstream children travel two hours, I don't think they do.

**68.** Person – Well they are being educated in the local community.

**69.** AS – My son went to his mainstream primary school three quarters on an hour on the bus, each way, because I have always lived in rural places, so there are places. I did not have a choice in mainstream because of where I lived and that's the case for a lot of people in mainstream. But it's not the same as you face, I know. I'm realistic about that.

**70.** AL – The choices that we have got are Salisbury or Rowde. Either way it's 20 miles each way. Whichever one, we are not going to send them to the one in Rowde, we are going to send them to the one in Salisbury. That's still twenty miles for him because we are smack in the middle. There was a Spire FM news report this week about the new school in Chippenham that has just opened up and its function for one for the north of the county. I saw the pictures of that site and it looks like an institution, it looks like a prison and that's what Rowde is going to look like and that's not going to be acceptable to anybody. My wife and I both work, we both drive, our oldest daughter is his carer and she doesn't drive. As it is, my wife is in Warminster and she can get to Trowbridge if necessary. When both of us have been working, our daughter has had to come here by taxi to pick him up when he's been ill and go back. £50 a time, 20 miles each way, or by train which is an hour each way and the bit to get to school in between. If it was 20 miles at least Trowbridge, if she has to get a train, she can get a train. Rowde is impossible to get to unless she learns to drive. She tried and failed so I can't put any pressure on her. She's doing the best she can. One of us will have to give up work or we'd have to move out the county. Is that's what's best for our children?

**71.** AS – What I'm hearing is concerns about what if there was going to be a school there you don't want it to look like a prison, nobody does, we need to take care about enabling parents to get to the school if they need to.

**72.** Person – And will ambulances and fire engines be able to get in there if needed as well.

**73.** Person – Shouldn't all of this have been taken into account? Journey times, children with additional needs and life limiting conditions. Shouldn't all of these have been thought about when you came to this conclusion. It's almost like you have gone well this is what we are doing and you don't seem to have listened.

- 74.**AS – I'm saying it has been and you are challenging that. There is an experience of transporting children from across Wiltshire to our special school in Devizes to Rowdeford. They are not PMLD of course.
- 75.**Person – No but they are moderate learning difficulties and that's completely different to having children with profound and severe complex needs.
- 76.**AL – And the concerns that I have just said about the distance you have ignored. So, this is why we have no faith in the Council.
- 77.**AS – Well I'm not finishing.
- 78.**and it's one of the most important points I made. What about the safety of children that are picked up? It's increased danger the further and longer they are on the bus. That is a big concern and probably the most, I know, if I can say for everybody, that we are concerned about. But what about the safety of our children? Surely that is more important than any other consideration that the Council has to take in making a decision.
- 79.**AS – And I don't disagree.
- 80.**Person – Where is the duty of care around our children on that transport?
- 81.**AS – Well transport is now in the EHCP. Specifications can be made in the planning in the EHCP and a review of the plan if it's not working and those specifications can include stuff about the transport. We will not have children who are not safe.
- 82.**Person – Why should we have to take these risks in the first place? Some of these kids are going to be four years old. It's going to be exhausting, you know. How do you expect them to perform and learn and do well at school if they've got travel like that at either end of the day?
- 83.**AL - This was one of my questions. It is a case of sometimes having to do a 10, 12-hour day and most adults struggle to do that, let alone many children in mainstream schools struggle to do that. Yet these children with SEND requirements are potentially, well I don't want to say potentially anymore, are going to be expected to do it if the Council gets its way, and that to me is discrimination against the disabled, and I think that is a strong point that Council should take note of because those are legal challenges if it comes to that.
- 84.**AS – Fair point.
- 85.**Person – Have you actually looked at the vulnerable children cares plans at all?
- 86.**AS – No, I haven't, no.
- 87.**Person – Have the Council?
- 88.**AS – Yes Council officers do that.
- 89.**Person – I don't think they do. So, we have children here that have severe epilepsy, they have life limiting illnesses, what happens if they have a seizure on transport and requires medication? I know PA's some of them are trained to give medication, well what if that medication doesn't work? That child may need hospital treatment. What are you going to do? Drop the other kids off at school first before you take them to hospital? It's not going to happen. You have to take them to hospital, it's as simple as that. You know that potentially, this could have potentially disastrous consequences for our children, because some of



them, are they going to have epilepsy profiles on the bus, because they are going to need, because some children only have a very short span when they can be in seizure for and then, well we all know what could happen.

- 90.** AS – Yeah, so if they need those plans they will have those plans.
- 91.** Person – Yes but how are you going to deal with it if a child has potentially a bad seizure on the transport and they are not, the medication isn't working for them? What are you going to do with a whole bus full of children and a child that could potentially die?
- 92.** AS – I think we are going to do the same as we do already and what you are saying to me I think is, with a longer journey there's more risk.
- 93.** Person – There is more risk to it, definitely.
- 94.** AS – But those things can happen now.
- 95.** Person – But there is an ambulance station down the road.
- 96.** Person – Exactly, there ain't one at Rowdeford. There's one road to Rowdeford from Calne and Chippenham. It was recently blocked off wasn't it because of an RTA both ends. How are the kids going to get in and out? And the other thing is that Councillor Mayes, bless her, said oh well we'll have a helicopter pad built on the new site. Air ambulance was grounded two months ago wasn't it? How are you going to get around that one?
- 97.** Person – The air ambulance is currently in Semington and that's nowhere near Rowdeford.
- 98.** AS – Okay, I have experience of working with a school that did exactly that and if the air ambulance is grounded I don't know what arrangements they make. There is an experience of having schools to get to schools if they need to.
- 99.** Person – Can I just intervene please? My daughter is one of these children that has severe epilepsy and she doesn't get on the bus at the moment, so she's not in any of your statistics that you've got. I walk her to school, I don't drive and she's not the only one. There are other children who are driven here or who walk to school, you know. They are not on the statistics at the moment to get transport. What about those children? Have you taken them into account because that's going to be extra money that you are going to have to find. (Name of child) will have to get on a bus. She doesn't have to do that now and she will need a one to one PA on the bus who could give her rescue meds if they need to and she isn't alone. There are a lot of other children in that position. Have you got the costings for those children? I doubt it.
- 100.** AS – So we've not got the costing for individual children but what I'm hearing very strongly is that your concerns about the medical issues and for you it has to stack up if this is going to work or whatever the solution is.
- 101.** Person – The solution is that they will be taken out of education and will be home educated, that's what will happen.
- 102.** Person – I'm hearing and I think you are as well, there is a very strong argument for PMLD children and very young children particularly to be supported within their local communities, or as much as possible. I live in a Wiltshire Town, I was terrified at the thought of bringing my son over to

Trowbridge, that seemed a long way away for me. But actually we are looking as I say at only two potential schools, if we think about it are going to be a long long way away for the majority of parents. It's going to be by exception, particularly, in the Rowde area that you are going to have a school on your doorstep. So, you know one of the things again, I think we need to be looking toward compromise sometimes. I don't understand why it has to be all or nothing. I do believe there is a place for a new school, centre of excellence or whatever in the county. I think certainly the numbers coming through we have to generate that. But why couldn't we at least look and again this is, you know I haven't given this a great deal of thought and I haven't spoken to Mr Cook about it at all, but why aren't we looking at Larkrise and St Nicks in terms of PMLD children and the youngest primary education? You know if you had local primary at eleven you could argue that some children can take a longer journey, are better prepared for a change of school like there mainstream peers. I just sometimes think that you veer towards one solution when actually if we looked at compromise and we looked at what would work for the majority, we might all end up with better choice and the feeling that views were being listened to. It's a real concern for me that we are reducing choice and not actually developing it. This is a terrific opportunity for Wiltshire.

- 103.** AS – Some compromise that you talk about has come through the thinking that has happened in the summer and autumn about the post-16, that at 16 we would look at a range of providers.
- 104.** Person – What providers would you actually look at? Your only provision is Wiltshire College and Fairfield and that isn't suitable for some of our children.
- 105.** AS – Additional providers have been developed.
- 106.** Person – What exactly?
- 107.** AS – I don't know the names.
- 108.** Person – My child is severely autistic. What provision have you looked at for those type of children?
- 109.** JW – I can give you some of the answers to that at the moment. So, we have been doing work with a whole range of providers.
- 110.** Person – What providers?
- 111.** JW – So, there is Catch 22, Kumon, there's a range of different providers about 20 in total who are looking to work with us at the moment. I don't want to name any particular one. The idea at the moment is to work alongside Wiltshire College and Fairfield to enable children to have opportunities in their own communities as well as linked to one of the colleges so that they would get.
- 112.** Person – My child needs one to one and sometimes three to one in school. Are you going to provide that post-16?
- 113.** JW – If that's what's need then we will continue it going forward.
- 114.** Person – So my question. We are going to take children out of the local community to go to another school. By the time it's open, my daughter is going to get a couple of years in a school she's not going to know and in a village that she's not going to know. Then she has got to come back to a community that

she has lost her connection with to try and do some sort of post-16 when at the moment my child is currently having issues with being taunted and picked on in the town centre for being different. But you want to take her away from what she wants already.

- 115.** AS – So we have different age group based solutions. We talked about how the building would open in 2023 and I think they are questions for us about how we do that transition. So your question is exactly what I would have in my mind. Would you move a child in the last year of school from here to Rowde for the one year, you might not, for two years you might not, for each different year group there may be different questions. So, the transition thing is something that we will need to get into more detail. That's someway down the road but I think there is some flexibility that can be in place.
- 116.** Person – Judith said that post-16 would come back here to integrate into their community, do things in their own community. Why can't our younger children do things in their community in a school here?
- 117.** Person - Most of our children will live their whole lives in Trowbridge or in Chippenham and you are intending to move them to somewhere they don't know, to get used to that. My son is only young so when, if he goes there, because if I have my way he's not going, if he goes over there, he'll have five years of getting used to Rowde to come back home to have to go through it all again to get use to his home town. That's not very fair to him is it? It's not very fair to any of them. All the children around here are known in the community.
- 118.** AS – Okay.
- 119.** Person – Why is this Council moving our kids out of the community? Why move them to somewhere that doesn't work?
- 120.** AS – This Council is doing, what most Councils do. We do move children out of villages and towns around this area to Trowbridge already, to Rowdeford.
- 121.** Person – But they are being moved to here they are being pushed out.
- 122.** AS – I understand.
- 123.** Person – This is why we are so angry with the Council as they have not being listening to what any of us have been saying.
- 124.** Person – Going back to keeping them in their community. I want to know what the new school will offer at the moment, I can't talk for every child at the school obviously, but my daughter has been to Home Bargains this week and they have brought their health snack, they have been swimming at the local swimming pool, they go horse riding, they do all sorts of things, meeting people and shops and career people in their town. What do they have in Rowde that offers those opportunities? Where do they learn to shop, where do they learn to swim?
- 125.** Person – Can I just add on to that. I've been doing a bit of homework today and facilities in and the closest to here in Trowbridge, the closest to Larkrise. And I looked at the closest in Devizes and I looked at the closest things that children use like swimming pools, like the supermarket, like the shop. And every single one of those things, including the café, is not within walking

distance for our children. So, they would have to access the community via transport incurring more cost for you guys and even more time on a bus.

- 126.** Person – And Rowde Parish Council are already upset about their roads being too busy and they are going to have, what, triple the transport coming through?
- 127.** I've actually worked out that the kids coming to the new school, it'll take 50 minutes or something. How are you going to afford that? Who's going to pay for that? I'll tell you who the silly buggers here, us.
- 128.** AS – We'll have to pay for 15 mini buses wherever they go.
- 129.** Person – Well actually your figures are wrong, they'll be 350 kids. It's going to be more than that. If you work your maths out properly because you've obviously been to the school of Diane Abbott of mathematics it'll actually be 410. That's the amount of kids at the moment. If no one came or went, it's 410 kids.
- 130.** AS – Well, we wouldn't necessarily be planning for children from out of Wiltshire. That takes account of kids from here who will have to go out the county. So, add all those back on, they are actually coming back into county.
- 131.** AS – They probably won't. If they are going to that school they will probably continue going to that school. The issue for us is.
- 132.** Person – But that's not the issue, you want to keep the kids in the county.
- 133.** AS – Well the new ones they will. The ones that are already established in the school they know we wouldn't be pulling them out.
- 134.** Person – But what happens when they go to this new super school, as you put it this centre of excellence? What happens if our children do not get on in that school? Where else is there for them to go? There is no other option because you are making one school.
- 135.** AS – With a large school like that, and you might disagree with the answer, is another part of the school, because you'll have more choice within one school. You've got the same number of teachers, you've got the same number of classes, you've got the same range in one school that you have got in three.
- 136.** Person – Then you can deal with my son when he has a meltdown.
- 137.** Person – So, you're saying that on Rowdeford site there is going to be one school?
- 138.** AS – That's the proposal.
- 139.** Person – One huge school.
- 140.** AS – Yes.
- 141.** Person – Right, why is the head of Rowdeford telling people that there are going to be three individual schools on that site?
- 142.** AS – Because he's talking about buildings.
- 143.** Person – Well then, he needs to get his facts right about what is being said.
- 144.** AS – He is right.
- 145.** Because he is saying three individual schools.

- 146.** AS – It will not be three individual schools. The proposal is there will be one school and we've made that very clear. We don't want something that looks like a prison or an institution all these things have been said, or a super school. We want it to be small scale, lots of places so there is a choice of the blue building, the red building, or however you describe them, because we've got loads of land there. Do the landscaping, we can make it feel accessible, not too big, because round the corner there will be another part that you might go to when you are older or you might, like your point, go to another class that's suits, as they'll be another class to go to like a big school. In a small school this doesn't.
- 147.** Person – Which will be totally overwhelming.
- 148.** AS – Well the idea is for all those separate buildings is exactly to deal with that question.
- 149.** Person – The thing is that the teachers take them out into the local community to Tesco, to Asda, to buy their bread rolls. Like Hayley said, they know where the swimming pool is. They've got to learn their life skills. How are they going to learn those out in the middle of a village somewhere? How do they then apply those life skills back into the town that they live in? It's no good learning how to catch a bus over there if you then can't apply that in the town that you live in.
- 150.** AS – Okay.
- 151.** Person – I just want to go back to the point of post-16. It seems very discriminatory to me. Mainstream children have the option of staying on at school after they are 16. They can either chose to go to college in their local area or they can stay on at school. So, I don't know why our children can't stay on at school after they are 16. I've taught in FE for over 20 years and in LD and right through to mainstream level three, and even the most articulate and able level three child can struggle at 16 moving into college, you know, just into the transition into adulthood, being in a new place etcetera. Our kids have far more challenges in place and yet they are going to be dumped basically out of the familiar environment. The best place for them to be post-16 is to be in the school that they know, with the teachers that they know, in a familiar environment that can nurture them through to their adult years, not dropped into some kind of provider who has commercial ability and not much else, or another college where they don't fit in and will struggle to fit in. You're dropping them in the ocean and it's really really unfair. It really does seem like nothing short of an institution.
- 152.** Person – I thought that we were supposed to be moving forward, not Victorian times.
- 153.** Person – This centre of excellence, it's a sound-bite, it's nameless. You know you can fill a school with state of the art equipment, it doesn't make it a centre of excellence.
- 154.** Person – Taking it back to the post-16 provision. The talk that you are mentioning, the private providers, the colleges, Fairfield Farm. I've been to

Fairfield farm and been to the café there. I've seen the children and they are able children, who are able to understand and able to work in the environment. Yes, they have SEND difficulties same as everybody else, but they are able to understand certain things. What about children like mine and other parents around here. My son will never, ever be able to live independently as he will not be able to understand now. He is ten years old now and he'll be nearly fifteen when this new school opens. He has the mind of a four/five-year-old in some areas. He will also be a dependant. He will never leave home unless we put him in a home, which sounds like you want to do here. After 16 what are his options and children like him? He cannot live independently, he's not safe to be independent, he can barely walk long distances, he can't think for himself, he doesn't understand the concept of danger, he can't understand the concept of shopping even though they try to, and at least he gets taken out here, he's always got a carer. Post-16 here can't go to Fairfield farm. What about these private providers, are they going to offer education of some kind? He's not going to take to that, he has to have one to one care in his class. God help the teachers here, they do a marvellous job. What's going to happen after 16? He cannot adapt to any other environment except here, and here from 16 to 19 there's a provision. Plus he'll only have the distance from home than he would be from Rowde. There's nothing post-16 for him and children like him because the way they are and the difficulties for them they just cannot be left in a safe way. What's the provision for the Council and I'm addressing the lady there as she's the one with all the answers. That there doesn't say much and that one there is. So, I would like to ask you what the provision is for children like mine who cannot be left alone for five minutes in a safe environment? What is there for them?

- 155.** JW – That's something that we are going to need to address looking at the whole system.
- 156.** Person – It needs to be addressed. We need to know exactly now.
- 157.** JW – And that's why we are working with a range of providers at the moment. There are some charities as well as private business. In fact most of them are charities who want to work with your children and want to provide for them post-16.
- 158.** Person – Are they going to have staff who have experience of profound and complex needs.
- 159.** Person – What can they provide?
- 160.** JW – They want to provide both support and skills.
- 161.** Person – What can they? Not the textbook answer, what can they provide?
- 162.** JW – I would need to go through all the providers with you. I would like to introduce you to them and we can give you links to the sites so you can look a bit more and explore for yourselves what these providers can offer to you.
- 163.** Person – Okay. So, what are the range of provisions that they offer? Never mind which providers. At this point now in the statutory phase when you

are about to make the decision in six weeks' time, you should be able to say post-16 the type of provision we've got is this for children with these needs, it is that for children with those needs, and there's colleges for people who can understand that side of things. There's Fairfield farm, at this point in time. God forbid you should know this at this point in time, doing otherwise you're no better than Theresa May. By the time Brexit comes we won't even know what's happening with our children in five years' time.

- 164.** AS – The answers I think are the same as for 16 year olds as they as for the older ones.
- 165.** Person – You haven't got a plan. Theresa May doesn't have one.
- 166.** AS – We don't know all that is going to be in the main school, if it turns out to be in Rowde. It'll be like this only better, the facilities will be there, the space will be there so on and so on. The same will be true for post-16 because what you will get and what your children will get is what is specified on the EHCP. You've got us over a barrel, they will get what's in your plan.
- 167.** Person – Will it provide provision for children from 16 to 19 for those who have no other options. Post-16 provisions at the moment are not suitable, the children are not suitable for Fairfield, not suitable for other colleges. Are you saying to me that the door is still open for them to stay at Rowdeford from 16 to 19 as that's the only place that they can be?
- 168.** AS – That's not the proposal at the moment.
- 169.** Person – Well then put it in the proposal.
- 170.** AS – That's what you are saying to us and we are hearing what you are saying. What I'm saying is the EHCP is a lever as we have got to provide what's in the assessed plan.
- 171.** Person – Can I just add to that. This is really key. Our children are going to be adults one day. They are going to need significant levels of support the whole way through. Now what matters for our children is the resilience of their parents because parents, whether we like it or not, are going to take the brunt of the care and support working with the local authority. Now, I would argue very strongly that a school in the local community enables us to get together. It enables us to learn from each other and support each other. And again a really big concern for me is that the school is far away and the children, all the children will go on a bus there and back. Parents do not see each other or meet each other and I think if you speak to St Nicks, if you speak to Larkrise, you'll find that they have really strong Friends of Larkrise or Friends of St Nicks which are events held where parents are supported together. And I do think we have to think carefully about partnership working with parents and they are strong enough to be able to continue to meet children's needs way on into adulthood. My son has left school now and believe me it's not getting easier. So you know that the strength I gain through the support network and I'm looking round at it, while he was at school is amazingly important. And I've got to go to another meeting. Please do not underestimate that, it's really important.
- 172.** Clapping.

- 173.** AS – Okay, supporting parents.
- 174.** Person – I think what the Council forgot how much parents suffer. Having a special needs child, it's quite a depressing life, it really drains you. Although we love our children and they are our worlds. Personally, I am emotionally and physically drained on most days and this place is my child's second home.
- 175.** Person – It's our saviour, this place. Definitely.
- 176.** Person – Walking into town and bumping into the teachers and they will interact with my child as if it's one of their own members of their family. They are fantastic. And if you put her in a school of that size, with that many people, with that many students, with that many teachers, are they still going to interact with them the same? Are they still going to know them on a one to one basis?
- 177.** AS – I think, my experience of very big schools is, yes.
- 178.** Person – The things is that we are also thinking of is that the staff here are exemplary, all of them, from the head teacher down, all of them exemplary and they know our children sometimes better than we know them ourselves. They might have spotted something about our child that we don't even know. It's no downer on us but they work with them all the time. You're proposing to send our children over to Rowde. How many of the staff who have known these children all their lives, how many are going to go with them? These are staff that they know and they trust and they are excited to be at school with, staff that know them and care for them and look after them. If those staff don't go with them our children have to get used to not just a new school, new staff, other strangers, new peers, everything. I can't even begin to think about how that's going to affect my son and I am sure that the parents that are here are worried about how it's going to affect their children. You're just not taking that into account. They're a number on a piece of paper and its oh look they're the most vulnerable, we'll just ship them out to an institution because that's what it is going to be.
- 179.** Person – They can't fend for themselves.
- 180.** Person – They can't fend for themselves. I would love for my child to be able to walk to school but he can't he relies on me to take him to school because he has no danger awareness, he would run out in front of a car, he has no danger awareness. You're not taking into consideration the impact on these children or the impact it's going to have on the families, because you're not the ones who have to deal with our children when they are having a meltdown, or they are so angry and they don't want to go to school. It's us that will deal with it and getting no support from Wiltshire Council for the parents or the children. It is just going to make it ten times worse.
- 181.** Person – Can I just say, sorry, that in the Cabinet meeting Laura Mayes said, it was quite patronising, she made out that we are just parents who don't like change and we are worried. It's not that, we know that we need change, we are open to compromise but you are not listening to what we don't want. Show of hands in this room, is there anyone here who wants it to happen? We know we have to have compromise. We are happy to have compromise, but the key



factors are the distance, the medical issues, the community issues, they're not being listened to. No offence, it's starting to sound personal, it's starting to sound that we are worried, that we are afraid of change. We are not afraid of change. We want to keep what we've got. We want to expand on that and we don't want one school. But nobody is listening to that, nobody is listening to the people that matter and should matter.

- 182.** Person – So you are going to end up building a school that nobody actually wants. You've had countless consultations, you've listened to parents from across Wiltshire and all three schools and has anybody actually come back to you and said they want this super school? You admitted yourselves earlier that only a small minority actually want it. Have you also done the maths? At the moment you have a 137 children in Rowdeford about 95 here about 85 in St Nicks. If you add together all those children it is pushing 300. You aren't going to have that many spaces once you get to 350.
- 183.** AS – Okay.
- 184.** Person – To go back to a parental choice. If I decided that I didn't not want to send my daughter to this school for various reasons, it could be travelling, it could be that it doesn't meet her needs or for whatever reason I don't want to send her there. What choice do I have? Where else can she go? What else are you going to offer her?
- 185.** Person – Just going on from what you said earlier about the EHCP's, you said that they are the only thing you consider when you make decisions about what children are going to have.
- 186.** AS – I don't think I did say that.
- 187.** Person – Well you said EHCP is the law, something like that you said about EHCP being the top thing you take into account.
- 188.** AS – It is important yes.
- 189.** Person – So let's just establish that it is important then. EHCP's are decided by the cooperation of the school and the parent, that's why we have parents evenings, correct I think, because we have a say what the plan is and we put in what we think. We get given a sheet, please fill in what your child has done and what you think they need, okay, we do that. We struggle as a family ourselves to get to parents evenings here, we missed one last week which I want to speak to Mr Cook about later, we only live ten miles away but how many parents are going to struggle to get to parent's evening if they are in Rowde? Even if you are local here in Trowbridge its ten miles. We'd have 20 miles. We both work full time, sometimes they are short notice, sometimes there is more notice but most parents evenings start at six o'clock. I don't finish at 5.30, most people do. I can't remember the last parents evening I attended for my son but if we are unable to get to those meetings and have EHCP's discussed in the timely manner the school want them, then we have to make special arrangements to come and discuss them, which means taking leave at short notice which is hard when you have a child with special needs as they are short notice. So, if EHCP's are the most important thing to take into account when

considering transport, post-16 and other things that have been said, how are they fairly decided? The parents cannot have input face to face. It's not right because you have to have the form sent to the home, fillings it in and then sent back to the school. Often, you sit down think about things and you can't remember all of them, face to face like we should be with the teachers, you discuss them, as you should, and it that discussion, ah yes that's another thing I wanted to talk to you about and then things get added to it. These things are decided by a panel and put together but the parents are the most important as they are the ones who know what their child needs outside the school. Put them inside the school and they have all the provisions, outside the school the parents are the only ones. If you are the parent of a child with special needs, medical concerns or anything else, the first thing you know is you get input in a meeting with a multi-disciplinary meeting and everybody introduces themselves, I'm this person and I'm an expert in this and I'm that person I'm and expert in that. I sat in my first one and I felt like I was being pushed around, good you're an expert, that makes us all experts but when it comes to our child we are the experts. Not you, not the school, not the governing council, we are the experts in what our child needs and quite often the schools input back to us, in a community like this where its small enough and the children are noticed and recognised, they come back to you and say did you know your son did this? Blimey, he doesn't do that at home, home do we get him to do that, what can we do? The development comes back and forth between the home and the school. If we cannot get to this school because it is out of the way, how is it good for any child?

- 190.** Person – What we are saying is that it's going to be very impersonal and they are not going to be able to build relationships with the teachers, like the good relationships we've got with the teachers at their school. It's fairly well known that teachers and families aren't supposed to form relationships but when you have got children with special needs it's almost impossible not to. We think a lot of our teachers and they think a lot of our children and we watched staff go in tears. That shows you and it shows us how much they care about our children and their education.
- 191.** Person – You have staff who are very passionate and asked passionate questions. They didn't feel as if they were being listened to. Are you listening to anybody at all?
- 192.** Person – The only time they'll listen is when it comes to voting. That's what I feel.
- 193.** HJ – And this is what the purpose of this is to listen to what you are saying.
- 194.** Person – But we had this last year and nobody listened then. We didn't want one school.
- 195.** Person – Alan was there saying he wanted to keep Ashton Street.
- 196.** Person – When we at that meeting we were told money is no option and it was turned on its head by those Councillors.

- 197.** Person – The Council brought out a poster that said you'd been talking to us for three years. The first we heard about it was last year.
- 198.** Person – we have got a legal challenge about that so that's an easy one. I think we are going over and over the same things.
- 199.** Person – We are going over and over old ground. We've been over in July and we keep going over and over it but we, I do have one more question and my question is to Judith. So, the 20 children that need places in September, what is your plans for those because Larkrise is full and St Nicolas is full.
- 200.** JW – I am meeting with the head teachers this Friday when we will be discussing that and between us we will create a plan.
- 201.** Person – Okay, so do you have any plans you might be able to share with us?
- 202.** JW – Unfortunately, not until I have spoken to the head teachers.
- 203.** Person – Okay so what about the fact that they might be putting in a mobile in Rowde? You are drip feeding them into Rowdeford which is pre-empting the consultation.
- 204.** JW – It's one of the considerations that they might consider and they might think about others. We have started that conversation with them on Monday and I have got time with them on Friday. We need to consider all the options but we do need to ensure that we have something in place by September.
- 205.** Person – And will you listen to the parents and what they want?
- 206.** JW – We have to provide what is required by the children so yes.
- 207.** Person – Why are you such against the split sites?
- 208.** AS – Because it is extra cost and extra organisation.
- 209.** Person – You have a special criteria associated with split site schools which is shrouded in mists of secrecy. For what it's worth, there is no problem in operating a split site location. Now for my sins or otherwise I was one of the first children to attend comprehensive schools in the country in south Devon in 1964. Now because back then they didn't have purpose built buildings, what they did is said right the new comprehensive is going to be based on the old secondary modern, the grammar school can continue as it was until the children work their way through the year system but we had to go, what I was then 13 or 14 I think. We were bused across town the town is on big hill on one side and one big hill on the other side and the town the middle. The two schools were something like two miles apart. There wasn't a problem, we lived with it. Now, you know, with Ashton Street, it's not rocket science, this problem can be overcome.
- 210.** AS – Yes and we are not saying it's not doable and I recognise what you did, as I did and that was quite common. However, mostly since the 1960s and 1970s they have disappeared as they were difficult to organise. So there are fewer split sites schools compared to what there used to be. They are now placed by single site because that is what's preferred.

211. Person – I understand your point and it is logical to have one school but we are not talking about a split site miles apart in this instance. You know, fears about children crossing the road, they are groundless because the staff would be able to take care of that.
212. Person – I just want to ask about the new site and I have to be honest I've still not been able to find out everything about it. The new site contains the current Rowde school, correct? Okay, and the plan is to extend that school on to all the mass of land you mentioned earlier on will be opened up. What I'm trying to understand that if Rowde itself is expanded slightly it won't need all that land that you talked about as it will be a massive super site. What's the value of that land that can be sold off and the money could be reinvested to keep the centres of excellence open here.
213. AS – Not all that much.
214. Person – I don't mean closing Rowde. I'm not suggesting that for a minute.
215. AS – It's outside the planning envelope for the development. Rowdeford isn't a site that you could change to housing because of the planning rules. So, value isn't as much. It's big so each acre is worth twice as much as half an acre but it's not housing land.
216. Person – That's fine that's a fair answer if that's the truth.
217. AS – Shall we finish by half past? Five minutes or are we done?
218. Person – We just don't want that option.
219. AS – I've got that clear.
220. Person – We want it to stay local but we said that last time.
221. Person – It's sad that after all your thoughts, all your meetings, your consultation, and all your discussions that this is all you can come up with. It's pitiful really.
222. AS – I think it is but in the end, it's not anything that my opinion decides.
223. Person – Well, I think your wrong and by the time anyone else realises your wrong they won't be able to put there kid anywhere else.
224. So, you change your mind but even though you think it's a pitiful situation you can't change your mind to support it.
225. AS – When we were talking last July I thought it was going to be easier to do and I no longer think that is the case.
226. Person – That's what the report said. The majority of people in Trowbridge think the two school option is the better option.
227. Person – So, after hearing everything do you know think that the super school is not the best option.
228. AS – That's right.
229. Person – Yeah but you said that last time. Do you have any sway over that meeting?
230. Person – She said do you think it's not the best option and he said no to the super school.
231. AS – Not I think the one school is the best option.

232. Person – But that’s not what you said.
233. Person – You said its pitiful.
234. AS - And I have tried to be as clear as I can. I changed my mind and I talked about the extra work that was done between July when we last met and that report went out,
235. Person – Alan, sorry, you were asked specifically as I was sat with a St Nicks parent and she asked you face to face what is it or what was it that changed your mind from July and you agree that the one school strategy is the best option. So, what is it that has changed your mind because you didn’t answer that question when we were sat around the tables at Corsham.
236. AS – It’s not one specific thing. It’s not a black and white decision. It’s the best of the balance.
237. Person – But we are talking about a more personal opinion and you were saying your personal opinion. So, you’ve changed you mind because of the outcome of the consultation? What’s changed your personal mind? Why do you now think that the one school, we are putting you on the spot now.
238. AS – You are. I’m here to do a job.
239. Person – Because you get paid by the Council.
240. AS – We’ll I’m a freelance so I can decide who I work for and I wouldn’t work for a Council that I disagree with.
241. Person – But your job is to do the best for our children and we are telling you that this one school is not the best option. So, your duty is to take that back.
242. AS – Absolutely, it is.
243. Person – to your Cabinet to listen to the public.
244. AS – That’s the reason of my job to be that between person with added professional experience because I have been in meetings like this going back to 1996 and I hear what parents say and teacher and headteachers say and I have got to come up with viable solutions. I think the Council has come up with a good solution and the best available solution. In the end, it’s not me that decides.
245. Person – If it’s a school of excellence they won’t have to fund it, anymore will they?
246. AS – The Council will put their own money to go into a new school whether it is a maintained school or an academy or whatever it is the Council will be paying and financing that for the next thirty years.
247. Person – Alan, sorry, there is a range of things that have changed your mind. What are those things?
248. AS – Partly the consultation, partly we got sites around Trowbridge that we looked at and we were looking quite positively at. That changed because since July we took views from the planners because if we are building a school, we’ve got to apply for planning permission same as you have if you’re making an extension on a house. Its more complicated if you are building a whole school and there is a whole set of regulations and the sites I thought were going

to be good did not stack up for planning. Mostly about access to the sites, so that left us with.

- 249.** Person – But Rowde has bad access.
- 250.** Person – What about Dursley Road. Around the back of Dursley Road there's a load of land there. You could build a new property on there and that was in the place as earmarked.
- 251.** Person – What about the secondary school at West Ashton?
- 252.** AS – Yes, West Ashton was one of the sites that we looked at for the special school.
- 253.** Person – But they have just said there that they weren't good sites but you wouldn't build schools on them.
- 254.** Person – So, why do mainstream schools get priority over special needs schools?
- 255.** AS – Partly access partly because that planners said, I don't know the planning jargon.
- 256.** Person – If access is the biggest thing going, the planning for Rowdeford is just ridiculous.
- 257.** AS – You'll tell me that Rowdeford is in the county and of course it is relative to here and they were yes and more so in relation to the West Ashton site for the special school. I was being told this by the planner and all I heard it was they told me and of course it is some distance out of town.
- 258.** Person – But you can build access there. You can't do that in Rowdeford.
- 259.** AS – Well we can. There's a road, there's hedges.
- 260.** Person – There's one road in and one road out.
- 261.** Person – Do the people that live there want another access road in their village.
- 262.** AS – It won't be in the middle of the village no but we can access the site.
- 263.** Person – How can you access the site? It's a country road.
- 264.** AS – Well, you'll build a gate.
- 265.** Person – But how are you going to access that site with fifty mini buses?
- 266.** AS – You'll build a gate. What more can I say?
- 267.** Person – You build a gate, you have children here who have no sense of danger. So, how is that supposed to be safe?
- 268.** AS – There's a gate.
- 269.** Person – Those two sites that have been mentioned at West Ashton and Dursley. There's plenty of land there that you can build access in and out and it doesn't affect mainstream traffic in and out of Trowbridge or out towards Melksham but you are willing to do that for Rowde but you aren't willing to do that for our kids. Mainstream kids can go anywhere they want but you want to push our kids out to the middle of nowhere? Why can't you build a special needs school in their own town but instead you're pushing them out to Rowde. That's what I am getting at but you want to build a secondary and primary school in Trowbridge.

- 270.** Person – He’s already answered that question.
- 271.** AS – Trowbridge needs a primary and secondary school and we are not going to build those outside of Trowbridge. It’s not an option.
- 272.** Person – As a parent with a mainstream child you have a choice of schools in the county town but we don’t have a choice of special schools if you put one out in the middle of a village somewhere.
- 273.** Person – I think you have answered the question though as you’ve already said that in Rowdeford you cannot build houses on it but you can build houses on here and you can build house on St Nicks. You answered your own question. Its money at the end of the day.
- 274.** PC – I am really sorry but we have run half an hour over and we are going to have to wrap it up. If there are any further questions, and I hate to have to cut things short like this, go on line and fill in the consultation. We’ll send that via email and also if people want to bring things to us then we can pass them on. So if there’s something afterwards that you think that you didn’t get a chance to say that then please do let us know.

## 4.4 Rowdeford School – Parent Consultation 26 February 2019

### 4.4.1 Meeting Notes

**Venue: Rowdeford Special School**

**Time: 5.10pm**

#### **PRESENT:**

**19/20 parents/carers/charity workers**

Alan Stubbersfield, Education & Skills Specialist Lead, Wiltshire Council (AS)

Helen Jones, Director of Commissioning - Family & Children's Services, Wiltshire Council (HJ)

Judith Westcott, Acting Head for Commissioning & Joint Planning, Wiltshire Council (JW)

Lisa Fryer, SEN Inclusion Support Officer, Wiltshire Council (LF)

Dominic Argar, Technical Support Officer, Communications, Wiltshire Council (DA)

Sandra Singer, Co-ordinator for School Leadership & Governance, Wiltshire Council (note-taker) (SS)

Rowdeford HT and AS introduced the meeting.

AS said he was here in July and had discussed the range of opportunities that faced us then. Now they are being asked to consider a range of locations around the 3 schools involved. How this is an evolving situation and the need to capture the differing views of the 3 schools involved as part of this extended consultation period.

The original consultation closed in July – proposal went to November Cabinet meeting – now in final week of extended consultation including this meeting and finally closes 5pm on Friday. This will then go into assimilating all the views made as part of the extended consultation in a report that goes to Cabinet on 26<sup>th</sup> March. At that time Members can decide to continue with original proposal/stop it or amend it and could come up with a new version of the proposal following all the views.

Parent from Larkrise - location here is perceived as distant and remote/rural character. Concerns from children who have profound medical emergencies. AS – this matter was discussed at the meeting with staff and governors - and staff have given reassurances of how this can be managed at Rowdeford and will be added to the report for Cabinet's consideration.



The community links and relationships with other schools has also been raised as concerns as part of the extended consultation.

CoG at Rowdeford did have concerns about the one new school option but since having visited other schools out of area and seen the integration of children of different needs and ages and how it works so well in one large school, the governor position now is they support growth at Rowdeford and the required improvement in buildings to accommodate the integration of the other 2 schools. They oppose the closure of Rowdeford School. Would be very motivated to back SLT to grow the school and make all the necessary provision for growth.

Parent/Charity worker – profound needs and medical emergencies concerns have been made by non Rowdeford parents. Assumes this is because Chippenham and Trowbridge are seen as closer to hospitals and emergency medical care.

Parent – what does it actually mean if the 3 schools close and re-open as an academy (new school). How will the LA still support the school?

AS the proposal is up for grabs at the moment – the final plan will be made in March after Cabinet consider all comments and views and concerns that have been made as part of the extended consultation. DfE rulings are if a new school is opened then it has to become an academy and then no longer under LA 'control'. AS also confirmed that all schools are under the umbrella of the DfE anyway ultimately even if they are an LA maintained school.

Lots of responsibilities will remain with the LA regardless of whether they are in a maintained school or an academy as they are special schools and their children have very specific needs.

Parent has a concern that an academy would mean no personal involvement and mostly run online/via email and that is obviously distressing to her. She is also concerned that there will be a large amount of children of different ages and abilities/needs in one combined school.

Rowdeford HT says he has worked in a large academy before becoming HT at Rowdeford and has not experienced any issues on communication but respects the parent's view. The proportion to staff/pupil ratio will continue whatever happens - even if the school was part of a Multi Academy Trust.

AS – there is a legal process of change. What has emerged in the consultation is that the view now seems to be in favour of some sort of merger with the 3 schools and evolving and amalgamating on one site.

Parent challenged this – so it is not set in stone that all 3 schools will close? AS confirmed this could potentially change as part of the extended consultation process.

Parent asked Rowdeford HT if there would be a recruitment issue if they were an academy. AS and HT said in HTs experience this is not the case – you always get the best staff as a provision for the students in your care. It seems to be irrelevant to school status/category of school.

Governor – asked the question of what expansion and amalgamation might look like. AS reported that the November report said 3 school closures and new academy opening. At the time it seemed to be the more equitable way of setting things in motion. There are now a range of views coming forward which could change the final plan.

HJ– there are various concerns made in current extended consultation and they now have the authority to make recommendations following this further consultation to Cabinet.

Parent asked about closure of 3 schools and the public notice in the press. AS responded you have a proposal published then everyone has the chance in the extended consultation to make their views known before the final report goes to Cabinet on 26<sup>th</sup> March.

Charitable Trust Worker – at what stage are architects involved? AS it would be usual for them to be involved at this early stage so all options and costs can be reviewed. So if a new school is agreed then there will be specifications, etc. at a very early stage.

JW - there is a lot of background work with architects and road planners and transport team and ambulance service etc. alongside all the consultations concerns and this will all be put in the report that goes to Cabinet in March. JW confirmed that the Rowdeford HT is already aware this is happening in the background at the LA.

HJ says there is a feasibility study at high level – just to look at what is possible for the LA. So the background team will look at what is possible at this Rowdeford site and what is possible at a new academy school and what is not possible and will look at the feasibility of any new locations that are coming through from the other sites/different proposals coming through etc.

The final plan by Cabinet - may have to then have further consultation following it - dependent if there was significant amendment from the original proposal.

HJ advised the audience to look at the website and view the online progress.

Audience still pushing on what new proposals and concerns might have been raised. AS – it's all part of the extended consultation process so have your view online and make your comments known in writing.

Professional range and choices? AS replied there is a choice now and there will still be the same choice in professional range whether a small or large school.

Parent – there is lack of placement and feels there is no choice now and has great concerns about the closure of 3 schools and funnelling into one school. She hopes if children are moved they are moved with the same army of staff. It is problematic for the child and the parent starting in a bigger school with no familiar support around them, She feels that is just daft.

Parent from Larkrise – has a child with complex needs – she is concerned that her child will get lost in a bigger school and taken over by children with profound medical needs on top of SEN needs – he thrives in the smaller environment. Her biggest fear he will be isolated and lost in the system//bigger classrooms and number of children. How do you access them? How do you move them around?

Rowdeford parent responded – community links are extremely strong and children are not segregated nor shut away.

Another Rowdeford school parent responded she genuinely doe understand the Larkrise parent/s' concerns but this is a lovely school with lots of community links.

AS responded a large school can still have small class sizes and small numbers of students receiving the necessary support from the staff.

Parents from all the schools are aggrieved at the initial consultation period as they can't believe that any of them would have chosen a single school - that is a statement and no response from AS required. Question: mitigate risks and geographical spread of ambulatory services and hospitals? Thinking how this might be mitigated and go forward to the Cabinet in March?

HJ has responded that the staff at Rowdeford have put very good arguments across for dealing with emergencies etc. on this site for a larger number of students. HJ said please talk to the staff and HT here and see how they can reassure you on that point and others.

Parent – 80 children out of County currently – how could that be reduced with a single school provision – less children out of County? AS responded it depends on the need why they are out of County – some of it comes down to space – those are the children that could come back into County as the single school option would create more

Wiltshire places. It can't prevent out of County children whose needs cannot be met in Wiltshire. Although it is hoped such wider issues could be addressed in future.

Staff - there are already children at Rowdeford with life threatening conditions so well versed in dealing with it now but developing further in growing the medical support base here.

Governor can they have assurance that the LA will consider the option of Rowdeford remaining open and growing. HJ responded that all views will be considered from this school and all those involved from the other two schools and there does seem to be a theme about growth – so it is the Council's officers' responsibility to agree that this all goes in the final report that Cabinet/Members.

Parent – there seems to be growth of all SEN children across Wiltshire – if there is an amalgamation in reality will there really be more Wiltshire places available? Will you really bring other children back in? With all the extra SEN children/families coming into Wiltshire the parent feels that the relocation site will still be too small. AS – are looking at student numbers but recognise they might get that wrong – but whatever the plan turns out to be it must be future proof so accepts the point that it is a growing number. There is no proposal to bring back from existing out of County schools all those 80 children - but the aim would be to reduce long term the number Wiltshire children going out of County.

Rowdeford HT – to respond some of your concerns: I shared the same opinion up until about 2 months ago that one school solution was not the right way - but have visited one school in Bath and one in Gloucester and the largest school had 330 children..... and the school was fantastic– it felt very small and fully integrated. There is marvellous provision in place in that large school.

Rowdeford HT – expertise of staff – part of the growth of the new school would be getting staff from all schools and expanding further so a bespoke curriculum provided for each child's individual needs. Saw a large school with a real large variety of resources and links with local community and whatever the outcome each and every child in their care must have a voice. Fully integrated school could be inspirational. Alongside this there are still plans for expansion in the South of the County and some of those children might not come to Rowdeford - and will make space for more children in this area of the County.

Even if current plan stops we will still need to plan for how children in parts of the County are having to go out of the County so something will have to change going forward.

Parent concerns about 6<sup>th</sup> form provision – where will it come from if not in the proposal? How will children be prepared for 6<sup>th</sup> form provision. HJ responded Council

is looking at this as it has come through very strongly the concern at the loss of post 16 provision in the proposal. But to confirm this could be an amendment to the original proposal and could include having 6<sup>th</sup> form provision. So please do make your view known in writing before Friday.

Parent - In this new school how will children be categorised? Has there been any thought? How will affect my child?

AS – if it does become an academy then you go through a procurement process to answer those questions but the LA does set out the specification – so do make your views known as part of the consultation process and go online by Friday. A larger school will give more choice on organisational practices so let us know please.

Rowdeford HT urged parents to please give their view online and and thanked them for coming and giving up their time.

**Closed at 6.22pm.**

## 4.4.2 Audio Recording Transcript

**Venue:** Rowdeford Special School

**Date:** 26 February 2019

**Time:** 5.10pm

1. Head – Good evening ladies and gentlemen, we are going to make a start. Firstly, I would like to introduce you to a few people. We've got Helen Jones who's the Director of Commissioning, we've got Alan Stubberfield who many of you who were involved in the pre-consultation period last summer will have met before he's the consultant who has oversight over the complex needs consultation in the north of the county and we've also got Judith Westcott at the back of the room who is the Head of Joint Planning and Commissioning. Thank you very much to everybody for coming and I am glad you've been able to join us. I'm going to hand over to Alan.
2. AS – Thank you Head. I am speaking in a microphone so that the session is recorded, and we have a full account of everything that is said. There will be microphones coming around the room when you want to speak, and they work by Bluetooth. You need to be quite careful, hold them about a hand's width away from your mouth and speak into the end of it like I am doing now not like that. You can see the difference as you get end on. If you point it at Dominic here, he's given up his day job in the abattoir to be our soundman. I think that covers the technicalities, there's no fire alarm planned, and the facilities are through the door there. So, you've met me before I was here in July talking about the range of alternatives which faced us in the pre-statutory stage of consultation about the future of education for children with cognitive difficulties in the north of Wiltshire and at that time we were looking at a range of options which included a number of schools one, two or three in all the alternative location available according to the different numbers of schools that might come out of the process. I was quite unsure about the future of this school as you'll remember when I was speaking in the summer and had different views about the other schools involved, as some of you will also remember and we have talked about it in various places about this has been an evolving situation where my own views developed through the summer up to when the consultation closed in July. The process developed towards a single school solution that went to the November Cabinet meeting. That meeting proposed the consultation that is happening now, and it closes on Friday this week. So, this meeting is part of the consultation and it is still opening online on the Wiltshire website and is up there until five o'clock Friday for your submissions to the consultation process. That then closes and we go to assimilating all the views that come from that and then that goes to a report which goes to the Cabinet meeting on 26 March and at that time the Councillors who are Cabinet members will be looking to say okay there was this proposal in November, lots of people have said various things about it, that'll be summed up in the consultation. If what happens in March is the same as what happened last November, then

there will be representations from consultees and members of the public. They will then make a decision, if they decide to hear it in March as it is up to members what they do but it is on the agenda, they can continue with the proposal, they can stop it, or they can amend it. Those are the options open to the Councillors. So, it could be a one school option, it could be a version of the proposal that went in November in other words an amended proposal in light of what people like you have said in these meetings, in the other schools and online or they can stop it. So, that's up in the air. What this is then is part of that consultation for you in Rowdeford around issues that are emerging in the consultation and the issues that are emerging in my impression are about the size of the one school option, its location here in what is a location perceived to be relatively distant for many people and relatively remote in terms of its rural character. There are concerns particularly from parents with children who have the most profound needs around medical emergencies and how that's dealt with in a location like this. There are issues being raised with us around transport really coming out of those points I've made to do with location and to do with the nature of the special education needs to the passengers. Community links have been raised and what it means to be in a school in this sort of place when community links are seen as an important part of the whole experience of all young children and relationships with other schools. That's just a point of the issues that I am hearing in the consultation which you may echo or not or come up with entirely different things. It's your meeting and we are here to hear your views so I'm not going to say much more. Community issues, location issues, size issues, nature of the need, your issues.

3. AF – My name is parent D and I am a governor here at Rowdeford school and the governors have already filed a position statement, but I just wanted to reiterate that I had concerns about the one school option. However, after visiting Three Ways School in Bath and Milestone in Gloucester and seen how the integration of the pupils with different needs and different ages worked really well. The governors position is that we support growth of Rowdeford School and we support an increase in the building to accommodate for the increase in pupils and the different needs that the pupils will bring but we oppose the closure of Rowdeford School and what we, as chair of governors, are looking at the growth of Rowdeford School and the growth in numbers of students and the growth in the knowledge and skills of our teaching staff, our senior leadership team as well as our associated staff and we grow as a school to increase numbers and to increase the number of buildings to increase the number of students that is being predicted. We are well aware that Wiltshire Council has done a lot of statistics. We oppose Rowdeford closing but we look towards the growth of the school on this site.
4. AS – Thank you.
5. TS – Person E you mentioned five issues that are emerging, in my view four of those issues are not emerging but were covered in the original consultation. The other one that I feel is new is the profound needs and medical emergencies and presumably it is because Trowbridge and Chippenham currently have hospitals. Presumably it's the only reason they think about that.

6. AS – Points have been made to use about the distance of this school from hospitals, yes. There are also concerns about medical emergencies occurring during the course of transport.
7. TS – I appreciate that, but the real point is that four of those issues are not new and they are the ones you had in the original consultation.
8. AS – Yes, I gave examples of issues that have been emphasized in the current phase of consultation, so they are live issues and they are live as they were last time.
9. Person – So, okay is Rowdeford still in the running to be extended or is this not the plan anymore is my first bit? The second bit is that I understand that three special schools will close, and academy created here on this site but what does that actually mean, will the LA have no responsibility for the children and all the parents? Who will actually be responsible to fulfil the promises or that we will hearing that will happen and will go through for the school whether that goes through as an academy.
10. AS – First point, is that the plan. There's a fine choice of words there. That's the proposal and the plan will emerge following the March decision. So, at the moment it's a proposal that is up for grabs and up for consultation. That's the paper that went to Cabinet in November. The plan because the three schools are maintained schools the authority has the power to make the decision in March about the closure. After which a plan would need to emerge because the parallel process is what would happen if those three schools close, what's the alternative plan? That gets into a long sequence of events and that links into your next question. So, at the moment the proposal was for the closure of the three schools and the opening of a new school, and the opening of any new school is always an academy, and part of the national rhetoric is that academies are free from local authority control. I don't understand what that means because as a local authority Director of Education I control any schools. The government controls maintain schools as the governments law requires them to observe the national curriculum for example. Whereas, the government doesn't choose to control academy's in the same way because they are not subject to the national curriculum. Similarly, there's a distinction in the national law about government control, about pay and conditions in maintained schools that doesn't apply in academies. So, you can see that I have a view on some of the national rhetoric and I think that can be played in various ways and everybody will have their own views on that and what I've said is factually true. The alternative are to open a new academy which you'll have your own views about the control issues but none of that changes the local authorities responsibilities for maintaining EHCP's and its responsibilities for children with special educational needs because whether it's an academy or not those responsibilities stay with the local authority. The control thing is maybe a bit obscure. I think in practice that it doesn't make a lot of difference in Wiltshire as we have a lot of experience working with academies, special schools and maintained special schools. In terms of our dialogue with those schools, which is overwhelmingly about their pupils, I don't think it makes much difference. Have I answered that question fully?



- 11.**CT – No not for me but I just wanted to say that academies for me have never been a positive thing. Parent F of a child that currently goes here and now with academies everything is done via the internet, so you don't have any personal one to one. I work with so many Rowdeford staff with my child, for me a massive concern is that that is going to be taken away, that personal interaction and knowledge with each of our children isn't going to be there anymore and that is really really concerning for safety wise, for loads of different, I don't know about the rest of us but I know as a parent that having that connection taken away is going to be massive.
- 12.**AS – I don't share that view I suppose, that's your view and that is what this meeting is about. I think if you were to look at parent view and the Ofsted reports on the relationships with parents between maintained and academy schools, I don't think that you would see that as a statistical pattern. I as it happens fell out with my son's primary school so that I moved him from one school to the other, twice, and those were maintained schools as it happens. People fall out with their schools, they love their schools because of the relationship they have and you're suggesting that this is affected by the internet connections.
- 13.**CT – Well, just for me personally its going to be the personal touch. So, with academies I think it is done via emails. A lot of communication is done via emails. Whereas, now I have regular meetings with the Rowdeford teachers here, I have one particular person that I can go to who is fantastic and gets it done straightaway. I think with a bigger school with the amount of risk that is going to be involved having that, personally in my experience, having that many different ages is going to be a massive risk for my child especially with the variety of disabilities that is going to be there, that is something that is concerning for me to be able to manage that many people. That's my main concern.
- 14.**AS – Okay, so the communications issues around academies and school with maintained status in your view are quite separate to that. Communications around the size of the school and the range of needs it covers?
- 15.**CT – Yeah, I think overall for me it's a massive concern.
- 16.**AS – Okay.
- 17.**Person – So, before working at Rowdeford I actually worked in a very large academy school and for me I didn't think that made any difference at all in terms of the communication levels between the staff and the parents and carers. So, again I appreciate that's your view point but it's not something that I have experienced in a large academy school before coming here. I think in terms of this school, obviously there would be more children but there will also be more staff as well. So, actually in terms of the proportion of the number of staff to the number of children that proportion will remain the same, if not actually increase. So, in terms of being enough staff to provide you with that personal touch that you currently get, I think that that would continue to exist if this school was apart of an academy trust. That's in my experience.
- 18.**AS – Let me pick up another point because I think another thing that is emerging out of this dialogue is around the legal process of change. The one is that put to the Cabinet and the proposal is three schools close and an academy open.

What has emerged in reflection to do with the consultations that are going on is that that's not the only way to do it and that people might have views about doing it in a different way to do with some kind of merger rather than closures.

19. Person – I think you have just partly answered my question. I was getting the impression from what you were saying earlier on was that it's a given that Rowdeford would close and the new school will open as an academy, am I right in thinking that decision hasn't actually been made and is part of the negotiations?
20. AS – Well, nothing is given as it is all subject to due process and on the specific there was a proposal that there would be closures and the new school would therefore have to be an academy and what we are now reflecting is that there would be another way of doing it. The merger thing is complex in law, it would be that not all schools close, but some do, and one grows. You would then have a maintained school because all other three are and you would have one growing. They don't simply merge like stuff you make a cake with, I'm trying to think of an analogy, for a merger to happen there is a growth and a closure. So, if this whole thing goes through there would be closures but there doesn't have to be three.
21. Person – Right okay. I think that has answered my question, thank you very much. Just picking up on the talk about staffing levels, is it a bit cynical to suggest that there is a vested interest in academies having less experienced staff that are paid not as much or is that an unjustified view?
22. AS – I think that all schools face recruitment issues and there is a market out there and all schools want to recruit the best teachers. So, if the recruitment issue was very different then there might be a different approach national to academy wages, but I don't see that happening.
23. Person – Just to clarify what I was saying before I had a microphone in my hand. In my experience its not the case and that when you lead a school you want the best staff you can possibly get to give you the best provision that you can give for the children that you look after. So, I haven't been in a school, academy or otherwise that financial considerations have been part of the selection process.
24. Person – Just to clarify what you were really saying and following on from parent D's thing is that the governor's position is expansion not closure. I am not sure of exactly the position would be and the advantages and disadvantages that you have been talking about mergers opposed to the expansion of Rowdeford. I suppose I am just the thinking of the local authority, if the local authority has got that far around that is?
25. AS – I can only report on what the local authorities thinking was when I was the guy doing it, I am not doing these odd meetings, but my day job is Director of Education somewhere else now. The proposal of course which I was involved in writing for the November report was for three closures and the opening of an academy, that's not because it was felt that it was wanted to be an academy but that was the inevitable result of the three closures but in my mind by having three closures and opening something new was about having equitable treatment of the staff. If you have two schools growing and one opening there

might be a perception that one group of staff was privileged, because they are sitting tenants for want of a better word, and you have two other groups of staff that are in a less advantageous position. That was my reasoning and I think there is a range of views about that and there is a range of views everything I say, reasonable so, that's why we consult.

- 26.** HJ – Can I just confirm what AS has said. The proposal on the table that we have published is that a single school, which is an academy, and three schools shut. The whole point of this consultation is that it's a statutory consultation and that we engage the widest possible views. JW and I have got the pleasure of writhing the report that goes to Cabinet on March 26. We in that report have a responsibility to feedback to Cabinet the wide range of views that there are. There are some strong views held by some of the parents in Larkrise and St Nicolas and we need to make sure we represent those views. We also need to make sure that we represent the views of the staff, the governors and the parents here in Rowdeford as well. We will present that to members and some of the arguments we will have evidence that might mitigate some of the concerns raised, there may be some we say we can't find anything to mitigate and we may as officers make recommendations for there to be a modification or indeed a new proposal for members to consider but at this moment I can't predetermine what they will decide on March 26 but the whole point of this is and we do know that there is a view of the governors as we have received the letter that says there should be an expansion but the proposal is the proposal.
- 27.** Person – Thank you, just talking about the closures it's just a bit confusing. So, there was a notice in the paper to close three special schools in Wiltshire. So, how come it has been proposed to close three special schools in Wiltshire and the notice has been put out there to the public but when will that be determined and why has that notice not been put forward, should that notice have been put forward after the decision was made?
- 28.** AS – No, that is how the sequence of events works. The local authority is obliged to publish the notice of the sort you have seen to initiate the kind of consultation that is happening now. It take a prescribed form so that in simple terms you can see what you are up against if you don't like and what you want to support if you do like it, so there is something saying that this is the proposal and that comes after what we call pre-statutory which were the discussions of last summer and before the statutory which is happening now. So, there are two stage of consultation and the first pre-statutory is fairly loose as it is pre-statutory. This is tighter as it is statutory and part of those requirements is the notice in the paper. That's determined then after the consultation ends of Friday, back to the notice, via all the consultation to the March decision.
- 29.** Person G. I am just interested to know at what stage the architects will get involved and so on. Is that's when the final decision is made to what the format is going to be, or have you started planning already at this stage and what it might look like?
- 30.** AS – I am not working in Wiltshire at the moment, so I can't answer that. It would be normal, if I can talk hypothetically, for architects to be involved at an early stage just as planners are because you want to know if something is

feasible and you want to know something about costs. Planners and architects are the people who deal in that kind of business and there were bits of information about costs in the November report. So, you can see that that sort of thing has happened at an early stage. What happens about this stage of the consultation and I mentioned about closures, there is also the question about whether the whole thing should go through then the proposal would be for a new school, which has to be built and then there is a process of coming up with a specification, to some degree this happens in this sort of phase but the specifics and detail will happen once we know it's a runner. That is how it feels to me, but I am not the technician on that.

- 31.** JW – You are absolutely right, that is what we are doing. We have had some architects that have come and had a look around and said does this really work because it would be wrong of use to put forward a report that everybody supports then to discover that it wasn't workable. So, we do have some architects who are looking and saying could we build it here, does it cost this, are there any issues about it being out here, are there any issues in terms flora and fauna around here. So, they have to check out a few of those things because of we get to the cabinet stage and members decide they want to do it, we can say yes that is doable or we can let them know early on if there were concerns. So, that you are aware we are doing quite a lot of background work behind this. There were issues that were raised when AS did come and see you in the first instances, so there is a lot of work that Helen and I are taking forward. Some of that is with the architects, some of that is also with the road planners, we are also talking with our transport team asking them what the transport routes are like, we've been talking with the ambulance service to see what that looks like and so all of that long side what people are saying here will be brought together, so as many of those things that have been worrying us all, we will be able to say these are what the answers are.
- 32.** JG – Can I just ask you then, have you been sharing that with any of the team here of the school, of the governors, or anybody, or not?
- 33.** JW – At this stage the Head knows that they came, and he invited them in. So, they are aware of them but at this point they haven't finished their report, so I haven't seen it either. So, they will be pulling that together in time so that when we get to the Cabinet report it will be part of the appendices.
- 34.** JG – There are quite a lot of local knowledge that is known, and I am surprised that they haven't consulted on that.
- 35.** JW – Yes, so that is what they are doing. They'll be spending time.
- 36.** JG – So they will contact us in due course?
- 37.** JW – Pardon?
- 38.** JG – I just don't see how you can start to do a plan without finding out the local knowledge about this place and the fact that the charitable trust has spent one point five million pounds here. So, obviously we are quite concerned about that being protected for the future, which obviously there is quite a great deal of debate about, if you start a whole new school and that fact it is listed and we just feel that, I just feel and I am sure some of my fellow trustees will feel that

you are running a bit roughshod. In one respect there should be a bit of consulting on that or sharing a bit with us potentially.

- 39.** HJ – Can I say at this stage because this is a proposal it would be inappropriate for us to consult. We literally just doing a feasibility study. Its high level and it's not around design it's just what JW said, what is possible? Are there some rare species on site that wouldn't make it possible? There are looking at things like JW at access. Depending on whether cabinet accept the proposal or not and one has to bear that in mind because Alan said they may not, they may want to modify, they may want to reject. At the point in which a proposal is agreed, be it on this site or whatever, it would be absolute appropriate for it to happen to be wider engagement for developing plans. This is not a plan to say this is what is this school, if it was accepted, would look like here and really that feasibility.
- 40.** Person – So, with that in mind have you done feasibility studies with the other alternative sites?
- 41.** HJ – No because the proposal is only on this site. So, it is only appropriate that we do the feasibility of this site. However, through the consultation there have been some views given about how maybe some different proposals might look like and we are getting our planners to look at the feasibility of those, so we can communicate back to members.
- 42.** Person – Okay, so you have actually done feasibility studies for other potential sites.
- 43.** HJ – We doing really high level so not the detail that has been done here but we have had some proposals in to what may be what a different proposal might look like and we are getting a very high level of planning with just views as to what feasibility is and what the cost is.
- 44.** Person – So, if on 26 March if the proposal is changed so that then two sites become the proposal, you'll then have to do a feasibility study for that and then go to another consultation?
- 45.** AS – Well I think we wouldn't have to go through another consultation process depending on how the divergence from the proposal is. Remember the law says that the decision maker is allowed to amend the proposal.
- 46.** HJ – I think the decision is that if the proposal put forward and the cabinet want a significant amendment, that is not based on a one school, then we would go out to consultation again.
- 47.** JW – It is the definition of modification so that's what it says, it says modification and you can assume that modification means basically the same thing but you have changed a bit but at the point that a bit starts to feel like a lot then that's the point that the members have to reject and put forward a new plan.
- 48.** Person – And these other proposed sites are?
- 49.** HJ – I think it, for those that want to look at the Council website today, there was a proposal around a split site with one site being in Melksham for example. So, we are looking at Melksham.

Audio recording stopped.

- 50.** Person - I know that your building designs and that will have massive changes to this environment here to be able to capable for that and that is my biggest

fear. My other fear also is, where is the community here? Where is it for those children? How can then come from here and go into Devizes. That means getting back into a bus again and some of them would have travelled for forty minutes. I know its probably a lovely village community here but I live in a village and its fantastic but at the moment he gets to see the local primary school, they are just next door and then come into the school. There's going to be so much community lost for those children.

- 51.** Person – I would just like to respond to the community elements. I live locally and my child comes here and whenever I am out and about with my child she knows people from Bromham, Rowde, Chippenham, Devizes, everywhere. People come from all the local areas to support this amazing school and they are not just part of one. They are not shut away. There's lots of things saying that they are hidden and shut away. I appreciate that people are in their own communities in their own towns and want to go to school in their own towns but the reality is that its not shut away here.
- 52.** Person – I've got a daughter that comes to Rowdeford and I understand I think because you put so much time and energy and love into your child and you want the right placement. My child comes here and I feel for you I really do because you have your child and you want what's best for them. I can only speak for myself and Rowdeford is a fantastic school and they do go into Devizes, and they do mix with other children in other towns, they do lots of lovely things here and different events. I do feel for you and I would be the same if my child had to go to Larkrise or St Nicolas.
- 53.** AS – The local authority cannot not acknowledge the strength of views. I think the purpose of the meeting is to talk to the local authority, so it can here what you are saying and what I am saying is that the local authority cannot ignore those concerns that you have articulated as a parent of another school and those points are well noted. I think that my own view is that there is no reason as to why a large school would have different class sizes for a small school because it's the number of pupils in the school that drives the money in. So, the more money, the more pupils, the more teachers will be what they are. I do recognise the concerns at the scale of the operation. You'll have read in the November report about proposals to mitigate by the design of the site and the separation of the buildings. My feeling is that this doesn't answer your concerns and we note that.
- 54.** Person – I've got more of a statement than a question to start with and then I will go onto a question if that's okay, but it builds on what you have just said about the points being noted. Some of the frustration comes from the pre-statutory consultation process and I don't think there was any parent of any child at any of the three schools that would have voiced the opinion for a single school and yet that was the conclusion that was reached. So, I think that we all feel that what weight was given to our opinions in that pre-statutory consultation process and I guess from a slightly cynical perspective what weight is being to anything we say in this room this evening because in our experiences it doesn't seem like any weight was given of the concerns that we stressed in the pre-

statutory stage. So, that's just a statement and I am not asking you to respond to that. That's just how I feel and I guess a lot of parents feel in the room.

**55.** Clapping.

**56.** Person – The question I guess, or the questions are. Is that you noted the emerging issues, I don't think there's been any different issues and you expanded on the issues are the start, but you spoke about how you would mitigate some of the risks or how you would mitigate some of the risks and some of the issues are around risks. When we look at the geographical spread of ambulatory services or hospitals and things like that. This is not something that this would be able to address, they are where they are. So, you're thinking about how those risks might be mitigated because in the proposal that went previously and the one that will go back in March, is there any thinking about that that you are able to share to reassure anybody in this room because we articulate these concerns and these issues but is there anything you are able to do to reassure us this evening?

**57.** HJ – We have also had a meeting with the staff and the governors here and they have given us their assurances about how they access ambulances and how they transport children to hospital. We understand that the ambulance depot is near by so ambulances can discharge rapidly. We have got our travel planning team who are currently looking at not just those reassurances but actually what does that mean and that will be a report that JW and I will receive by the time we end up writing the report next week. So, I can't give you those reassurances but I think the staff here might be able to communicate from their personal experience, but I wouldn't like to say, as somebody who is writing the report, that that is fact because we will test out those with the planners.

**58.** Person – Yes, I guess its not the status quo and the provision that exists around the school today and I do appreciate that the school spreads from SLD through but the mix and needs of one bigger school and the scale of that is a different level of demand of other local services that what is required from this site today.

**59.** HJ – Yes you are correct, and our planners are looking into that. So, that will be part of the evidence and I can't tell you at this stage what they are going to tell us but that obviously will be what we communicate to members.

**60.** Person – So, can I ask one final question. When we spoke about the out of county piece earlier if your child didn't fit into the single school and you said there was about eighty children that have to move out of county currently and you were looking to reduce that through the proposal you were putting forward, could you perhaps expand a little bit on how the proposal of a single school would provide a setting or a solution that would mean that less children from Wiltshire would have to be catered for out of county? You said that is what you were targeting and there wasn't really, with us as nonprofessional and parents don't really understand how a single site would achieve that objective.

**61.** AS – So, in the first place if we look at those eighty children or whatever the number is, some of them are out of county because of the severity of need is not a need that can be met in any of our special schools, some of them are out of county because those needs could be met if there was space. So, the major part of the answer is that its scale of operation and in truth that's not about it

being a single school its about there being enough places. The further question I would say I about how we are able to provide those places, clearly with come up with the single school option as the best way of doing that and clearly that is disputed. One of the propositions around that is that the scale of operation brings together the area of expertise that you can edge into that first group of children that I talked about and who's needs are not currently met because the generation of what we refer to as centre of excellence can address those as well.

- 62.** Person – Shall I just say about the medical side of it. We at Rowdeford as it stands currently have a large number of students who have life threatening conditions that we cope, and we manage, and we deal with really successfully. At the moment we have Virgin Care staff who are actually based in the school to provide young people with that medical support. I think that in this plan part of it would be to grow that medical support base of that there is a certain amount of support on site. Obviously, we would be able to get to casualty but we would be able to grow a medical support base to run it alongside education and that's how I think EHCP's should be and the closer you can tie that in the better.
- 63.** Person – Can we have an assurance from the local authority that they will consider the option that Rowdeford would remain open but with growth and development in the school.
- 64.** HJ – I have said that were we have got themes through the consultation and Alan articulated at the beginning some of the themes that we have heard very strongly from parents, teachers and governors from the other two schools which we will put forward, we have also heard a theme about growth so it would be our responsibility to as we are going to communicate the views of everybody and that we communicate that to members. So, that will be put into the consultation paper that goes on March 26.
- 65.** Person – You say about the three schools going into one and the eight children from out the county, the children when you lump them all together, for me the numbers don't stack up. So, X amount of years done the line when this school is built whether that be here there or wherever that growth of children with SEN and that need the support the school, I feel, will be too small upon completion because if you've got eighty children out of area and you want to bring them back into county to keep Wiltshire money in Wiltshire and to have that one site as it is, when you put Larkrise, St Nicks and Rowdeford together there's not that many places extra. I thought it was about 20 odd and I'm from Chippenham, and the housing that is going up on Chippenham is going up quicker than you can build a Lego building, Up the road from us there is a new estate with seven hundred and fifty houses. This is happening everywhere and not just in Chippenham. You even have all these forces families that are relocating and that's in the thousands, if you have only got 20 places and if you are looking to keep money in Wiltshire, have extra families coming to Wiltshire, it just seems like that one place wherever that is, is too small.
- 66.** AS – The Army relocation and the planning for houses are known a long time in advance in the Authority and we are able to put that into the projections for pupil numbers but we might get that wrong and therefore we have been



instructed by the Council that whatever plan does come end it needs to be future proof, answering your point, we don't know how many we will need in beyond thirty years so the design is as such that there can be expansion. So, it won't be limited in that way and as for the eighty, I wouldn't expect there to be a proposal to bring them back from their existing schools in which they are placed but the aim would be to reduce the flow. So, it would be a long term fair slow reduction and that's the way it always happens. Once children are placed you don't really want to have to move them from a school that they are familiar with.

**67.** Person – I just thought it might be helpful to respond to some of your concerns parent and then you just gave me some more. So, I will try and cover some from last time and the ladies at the back as well, I just wanted to pick up on a few things that you said. I share the same opinion as you until up about two months ago that I wasn't convinced that the one school solution was the best solution. Since then I have been to visit two very large special needs schools, one in Bath and one in Gloucester, and I went there concerned about the size and the one in Gloucester is three hundred and thirty children so not far away from the projected size of this. The school was fantastic, it didn't feel like there were three hundred plus students on site, all the children were fully integrated, no body was hidden away in a corner and not allowed to communicate or interact with other children around the site. I witnessed children with MLD supported children with PMLD, helping them and having gone through training to push their wheelchairs and to support those children in classes. So, there was full integration with all of the students. In terms of your concerns about the expertise of the staff, part of the growth of the new school, the new big school will be about getting the expertise from the other schools and beyond to support the growth of those. I don't expert children with the most profound needs to just come in a fit in with the Rowdeford model, that's not what this is about at all, we will need to make sure that we provide a bespoke curriculum for them based upon their individual needs and I am certainly not advocated that they just need to come and fit in with Rowdeford because that's not possible. It's about providing a bespoke curriculum and as I said I saw a school with a real variety of needs working together in a fantastic community. Those children with profound needs, we need to continue to make sure that they have a voice and we need to continue to make sure that their needs are being met and they are not being lost in that school because I agree, I know the ladies at the back said it as well, there could be a danger that it happens and we need to make sure it doesn't with a fully integrated school like the one that I saw in Gloucester. I left there feeling completely inspired about what could be possible and I just think that its worth me sharing that with you. The last thing said about extra space being provided and there not being enough, don't forget that there are also plans for expansion in the south of the county and the number of children that perhaps in the past would have come from the Salisbury area to Rowdeford would not necessarily be coming to Rowdeford as there is additional provision being planned in the south of the county as well. So, that will create extra space in the north, east and west of the county as well.

- 68.** AS – How long have we got the building for Head?
- 69.** Person – Just a very quick one then. Did I understand correctly that on 26th that the Cabinet could approve, amend or stop? Is it theoretical or practically possible that we could be in two years' time or five years' time if what's proposed and its not financial attractive as first thought?
- 70.** AS – Theoretical not practical I would say.
- 71.** Person – So, is there a deadline when a decision would have to be made?
- 72.** AS – A decision will be made, I think, on 26 March. It could be any of those that you mentioned but if it were to stop then there would still be an unanswered question about the growing number of special needs children will have their needs met in the north of Wiltshire. So, the process would need to go round the loop again.
- 73.** Person – So, it could in theory carry on as we are?
- 74.** AS – We can't carry on as we are because a problem has been identified of more and more children having to go out of county and this will become more severe that we would not be able to find those places at any reasonable distance. So, something has to be done.
- 75.** Person – Obviously, all of us here have children at different stages of education but personally I am looking forward to 2023 when you potentially want to propose to open this big super school and my daughter at that time will be nearing what I would call sixth form education. So, I am looking at where she will go when she finishes her statutory education. My understanding is, and tell me if I am wrong, that this super school would not have a sixth form provision and my concern is that with the closure of Larkrise and St Nicks, that I understand do currently have a sixth form provision, you will be losing some placements there and I have heard rumors that there is Wiltshire College, there's Fairfield College, there's Poplar's at Chippenham but how are you going to fit these children in if you are potentially losing the sixth form provision in Larkrise and St Nicks? Also, for the continuity of children who would be potentially coming through the super school, how is that going to affect them? How are you going to prepare them for sixth form provision?
- 76.** HJ – This is an area that we are looking at the feasibility of. It's come through very strongly throughout the consultation around the loss of St Nicolas and Larkrise post-16 provision and the issues that parents have articulated to us around developmental needs and maybe the need for some children to have longer to transition into any FE provision or etcetera. We are looking, and I can't really say much more than this at the moment and clearly this is a subject again for members whether they want to look at this as an amendment to the proposition, we are looking at the feasibility of having a small sixth form provision if there were a single school because we recognise that its come through very strongly that some families are concerned about the end of 16.
- 77.** Person – So, I kind of heard, and I did speak to Rowdeford previously, that there was meant to be some young children in a pop up tent kind of coming in to Rowdeford, you're nodding already, and that's not been confirmed or denied but I wondered how, if we had this big school, has there been any thought of how these children are going to be sectioned in ages, is there going to be

categories of more profound one side. How is it going work? Clearly, they are all going to be a different stages, are you thinking of 5 classes, ten classes, has there been any thought into how those children are going to be sorted into ages because of me at the moment it seems all very secret. So, as a parent I just want to know what the facts are and how that is going to affect my child because a lot of it is about the grounds and I understand that is important but a lot of it doesn't seem to be based round our children and what their needs are and how we are going to meet there needs in this new school.

**78.** AS – The process of starting an academy is the proposal so far and that means that you go through a procurement process to identify a provider, who is likely to be a multi academy trust, to set up the new academy. It is the job of the provider to answer those questions and its not the job of the local authority but what we do is set out the specification and you have the right and the option to say what sort of things should be in that specification through this current consultation process. So, if you take the view that there should be a particular form of organisation then you let us know. There isn't much time not but there is time until Friday to go online and say that. I suppose that the general view is that the large school means that there are more choices around the organisation of classes, and you would have heard me say that before and you will have your own views about that so let us know.

**79.** Person – I just want to say thank you for coming this evening and I appreciate you giving up your time to be here. I just want to reiterate what AS said and if you haven't responded to the consultation please do so by Friday.

## 4.5 Melksham Town Hall – 25 February 2019

Present:

Helen Jones, Wiltshire Council, Head of Commissioning  
Judith Westcott, Wiltshire Council, Interim Head of Children's Commissioning  
Emily Wood, Wiltshire Council, Children' Commissioning (minutes)  
Parent I  
Parent J  
Parent H  
Governor: Larkrise School

HJ\_Introduced the session by explaining this was an Informal conversation and that no audio was being taken although EW is present to take some notes. That this is an opportunity to engage in a discussion as the Larkrise parent/carer event was busy and some chances to contribute may have been missed.

HJ\_ JW met with Cabinet officers last week. Explanation given on how the report will be constructed. It will focus on the concerns raised to date. Which are predominately include: Travel times, Health & Safety of the travel (particularly for children with complex health issues). Travel for staff (esp those on lower wages). Issues for travel for parents as it's recognised that children with the most complex needs often have a parent who is a primer carer who may rely on public transport. Ambulances – comparative times to hospital. The proposed school's position in the 'community' – could be seen as segregation with lack of access to community facilities. Post 16 ed, PMLD/severe health issues which require a phased access to post 16 education. The school size. Parental support access – school impacts on the parent's wellbeing. The report needs to ensure that all these concerns are addressed. Appendices to the report will be huge. Need to demonstrate that all members will read the entire report. Members need to give due weight to what is being said. Balance needs to be arrived at to listening to both sides of the argument. (It is recognised that the majority in support have child with MLD).

Parent I/J\_ Perceived that Laura Mayes didn't listen back in November.

EW\_Now feels comfortable that parents against the proposal have been listened to.

Governor\_Appreciate that additional time has been given to vent concerns. Out of county children whose places may be more secure may not be so interested.

JW\_Same themes are coming through. These builds the picture to develop the cabinet report.

Governor\_Would like to put forward ideas for compromise.

HJ\_Reassured all that a lot of work is being done behind the scenes. Solution focussed. Post 16 unit could be on site- this is a tangible outcome. Transport plans for every child are being calculated, including those who are NOT currently on transport. Differentiate the report for different groups of children based on their health needs.

Governor\_Transport plans needs to be future proofed. Consider housing developments and how this will impact transport plans.

HJ\_Rush-hour calculations and testing also to be undertaken. Specialised software is being used.

Governor\_Proposals are not clear as to whether children will be placed in taxis or minibuses.

JWest\_Transport plans are considered pick-up times. Choice of vehicle perhaps needs to be taken into consideration.

Parent I/J\_Parents have increasingly decided to take their own children into school.

Parent I/J\_Voiced concerns that 50 minibuses on the one road in and out of Rowde.

HJ\_Transport planners are looking at the logistics of this.

Larkrise and St Nics are similar compared to Rowdeford (which is secondary) where parents have chosen a rural-based education. Parents wish their children to be in a town location.

A centre of excellence would work well in an urban setting (eg Three Ways).

Rowde may be geographically centrally located, but it's far away from the main towns.

Discussion had over positioning of school in Melksham – Governor explained that Melksham is served by a main road. (A350)

Parent I/J\_Concerns over the LA's ability to staff the new centre in this rural location. These are low-paid employees who may have to travel a great distance to get to work. Most schools have a difficulty in finding sufficient people to fill these jobs.

HJ\_Explained that members could accept part of the proposals or the proposal with moderation.

Governor\_0-25 SEND project was 'ground-breaking' – long-time strategic thinking. How do the proposals fit in with this strategy? There is no supported independent-living in Rowde.

EW\_No sense in bringing the three schools together, the designation of children attending Rowde is completely different to Larkrise and St Nics.

Parent I/J\_What choice is there if a child does not get on with the new school?

Governor\_ Size is a concern. Big and busy – is overwhelming. Transitions need to be slow and steady. Suggest that a centre is developed in Rowde (to centralise services). SALT or physio could be administered there.

Governor\_Need to get a balance and avoid staff travelling around the county each week.

HJ\_Medway example given – split on two sites – moved onto one site. Specialised service on one site.

JWest\_A lot of children have more than one need, therefore centralising services would be good.

JWest\_TAC is developed further by centralising services.

JW\_new site could accommodate 11-16 only. Better solution (retain PMLD in urban centres).

Parent I/J\_Concern that we'll be hard-pushed to employ a Band 6 physio. NHS struggle.

HJ\_Consultation has been shared with our existing care provider (Virgin Care). We have the flexibility to build the new care contract around the one school, if proposal was accepted.

Compromises could be:

One site in an Urban environment (Melksham?) with an all age MLD school in Rowdeford,

Post 16 children who attend Rowdeford – the majority attend Wiltshire College in their numerous bases across the county. SEND provision is outstanding. Good platform of understanding. Split between campus and their home town. Each child has their own, unique package.

PMLD/SLD children could be positioned in Melksham, this could then include Post 16 provision.

Residential question? Parents need respite and access to peer support group that is age appropriate.

The education provision needs to dovetail into adult care.

Parent I/J\_Couldn't Ashton Street be used for secondary provision?

JWest\_but what about Chippenham based children?

Parent I/J\_Wheelchair service is based in Melksham; the independent living centre is also in Semington

JWest\_ Suggests that Melksham and Rowdeford could do both primary, Secondary provision then split by designation.

Governor\_One executive leadership will enable strategic overview.

JWest\_Do we genuinely have the land to develop something in Melksham?

All agreed that both Larkrise and St Nics are now no longer fit for purpose. Just need to find a compromise.

Agreement was reached that everyone wants the best solution.

Parent I/J\_Transport costs need to include daily trips out to accessing local facilities in Rowde or Devizes. Currently children at Larkriser/St Nics walk to these facilities. Swimming pool in Devizes doesn't have a movable floor (unlike Trowbridge).

Parent I/J\_How will the children's dignity be maintained on transport if their medicines are rectally administered?

Parent I/J\_There's a concern over a proposed Helipad, this could be alarming for children with sensory issues.

HJ\_Concluded the session by explaining that tomorrow's full council meeting is not a decision-making forum but an opportunity for the full council to be briefed on the consultation to date. Comments raised at the meeting will be added to the consultation feedback.

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## **SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (22 May 2019)**

### **APPENDIX 5:**

#### **WILTSHIRE PARENT CARER COUNCIL MEETING NOTES**

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## 5.1 Salisbury – Meeting with parents carers - 15 January 2019

### Session notes

4 parent carers attended

The following are notes of the contributions made by the parent carers during the session. (text in *italic* indicates specific responses given during the session).

I can understand parents finding it difficult to understand the opportunities because it doesn't exist yet.

My child is stuck in mainstream because there is nowhere else for him to go. Panel won't agree special provision because there is nowhere to put him. My child doesn't have access to a teacher in his current mainstream school. He is taught by 3 TAs but no teacher. If I have to home school I will, but I don't want to so I would rather the current option I have at the moment, even though it's not perfect. I would welcome more provision.

How are the proposals helping children like my son who has a learning disability, autism and very challenging behaviour? Currently my son has to be educated out of county.

We need residential provision for children and young people with very complex autism, learning disabilities and challenging behaviour. Is this need being considered?

Will Mr Sambrook continue to head the Centre of Excellence in the south? I would be keen for him to continue to do so. Is there any chance that he will also lead the new school in the north of the county? *A discussion took place at this point describing the process for selecting the Multi Academy Trust (MAT) responsible for the new school.* Will parents have an opportunity to be part of the selection process for the new MAT in the north of the county? *The process is complicated, but hopefully yes.*

There are lots of children with SEND in mainstream schools now, these schools need the support now, not in 5 years' time.

The location of the new school in a rural setting seems perfect to me. Our children, especially those with ASD need a quieter environment and putting a school in the middle of a busy town wouldn't make as much sense.

The Wiltshire College option for post 16 young people is great for meeting vocational needs but not academic needs. We need an offer that can be matched to individuals and cater for all needs.

The new school needs to have an 'Open Door' policy. A true open door policy makes a real difference; not all schools currently operate in this way.

The provision and styles of approach in schools is not the same from school to school at the moment. So many different academy trusts running so many different schools seems to make things even less consistent.

The school environment is really important. Class sizes and outside space MUST be small. There shouldn't be bright colours in classrooms as it is overstimulating. The new school should feel spacious and relaxed. The school needs to have the facilities, opportunities and skills to transition children into adulthood. This needs to happen really early: it takes a lot of support and an awful lot of time (years).

As well as a new special school, we need more provision that sits between mainstream and special school. *We are developing more Resource Bases as well.*

Some of our rural mainstream schools don't understand SEND or EHCPs. There is reluctance in some schools to support the assessment process; these schools definitely need more support, this is real opportunity for the new special schools to do outreach support. Outreach support to our mainstream schools should include training for SENCos. Will the outreach support also challenge our schools?

Will there be someone like CAMHS in the new school? There are real benefits to opportunities and curriculums like outdoor learning and Forest Schools. Forest Schools are really good at supporting mental health, often without the children even realising it. Many of our schools aren't able to offer this at the moment.

There will never be one school that suits everyone perfectly. I hope people will have the insight and realise there are thousands of children not able to access what is right for their child. A journey to school in a taxi or minibus might be a small compromise to get the right provision.

Would it be fair to keep offering places at Larkrise if it is going to close? Couldn't there be a softer transition option?

I think there is so much opportunity for both children and staff in the Centres of Excellence. For instance, there could be more training, support and career development. The Centres of Excellence will also be a lot more visible in the county than our current special schools are.

Life skills are so important and this is a real opportunity for a new school to deliver on what children with SEND really need; there is so much more to education than just an academic curriculum.

How will a large school meet many different needs in one large school? *Separate schools within a school: smaller units, separate entrances, separate outside spaces. We are already having conversations with an organisation called Centre for Human Space Innovation to consider appropriate design options.*

How will you manage challenges like drop-off volume? Could you have different start and finish times, and split lunchtimes to ease the volume of traffic? *We are definitely considering these options. We might also be able to increase the number of access points into Rowdeford School.*

I can see that it would be affordable to have all the facilities such as a nurse etc. in three smaller schools, better to have excellent facilities all in one place.

Will there be an opportunity for wrap around care (breakfast club and after school club) at the new school? This could enable more parents to go back to work.

Could it have a swimming pool as well as a hydro pool? The two offer very different opportunities and could really bring something to the community.

## 5.2 Springfield Campus Corsham – 18 January 2019

### **Session notes**

11 parent carers attended

The session was opened by Stuart Hall, followed by a short synopsis of the proposals by the Project lead from Wiltshire Council Alan Stubbersfield. A number of overall questions were responded to before moving into more detailed discussion as described below.

The session was organised into themes, all parent carers had an opportunity to spend time with a facilitator discussing a theme before moving to another facilitator to discuss a new theme. There were a total of 5 themes discussed during the session; each facilitator took notes to capture contributions by parent carers on the theme they were facilitating.

### **Theme 1 - Community**

The facilitator asked: “What do you understand by the term Community?” The following are notes of the responses from parent carers:-

- My next door neighbour, the park, shops. I want more children to be part of mainstream community opportunities, not segregated.
- Moving out into the community and drawing others in to the school community.
- The school community is how children mix with each other in the school.
- There are several bits to community. Community use and community inclusion. The school could have a hydrotherapy pool that is open to the public. Children should interact as a whole school community and come together for special events.
- How will the community be present in the school? Will the community properly mix with the children at the school?
- Our children need to access the community where the school is located. Chippenham for example has a good community that knows our children. For example they visit Morisons, the church and use the community pool; the community is very used to seeing our children. It is important to realise the practicalities of using a bus e.g. how long will it take to seat several disabled children on a public bus, will it delay bus journeys for the public?
- Community is both within the school and where the school is based. Children need to be supported to integrate into their local community. The community needs to integrate into our school. I am worried we will lose acceptance if our

'normal' children don't see our children. There should be involvement with cafés etc.

- Footpaths in the village would need to be improved, and the community will need to be made wheelchair accessible.
- At the moment, my child watches plays in Paxcroft and does a little bit of technology with Clarendon.
- All children in a school need to know each other and mix. I am worried that if the school operates in 'pods', there may not be opportunities for the whole school to mix.

### Outreach

- Outreach should include support from the community coming into the school. "It's the microcosm and the macrocosm". The school should take children from the area and help them integrate back into their community.

### Choice

- Will people still be able to choose other schools? (including schools that are out of Wiltshire).
- One thing that wears parents out is the fight. This is an opportunity to think about being more accommodating to parents. Parents might want to choose provision that is outside of the authority if it makes sense e.g. shorter travel time, the setting, provision and ethos feels right.

### Reassurance

- We want more of a guarantee, we want to hear: "We will...". Not: "We are hoping to...", or "We would like to...".
- I want my child close to me so I know they are safe and I want to be part of my child's community.
- How will staff be able to support my child better than they can now?
- What will happen in the meantime to our schools and children? We have a problem now, not just in 5 years' time. Will you keep placing children in schools you are proposing to close?
- Is the £20million being spent just on the new Rowde school, or will it have to be shared between Rowde and Exeter House School? Will the new minibuses that we are hearing about also have to be funded from the £20million?
- Buses would have to be able to administer emergency medication.

### Risks

- One school doesn't give parents choice. If there is a breakdown in trust, where do you go? What is the back-up plan if it all goes wrong? I am worried we are putting all our eggs in one basket.
- It's concerning that it's one school. What if staff don't have the expertise to meet the needs of my child?

### Opportunities

- We would like wrap-around care every day, it would really help. Would this be in the child's best interest though? It could mean a very long day for the child.
- Would people prefer an enhanced provision at one school, or an inferior option at several schools?
- What about having satellite primary schools in the current localities and a specialised secondary school in Rowde?
- An executive head for a centre of excellence can be part of planning for the needs of children and placing them appropriately at the right school.
- We live in Warminster and my child's journey is an hour and 10 minutes each way. *Other parents asked: How does he cope? Parent replied: He loves it.*
- Instead of all the new mainstream schools being built, why don't they build another special school?
- The more people see our children, the more they accept them.
- I don't think the money should be spent on building a swimming pool that the community could access, instead, the children could go and use Devizes swimming pool with the community.

### Worries

- We're not scared of change, we know that change happens. I drive my daughter to school and I can take her into the classroom. I am worried about the stress of minibuses on a child e.g. noises and the time it would take just to get of our village by picking up all the children in our area; that could mean a lot of time sitting on a minibus and not really going anywhere.
- I don't want it to be a zoo where people visit to tick a box and then leave.
- My main worry is about children becoming invisible.
- If my child has a seizure, I can get to her easily. I would have to keep her at home more often as I wouldn't be able to get to her; her attendance would fall massively. I don't work for the very reason that if I can be on call to get to her.

### Other

- Trowbridge and Chippenham are principle towns.
- Please don't make it like Brexit. We have to expand the provision somehow.
- This should have been done years ago before the problem got so bad.
- Has legal process been followed?

One parent wrote her worries and are summarised as follows.

'The communities of Trowbridge and Chippenham will suffer if they lose their special schools. Having SEND children visible breaks down prejudice.

I am worried about lack of inclusion/lack of community, the location is rural, transport links.

Transport to the school is a concern, I am worried that 100% of the children attending he school will have to us transport.

I am concerned about the possibilities of central pick-ups, taxis being stopped, parents being forced to drive their children to school. These were ideas for discussion in the unrelated recent SEN Transport survey.

Getting to the school for emergencies and appointments will be difficult for me.

I don't think Wiltshire College is suitable for all children, especially those with PMLD.

This proposal reduces our choice of provision.

Although Devizes is near to the school, children will have to get on a bus to get there as they can't walk.

Opportunities for parents to support other parents will be limited; they will never meet each other.

It is really positive that there is a proposal for a new school and new facilities, but we could have this in Trowbridge and Chippenham.'

## **Theme 2 - Health**

The following are the main points made by parent carers about health:-

- Concerns about long days and health needs.
- Concerns that even with economies of scale there still won't be enough Health help.
- Being able to stay part of the care.
- Thinking about when I need to come in and distance to other places.
- Thinking about mental health concerns and how schools can work with this.
- Home schoolers: Cross overs with ASD & SEMH. There have to be nurturing environments.
- Distance learning options – for when ill at home.
- PMLD children:
  - Ensuring health needs are met in school.
  - Accessing quick care when needed.
  - Having mum and dad around when feeling unwell.
  - Five years: Consultant  
A real multi-disciplinary Team clinics
- Taxi fares.
- Primary in two hubs and secondary together.
- Paediatricians:
  - Lack of continuity.
  - Need more direct contact.
  - Opaque systems for communication.
- Clinics in the hubs.
- Concerns about parents getting to emergency links to hospital.
- Paramedics – conversations with ambulance service about how we keep a local base.
- Hospital contact.

- Taking away choice if don't have more than one school.
- Coming into school to support.
- Emergency medication on transport.
- Attendance could go down because of the days when not confident that mum would be needed.
- Emergency bus/ people carrier for bringing in parents/ carers.

### **Theme 3 – Post-16 Provision**

The following are the responses received by parent carers when asked for their comments about post-16 provision:-

#### **Questions from parents:**

- With only 1 proposed special school how do you propose to accommodate Post 16?
- What is the impact for young people who are due to leave school in 2023?
- The children are already dealing with many needs and attachments so how will they manage in a large school?
- How will transition work? When will one school close and the other open? How can Rowdeford close and open its door as a new school but still enable key transitions to take place?
- Independent Life - how would young people be supported to travel independently to a placement?
- What is the proposal for Poplar College if St Nicolas close?

#### **What works well now:**

- Currently Post 16 provision is on site so staff know the children well, can meet their medical needs and understand how they communicate and have a shared trust and understanding.
- The small 6th form provision at the special school works well. The space is small and quiet so they are not overwhelmed by noise or crowds.
- Seamless transition where school ends and post 16 begins.
- Post 16 provision that is within walkable distance to an accessible community e.g. St Nics is central so they can go into town but Rowde is in a village with uneven pavements and you would be unable to manoeuvre wheelchairs.
- Education is important but more important is that child is safe, secure and has their medical needs met, this happens in post 16 provision in special schools.



- The current classes are stable with the same room, same staff who know the children well, this would be difficult to replicate. Staff know here really well and I feel totally confident with them managing her needs day to day.

Concerns:

- I am concerned that my child will only have 1 year of transition into the new proposed school before having to move on again.
- I do not feel Wiltshire College would be able to manage the complex needs of many of the young people. Post 16 options would need to change dramatically to accommodate PMLD or those with SLD/ASD needs.
- If they have to move to Wiltshire College this would be too large and busy with neurotypical teenagers who are typically loud.
- The road in Rowde is also too busy and the pavements are not accessible for wheelchairs.
- Worried about provision for PMLD. I am realistic that my daughter won't work but what is the proposed provision for PMLD students. If this is set up in college I am worried as only a few PMLD children each year so it could mean only a small cohort to mix with peers. Currently there is only 6 in a class.
- How would they access hydrotherapy, SALT, Physio e.g. would they go into a day placement rather than going somewhere else that was local to where they lived?
- I am worried about the lack of continuity and stability e.g. having to move into a new school and then again into adult services - staffing knowledge, change of environment or change in staff/pupils.
- There are no plans for Post 16 on the new proposed site at Rowdeford. I am concerned how Wiltshire College would meet more complex needs. 16 seems a very young age to move to college, especially when they are developmentally younger.
- The school currently nurture young people - how would this translate to a post 16 provision. Would school support post 16 placements or TAs go with them to support transition?
- I am concerned about medical needs being met - is there going to be a gap in training staff or reliance on parents to do tube feeds/training and does this mean admission could be delayed whilst staff training is implemented?
- Will there be Post 16 variety of options e.g. traditional structured learning, life skills based curriculum or those who need more holistic learning e.g. outdoors, cafe. Will there be 1 of each type or more of this variety of provision within local communities?

- I feel transition to Post 16 off site is another hurdle for parents - many need to fight for the right provision where as currently so long as needs are met at St Nics/Larkrise they can stay.
- What work will go into the development of the post 16 services based on a range of needs e.g. the right environment, curriculum to meet developmental and sensory needs. Young people will need to adapt to a new environment, could be issues around safety - they currently have space and freedom to explore but how would a new environment ensure their safety?
- The proposal doesn't say where the post16 children will go. Could they transfer early if they only have 1 year to go when the new school opens?
- I do not feel Wiltshire College is set up to meet their needs and Wiltshire College have already turned down SLD pupils before because they couldn't meet needs.
- The move to one site is disruptive to students especially when they then have to go back into their community post 16.
- Concerned how SLD students would manage in a mainstream college.

#### Ideas:

- I would ideally like to see a staggered extension into further education. E.g. an extension from school for post 16, ideally being based at school with a slow supported transition with gradually increases to access college. They could then be supported by staff who know them.
- The new school needs to have a post 16.
- There needs to be transition work and support to ease into a Post 16 placement. There needs to be knowledge and experience of teachers who know the child well who can support transition. There would need to be more training for staff to manage the ever increasing complex needs of the young people e.g. feeding, sexualised behaviour - how would a mainstream college environment manage this?
- I would like the school to offer more life skills e.g. how to use a washing machine, washing up, using money, telling the time, support to set up a bank account.
- I would like the Disability Team to be able to write a letter that allows me to open an account for my child without having to apply to the courts.
- Would it be possible to include a 6th form block in the proposal on the same site, like the 16-25 placement in Swindon?

- I think it would be good if they could still have contact with the school for a few days but then spend time in their community area working on life skills like shopping, mixing in their community.
- There is a need to learn basic life skills like cooking and house maintenance. This can be done at home but I feel school is better placed to support this as they have the right skills and approach to support my child learn these skills. Being within school would also enable them to continue being educated to the best of their ability.
- There needs to be a small quiet, nurturing space with seamless transition and support by trusted staff who know their needs and can enable young people to feel safe and happy.
- Increased Post 16 for complex needs.
- Need for community presence to learn safety in the community e.g. to understand that a white light on a car means it's reversing.
- I would want provision in the town. Need different provision, possibly integrate in to day services sooner bring down the adult provision to accommodate post 16 PMLD students but would need to access relevant activities for their age. It would be too costly expanding Wiltshire College to accommodate PMLD e.g. hoists.
- I would want my child to be happy with opportunities to experience a variety of experiences e.g. sensory, hydrotherapy.
- I would want advice and support about what is available in the next stage of their life e.g. residential adulthood.
- I want Post 16 provision to deal with all Post 16 needs and it can be developed to give us what we need. With the right funding, provision and staffing this could work.
- If Wiltshire College were to expand and improve provision they would need the right facilities and specialist training and qualified staff. If you develop a centre of excellence and limit the age or ability so that PMLD children or very young or post 16 where you can demonstrate a greater reason to keep in their community area, especially parents nearby for medical needs children, then this could work. Larkrise and St Nics already have Post 16 - could these sites be used for the 6th form, PMLD or really young or high medical needs students? If not maybe a satellite 6th form centre?
- Could Ashton Street, Trowbridge, be used as a satellite 6th form centre?

#### **Theme 4 – Transport/ Bus routes**

The following are the comments, questions and concerns raised by parent carers when asked about transport and bus routes:-

- Central pick up points:
  - "I'm worried about having central pick up points as mentioned in the SEND transport consultation survey."
  - "If we had to meet at a central pick up point we would miss the bus every time."
  - "I do not like the idea of a central pick up point. I live in a village and there is no safe space for this."
  - "I want reassurance that my child will be picked up from home."

– All parents voiced their concern at this session about having a central pick up point. *Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC) is part of Wiltshire Council's Families and Children's Transformation SEND Transport sub-group that is exploring petrol & oil expenses. As part of this strategic work, WPCC decided to find out more about what parent carers thought of the petrol & oil expenses option by running a survey from Oct 26<sup>th</sup>-Nov 14<sup>th</sup> 2018; this was not part of a Wiltshire Council consultation. As a parent carer forum we have heard of other local authorities who have introduced central pick up points and decided to add a question about them to our survey to gather parent carers' views. This work was not part of the special schools consultation. If you'd like to take a look at the survey report, please click on the following link to go to our WPCC results page [http://wiltshireparentcarercouncil.co.uk/en/What\\_we\\_do\\_-\\_Have\\_your\\_say!\\_-\\_Results](http://wiltshireparentcarercouncil.co.uk/en/What_we_do_-_Have_your_say!_-_Results)*
- "It makes sense for school to have its own transport but what if Wiltshire Council promises this and when the academy takes over Wiltshire Council don't have a say?"
- Cost:
  - "It's all very well saying every child will have a transport plan but how can transporting all of these children be cheaper?"
  - "PMLD children require specialised transport which means the expense will be greater."
  - "There will be extra expense for parents having to travel to school meetings, pick their child up when ill, etc."
- Concerns about travel times for children. Parent carers felt that travel times were being underestimated as not taking into account:-
  - Country roads
  - Traffic congestion/ work traffic through Chippenham and Devizes
  - Time it takes to get children/ young people with SEND onto transport
  - Picking up other pupils en-route and extra time needed, e.g. getting wheelchair users onto transport, children with challenging behaviour, etc.

- Is travel time going to increase/ more pick ups? “My child already gets picked up at 7.10am in Hindon and arrives at Rowdeford at 8.45am with 3 others picked up on the way.”
- Child’s health/ wellbeing/ safety:
  - “What is the statutory guidance on the length of time our children should spend on school transport?” “50% of Larkrise children walk and if they do go on transport it is a short journey. Same for St Nics too.” “Maximum transport time depends on the age of the child but it needs to take into account the child’s special needs.”
  - There was concern about longer days impacting on children’s health.
  - Parents were concerned about the anxiety that longer journeys would cause their children and how the longer journeys would affect their children’s medical conditions.
  - “How will my child cope on shared transport with their sensory needs?” “Transport mustn’t be too big or noisy.”
  - “How is my child going to cope with learning if stressed from the journey to school?”
  - “Waking my child up earlier causes her to have more seizures. This will mean she won’t be at school so much.”
  - “If my child has a seizure at school what do I do as I don’t drive?” Another parent said that many parent carers were worried about not being able to get to their children if they had a seizure, which could happen at any time.
  - Another parent said they were concerned about health risks and the need for many of the children to be near major hospitals.
  - “I’m concerned about congestion at Rowdeford at pick up/ drop off times. My child is a ‘runner’ and I’m concerned that the gate will be open due to vehicles queuing to get in/ out of the school grounds. How secure will the school be?”
- Transport staff:
  - SEND transport PAs may also want to take on another role at the school, e.g. TA and having more hours may make the job more attractive to some prospective applicants:
    - “Someone said current TAs are going to be retained?”
    - “Many Larkrise TAs have swapped to become PAs.”
  - PAs/ drivers:
    - “If there are not enough PAs what happens?”
    - “How many PAs per bus?”
    - “Current PAs and bus drivers are good at knowing how to deal with my child’s challenging behaviour.”
    - “My child’s PA goes into school at pick up time to get him on the bus. Would this still happen with the new school?”

- Parents wanted reassurance on how those with complex medical needs would be treated and wanted expert PA training on epilepsy and other meds with comments such as, “I won’t let her go with just anyone”.
  - Parents wanted reassurance that PAs were trained in dealing with challenging behaviour.
  - “Consistency of driver is important. If the driver changes it causes big problems.”
  - Pre-meet and greet important – do more in advance such as photos of driver/ PA, etc. “Many taxi companies won’t do this at the. If the drivers/PAs were hired by the school maybe this wouldn’t be a problem?”
  - “It would be useful (if possible) if the transport fleet/ vehicles had a similar look/ colour for consistency for the children.”
- SEND transport PAs may also want to take on another role at the school, e.g. TA and having more hours may make the job more attractive to some prospective applicants:
  - “Someone said current TAs are going to be retained?”
  - “Many Larkrise TAs have swapped to become PAs.”
- Training of PAs/ drivers:
  - “Current PAs and bus drivers are good at knowing how to deal with my child’s challenging behaviour.”
  - “PAs would need to be trained to deliver complex medication.”
  - “Not all PAs are currently well-trained in administering medication. This often means the parent ends up doing the transport” (parent travels Corsham to Rowde).
- Other SEND transport questions included:
  - “What will the routes be?”
  - “Are journey estimates accurate?”
  - “Will my child have to share transport?”
  - “Will my child know anyone on the minibus?”
  - “What about breakfast/ after school clubs? How would transport work for those? Will there be extra buses for children who do or don’t want these clubs?”
  - “If there is a school transport fleet could these vehicles be used during the day for excursions, etc.?”
- Contact with teachers/ other parents:
  - “I currently choose to drive my child to school and claim petrol and oil expenses. I feel isolated as it is having a special needs child and if I was to use SEND transport I would feel even more isolated as I like going into the school every day and the contact with teachers/parents. Petrol and oil expenses should still be an option with a new school.”

- “At the moment I claim petrol and oil expenses. Driving my child to school means I can communicate with staff and this helps to stop me feeling isolated.”
  - “Some means of communication needs setting up for those parents who wouldn’t be going into school anymore.”
  - “We currently have a 3 minute walk to Larkrise School, many other parents do the same – it gives us the chance to meet, chat and support each other – we would lose all of that.”
  - “It would affect my mental health if I had no contact with other parents.”
- Public transport:
    - “Some parent carers don’t drive. There is no public transport in Rowde.”
    - “Trowbridge to Rowde will be a 2-bus journey for me which will include getting into Devizes and back out again to Rowde.” “From Tidworth it is probably more than 2 buses – I haven’t got a clue – I would feel stuck. Tidworth is like a ‘hole’ when it comes to getting to other places.” [Parent explained whether travelling to a special school in the south or north it was a long journey and felt that there wasn’t a choice in Tidworth when it came to special school provision.]
    - Another parent said it would take them 1.5 hours to get to the school on public transport.
- “The closure proposal doesn’t include increased car use.” Parent quoted from pg 30 of the DfE’s ‘Opening and closing maintained schools’ guidance which states ‘The proposed arrangements for travel of displaced pupils to other schools including how the proposed arrangements will mitigate against increased car use’. Parent does not believe Wiltshire Council’s transport algorithm.
  - “Transport is a ‘red herring’ and does not drive this debate.” Parent felt that whether the 1, 2 or 3-school option had been chosen, there would always be some children who had longer or shorter journeys and she didn’t think there would be a massive gain or loss. The parent felt that a good compromise would be to have the new school but have it for secondary-aged children (as they tend to be able to cope with longer journeys better than younger children and this is when parents tend to want the “best school”) and for the younger children to still go to Larkrise and St Nicholas School (removing mobiles at Larkrise so there is more outside space). This way primary aged children would be in their local area in schools that parents felt most comfortable with (some parents may prefer a local but not so well-equipped school). This would be in line with parents of primary-aged children in mainstream schools whose parents expect the school to be close by. “This should be the same for special needs children.”
  - Three Ways School in Bath is not a good comparison. “Bath is a city area and hugely different to our large, rural county.”

## 5.3 Stepping Stones District Specialist Centre – 8 February 2019

### Comments on special school proposal

5 attended including 4 parent carers (one also being the Stepping Stones manager who had collated feedback from other Stepping Stones parents who could not attend) and 1 grandparent

The following is an overview of the morning's discussion:

#### General themes from parent carers of children at Stepping Stones

Debbie, the manager of Stepping Stones advised of what she was hearing from parents at their District Specialist Centre:

- Most parents do not think there is enough special school choice now and the one school proposal reduces choice even further.
- Critchill and Three Ways can meet needs but are saying “no more Wiltshire children”. Moving away from local choice, out of principle, is inappropriate.
- Many parents are not against a school in Rowde but why at the cost of closing other provision? We really feel this is a backwards step.
- Concern over parents having to travel more as well as their children.
- Many parents feel that they will be forced to home school.
- We need parent carers to be resilient as their children will need life-long support. Parents get support and learn from each other more than anything else. They get this when their children are more local to their school. The one school proposal reduces opportunities for parent carers to meet. This is setting up problems for the future.
- This is a tremendous opportunity and we are delighted that the LA want to spend £20 million but one school as a provision for such a wide range of needs is pushing their luck. There needs to be some sort of compromise, especially for the very young and PMLD children who are less likely to cope with a long journey.
- Wiltshire is “crying out” for new provision, space and teaching staff within the community. (For primary age).
- The proposal is not reflecting the different aspirations of what parent carers think is right for their child. Nobody is more ambitious than parent carers – don't presume we are not. If we lose local provision, it will never come back and this will be poor investment.

The following shows other topics discussed at the session:



## Consultation

- Some are feeling very disheartened with attending consultations as they feel that Wiltshire Council are just not taking any notice of what parent carers are saying. “We want to see some compromise – who is going to listen?” “Wiltshire Council are not listening to us.” There is a real feeling that “Wiltshire Council don’t care about parent carers”.
- One parent had received the email about the consultation which had been sent out by the Local Authority to parents of children with an Education, Health & Care Plan. “This was the first email in 2.5 years I had received from the Local Authority to ask for my opinion. They should have done this earlier in the process.” “They should always contact people on the SEND register.” “This should’ve been more widely promoted.”
- One parent felt that the Local Authority’s latest consultation survey was too simple with only 2 questions – “it felt like a ‘tick box’ exercise”. “The survey should have asked if the child has medical needs.”
- “Most of the parent carers who are campaigning have children with high medical needs, seizures, etc. This is why we are worried and not because we don’t like change or are over protective.”
- One parent said that when she had seen the ‘Save Larkrise/ St Nics’ campaign in the local press it came across as an emotional plight. She said that after listening to parents concerned in person she had very much changed her perception and had a better understanding.

## Location

- Rowdeford is isolated. There is no train station and no regular bus services which means using a taxi or car. It’s not about the facilities, it’s about the location. Opportunities for children to be part of the community are extremely limited compared to having schools in Trowbridge and Chippenham.
- A two-school option would have been more palatable.
- Rowde is one country road. Lots of lorries use it to get to the recycling centre.
- Traffic will get back up down that little lane. What about those country lanes if the weather is bad?
- One parent said it was in the news recently that a fire engine couldn’t get down the lanes in Rowde which is very concerning.
- The proposed school will be different to Three Ways as it is not in a city conurbation. Three Ways has Sainsburys next door and other ways the children can mix and be part of their local community.

- Larkrise children love walking around Trowbridge and they've got the farm. The school is easy to access for everybody.
- Why can't they build in Trowbridge/ use the Ashton Street site? [The Cabinet document from November 2018 when discussing the 2-school (Trowbridge and Chippenham) option stated:
- 'Trowbridge greenfield sites are challenging in planning terms and unlikely to be viable: use of Ashton St would mean a split site, congested access and operation of the school with an on-going building project incurring additional brownfield development costs;']
- Why not use the £20m for a new school but still keep Larkrise and St Nics? [See <https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s154116/Special%20Schools%202019.1.18.pdf> item 13. for the analysis of the 3 school option.]

### Provision

- One parent had a young child at Three Ways School. 1.5 years ago when it came to choosing a school they looked at Larkrise School (which was 2 minutes away) and decided it was not suitable. The parent said that the difference between the two schools is immense – two totally different entities. The parents recognised that her child had very different needs to some other children – “My child has severe autism. Some of the Larkrise children have a lot more profound medical needs. I wish my child's school was in Trowbridge but there is not choice. There is a big difference between complex needs like tube feeding, etc, and children with learning difficulties.” The parent explained how she would move to BANES at some point as she wants to go to work and have some separation from her child. (Parent currently transports child to/from Three Ways herself.)
- Another parent said she would not want to move house to be closer to her child's school as she had her family close by in Trowbridge.
- I feel that we should have a Centre of Excellence for Autism with the option of the child going back into mainstream school if appropriate.
- We need more resource base places and to upskill staff. My child might then be able to go to the resource base over the road from where I live.
- Another parent's child had Larkrise named for starting school in Sept this year. She spoke about how they had looked at Studley Green resource base but it was unsuitable for her son's high autism needs and they don't do 1 to 1.
- No Centre of Excellence is broad enough to do all SEND. We need a whole range of options. The whole menu under one roof is setting ourselves up for a white elephant. Everyone seemed to agree that there was a need to split complex medical needs and learning difficulties.

- It's not all about the building, it's also about the outreach. Outreach is expensive and needs massive amounts of money.
- I want my child to have friends and high self-esteem. We need different levels of provision.
- One parent said they didn't want their child in a big school with big class sizes. The parent with a child at Three Ways said that her child was in a reception class of 9 children (3 of whom are from Trowbridge). She felt that as they were a bigger school they were more able to group children to their abilities/needs.
- Academies do their own thing – the Local Authority won't have any control over them. One parent asked if the other parent felt that the Local Authority didn't care about their child wouldn't they rather have an academy who would strive to give their child the best?
- We need a new school with new facilities in Trowbridge regardless of whether it is an academy or not. The parent said they would still not want their child to go to a school in Rowde even if it was maintained by the Local Authority, so would not see this as a suitable compromise at all.

### Transport

- Transport is a massive issue for parent carers and more are thinking of home schooling. "It puts more pressure on parents – we have no choice."
- We always hear about more mainstream schools being built. No other children are are expected to travel so far to school so why should ours?
- I've heard some children have to use neck braces on transport to be safe travelling down the bumpy roads.
- What about if a child needs urgent meds/ oxygen on the journey to/ from school? Will PAs and TAs in school have these to hand and are they going to be trained to use them? What happens if my child has a seizure? There would be nowhere to pull over down the narrow roads/ lanes. What about the other children on the transport if this was to happen (e.g. distress caused)?
- Parent advised that if her child had to travel to school in Rowde she would be okay to drive him there but wouldn't know what to do in a medical situation. She also also felt that he would start pulling at his seat belt. She said if he had to wait for or spend a long time on a bus he would start getting irritable within half an hour. "If a PA was quite elderly he is quite strong."
- The parent whose child went to Three Ways shared some insight into what it was like at the school at drop off/ pick up times. She described the amount of buses in the school car park and that they had to leave early enough to pick up

all the children and to get there but then most mornings those children were sat in the buses for around 20 minutes every morning waiting for the school to open.

- Parents felt that there could be more effective planning of transport routes, etc. “There is one minibus that just has a PA, one child and a driver – surely they could take my child?”
- There was concern about the training of transport PAs especially for those with medical or behavioural needs. “When I see some of the PAs on transport at the moment they look the same age as my granny!”

### Health

- Impact of long journey on children and school staff, e.g. parent carers who currently change child’s nappy before school and the school staff know they don’t have to worry about changing it until midday. With children having longer journey times they will need changing at school in the morning which will take up more of the school day.
- Long journeys will make my child even more tired and this then affects his sleep at night.
- One parent said that their child gets blue lighted a lot. Parents are feeling anxious about the proposed school not being near enough to an A&E department. “This is a big risk for some of us.” Parents are worried about not being able to get to their children quickly – “I worry at the moment when I’m only 5 minutes away from Stepping Stones. The proposed school would be too remote for me even if they do have a full-time nurse.” “If Larkrise wasn’t there I would home school – I can’t take the risk of being far away.”
- One parent had a child with severe epilepsy and a sleep disorder. “When he starts at Larkrise he will only do mornings – if he was at a school in Rowde by the time get gets there I will need to get him back. If he can’t manage a whole school day how would he manage a long journey as well?”
- Many parent carers choose Three Ways School due to it being close to the Royal United Hospital.
- Parent advised that her child’s paediatric doctor and physio both go to Larkrise already.
- We’ve never been apart when my child has had a seizure. He also gets 12 hours of sickness after having one.

### Post-16

- All we will have is Wiltshire College, Lackham and Fairfield Farm College. These aren't suitable for PMLD young people. An 11-19 year old Centre of Excellence would be better and keep primary-aged children local. Our complex needs children already have the least opportunities. The view of having the Centre of Excellence for secondary-aged children was not shared by the parents who had children of nursery/ reception age – they said that even a child who was secondary school age still might not have the equivalent mental ability. They felt that a child's needs could increase as they got older and it would be "putting off the inevitable".

#### Other comments

- One parent said that they were concerned about losing daily communication with the teachers if her child was to get on a bus to school. Another parent said they would be happy with a weekly update from the school but could see that her child's needs were different to children with complex needs whose parents might want a daily update.

#### Reception-aged children without a named school for September 2019

- Some parents had seen on social media recently that there are 20 Wiltshire preschool children who do not have a special school place for September 2019. The information they heard is that these children will be placed in a mobile classroom at Rowdeford School. This information has caused high anxiety amongst parents. When I heard this I phoned Phil Cook as I wanted to check my child still has his place at Larkrise in September." "It's disgusting that these parents didn't even know that there was no special school place for their children." [The Local Authority is currently in discussions with special school heads and they are exploring different options for September –a meeting that was due to take place on 1st February was postponed due to the extreme weather.]

## 5.4 WPCC SENDIS EVENT Information event – 8 February 2019

### Feedback from Parent Carers

It's not a good idea, it isn't a good route from Lyneham. My child already has a long journey to get to St Nicholas. My child is picked up at 7:45am already and it takes 1½ hours to get to St Nicholas. I do agree that newer facilities would be good though. I want the school to be within walking distance of a park and a supermarket. I think if the schools close, they will also lose teachers; they won't all want to move to the new school. I don't like the single model, for example the SPA and the new Front Door has made things worse not better. I know a parent who lives in Swindon, her child has to attend St Nicholas as there were no spaces in the Swindon schools, the journey for their child will be horrendous.

I was initially against it; all schools cater for different needs and we need that range of provision. My son attends Larkrise, it's not great as it's too squeezed. There is not much greenery or outside space at Larkrise. I really like the Rowde site. I think it will be a good thing. The pod design is a good idea. One site is a good idea, but why not have satellites of the school in communities and link the offer across schools; this would help with resources. There is no nurse at Larkrise. I don't see why they can't do what they do at Larkrise on the Rowde site. The Rowde site has acres of land which would be great for our children.

As parents we know it's a struggle to get a place in a special school. I was surprised that the Rowdeford site was chosen though. Exeter House couldn't meet my child's needs but I think the opportunities offered by Springfield is great. I think what is being done to increase provision, especially the ASD provision in the south is great. I wish we'd had Springfield's South a few years ago, then my child may not have had to go out of county.

We have just moved to Salisbury and we want to go as mainstream as possible. My child is currently at a mainstream pre-school. I think what is needed is a more balanced approach between mainstream and special. Mainstream don't seem to have the knowledge and experience of Down Syndrome and they need some support, this is where a more balanced approach between special schools and mainstream could really work. The mainstream nursery is very open to working with us as parents though.

I am really keen for provision to continue at Rowdeford, the environment is very good and the school meets my son's needs.

I was concerned that a bigger school would be too much for my child. Now I understand the pod idea and small class sizes, this sounds brilliant.

The offer of outreach would be brilliant for a child like mine who is a round peg in a square hole. Mainstream schools need more support, especially at secondary level if they are to meet the needs of our children. I think flexible provision/attendance across more than one school would work well.

My child travels from Salisbury to Rowdeford but the journey is fine. I really like the idea of children travelling in people carriers rather than minibuses.

If my child went to Exeter House, she would exist; at Rowdeford she is pushed to her full potential.

I didn't understand what the new school could be like. I like this, it sounds good.

The journey from Bradford-on-Avon to Rowdeford seems okay. I think this is a brilliant idea.

Mr Sambrook is amazing!

I am disgusted by the proposals. Don't put our children away in a large school. I would prefer more special and resource bases attached to mainstream schools. There should be a special school in every town. Mainstream was not working for my child, my son was struggling and not getting the support he needed. The distance to the new school is a real worry, and I worry about the children's mental health. My child is doing well at Larkrise, why would I change it?

## 5.5 Devizes and District Opportunity Centre – 25 February 2019

Comments on special school proposal

This was a play session for 0-2 year olds and their parent carers.

The following is an overview of discussions had with parents:

### General comments about the proposal

- Some of the parents said they had not heard about the proposal or knew very little of it.
- Two parent carers said they strongly disagreed with the proposal. "It puts extra strain on parents – life is already difficult being a parent of a child with additional needs. This is going to impact on families and upset a lot of people. Why make it hard for them?" There was a feeling from some that the proposal is going to go ahead regardless of what parents think.
- One parent said the same sort of thing happened when she lived in London and it was unsuccessful as the school lost its personal touch.
- There were a few parents who were concerned that if the new school was their only choice, their child might be 'forced' to go to a mainstream school.
- "It's hard enough choosing a soft play centre or restaurant to go to because we are lacking in choices for our children. This proposal means we will have no choice apart from mainstream or the new school."

- One parent felt that change was hard enough for her older child who was higher-functioning and on the autistic spectrum and said it would be harder again for children who were “less functioning” and their parents.
- One parent had mixed feelings about the proposal. The parent said, living in Devizes, the new school would be on their door step which was great but he felt it was a shame to shut Larkrise and St Nics and he knew other families this was going to affect.
- One couple felt very strongly that Rowdeford was a good school and site, especially the outdoor space (mum had attended Rowdeford School herself when she was younger). They felt that there were more children with additional needs being born now and that mainstream school wasn't suitable for a lot of them so schools like Rowdeford are needed.

### Provision

- One parent said she could see the pros and cons. “All they want to do is help – they just need to it in the right way.”
- “It could be good to bring it all together.”
- “I wouldn't want big classes for my child.” “More people means it will be too loud.”
- “Bigger is not always better.” “Children and parents need to know the teacher and the teachers need to have time for the children.”
- One parent thought it was good to see older pupils at school as it gave parents of younger children some support being able to see how other children “got there”.

### Location/ Transport

- “I don't drive so if my child did need to go to this school I would have to look at transport.”
- “I get a lift to the DSC and a bus back, so as I don't drive transport could be a big issue.” (Travels from Melksham)
- “Lots of parents here don't drive.”
- “We live in Bromham so transport is not an issue.”
- Two parents said that the proposal would mean too much extra travelling for children and parents.
- One parent had four other children at different schools and didn't know how she could be in different places at once.
- “My child is only two but I'm worried as the distance to the new school would mean I wouldn't be able to work.”

### Health

- “Having professionals on-site would be good.”



- “We’ve not thought about it yet. We haven’t thought of a nursery let alone school.” The parent said they have to think month by month due to daughter’s health.
- Another parent said they liked the idea of health professionals/ therapists being on-site. They felt that their child’s physiotherapy was lacking since Virgin Care had taken over the contract so hopefully this would be an improvement.

#### Other comments

- One parent asked whether the proposal would affect resource bases/ places.

## 5.6 Springboard Opportunity Centre, Chippenham – 25 February 2019

### **Session notes**

The following are notes of the contributions made by parents during the session.

#### Special Education Provision from the Beginning

Some families of summer born children are delaying their children's start to school because of fears about uncertainty of future provision. This is having a knock-on impact on the availability of provision at District Specialist Centres.

#### The Centre of Excellence

I think this sounds like a fantastic idea, especially as it is for the long term. A purpose built school will be great.

My child has cerebral palsy and really benefits from attending both specialist and mainstream provision. This benefits not only my child but the community, I would really like mixed provision as part of this new offer so that my child could continue to access some mainstream schooling with support, as well as the new specialist provision. Attending both special school and mainstream would really help integration.

We could work with other schools and especially Wiltshire College that have made integration work and let their experience support the outreach and integration of the new centres of excellence.

One school in the north of the county is a worry for me as it could be too insular; what if it doesn't work, we are left with no other choices. You learn from others and having more than one school could mean that schools could work together and support each other.

Why not fund District Specialist Centres to offer outreach support and training.

#### Transport

I was worried about my child being on a mini bus but the possibility that some people carriers might be considered I think is a great idea. I think the school owning and running the transport would be much better and using TAs as Passenger Assistants would work really well.

I think it's good for our children to be away from us for some of the time rather than parents taking their children to school, it helps them develop a little bit of independence and it helps the parents too.

## Reassurance

My biggest worry is the transition from a school that is closing to the new school, we need time to get to know the new school before our children transition.

It has been really helpful to speak about the proposals and have a face to face discussion. I understand it a lot better now and I am a lot less worried. You can misunderstand what is written sometimes. Some of the information on social media is not helpful.

## Post 16

I have experience of Wiltshire College and it has been amazing, to be honest they have been better than school.

## 5.7 John McNeill Opportunity Centre, Salisbury – 25 February 2019

### **Session notes**

The following are notes of the contributions made by parents during the session.

### Special Education Provision from the Beginning

How can District Specialist Centres (DSCs) continue without enough funding? The need is massive. Nurseries need the support that DSCs could provide, this could really help inclusion and the demand for places in special provision. Continual fundraising is exhausting for both the parents and the DSCs.

### The Centre of Excellence

I am worried that 'Super Schools' won't treat children as individuals. I don't think this proposal is right.

The new build at Rowde doesn't bother me.

My child lives in Salisbury and attends Rowdeford; my child is happy to travel.

Transport is a worry for me, it needs to be a positive experience.

Outreach sounds great; how do we make mainstream schools engage and be open to taking our children? Many schools aren't keen at the moment.

We have seen a lot of information about the £20million investment in a new school in the north of the county, what investment will there be in Exeter House School? Will any investment at Exeter House School come out of the £20million?

I think some children in special school could be in a Resource Base but there aren't enough places. You need to talk face to face with schools to 'sell' the benefits of having Resource Bases, emails won't work. Identify schools that are already doing a great job and show good practice, and build relationships with schools that are not doing so well or not so open to including children with SEND.

We need Resource Bases at secondary schools, not just primary schools.

### Language and Communication

We need a commonality of language to help understanding and reduce misconception e.g. if DSCs are recognised nationally as Specialist Nurseries, adopt this language in Wiltshire. The term My Plan is confusing, I prefer EHCP.

### Reassurance

Rather than telling us what you hope to provide, tell us what will be provided and when. For example, it is difficult for parents to have confidence in provision when we are being told that we *hope* to have KS3 and KS4 provision for children with ASD at Springfield South, or when I asked when the modular would be built and ready a member of staff from Springfields told me "*if it's anything like the shambles it has been, I can't see it happening before the summer*".

What happens to rising 5s with ASD as Springfield won't take them?

Training for teachers at the new centres of excellence is key. There needs to be investment in their training.

There is a lot of vision and opportunity in the proposal which is great but my concern is about now, the year after, and the year after... This could create anxiety and anger and we could lose the opportunity to work collaboratively. You need to communicate with us so we know you are working to meet the needs that are there now.

Invest in the various transition points during a child's journey through education. There is nothing in the proposal to increase pre-school provision; if we get it right here, it can have a positive impact on the journey a child takes in their education and a significant positive impact on the parent.

Parents need to be true partners with the school. They should feel they could come in at any time to be reassured that provision is good.

Please keep communicating with the parents.

## 5.8 Calne – Meeting with parent carers - 28 February 2019

### Session notes

The session was organised into themes, all parent carers had an opportunity to spend time with a facilitator discussing a theme before moving to another facilitator to discuss a new theme. Each facilitator took notes to capture contributions by parent carers on the theme they were facilitating.

### Theme 1 – Worries/Positives/New School

#### Conversation 1

- Three Ways preferred from Melksham. Local special schools need replacing.
- Centre of Excellence is Okay
- Transition not good for children/ young people.
- What about the majority? Complex? (Will we be catering for those not PMLD?\*)  
\*Admission threshold is a concern.
- Funding of CPD, specialist support, therapies – better in one place.

#### Conversation 2

- Physiotherapy is hard to get – better in one place.
- One school definitely positive. Specialisms and staff will make a difference.
- Post-16 parents need to worry about finding placement. Would prefer Larkrise 16+ - or post-16 on new site.
- Lack of choice – would want post-16 at Rowdeford.
- National Star College preferred to Fairfield. We want a National Star in Wiltshire!
- Wiltshire College too stimulating environment for ASD like the all-singing/ all dancing idea; but want it post-16.

#### Conversation 3

- Transition planning over years will help.
- Understanding of the word “complex”\*. \*People think it means very complex.
- Post-16 – age/ stage questions. Need choice. Swindon was chosen over Rowdeford because of post-16 offer.
- Will staff move?
- Would need transport for non-driving parents – Carer transport charity – for emergencies.

#### Conversation 4

- No issues – not too big – all seems positive.
- Residential.
- Future-proof – need to allow expansion.
- Wheelchair friendly.
- “Complex” – what is the range of needs?
- 2 cases of pupils with challenging behaviour/ ASD and academically able – Springfields & GCSEs.
- Need to meet academic needs: Springfields/ Dowlands not covering the “nearly mainstream”. For example, my child is at Studley Green and is an example of “nearly mainstream” i.e. complex/SEMH needs but academically able to succeed with GCSE.

## **Theme 2 - Health**

Main points:-

- Parental choice.
- Extra resource base spaces. Need the support from special schools.
- ELP must be like resource base. ELP is not good enough.
- Fantastic idea – to have all on one site would be amazing.
- Lack of paediatricians in county.
- Virgin Care – I had to have 22 phone calls to get an assessment.
- Attending annual appraisals.
- Really important to encourage more training, secondments and sharing of knowledge.
- Three Ways is a great example of how to bring things together.
- Some primary schools to a great job.
- Local colleges and the scheme of things and concerns about falling through the gap.
- Notes that parents recognise the local authority are trying hard.
- WPCCC have been amazing, giving great support.
- Real concerns around Virgin Care and not being able to access. No one ever gets back and there’s no follow through.
- Community learning is a parent’s responsibility. We shouldn’t be expecting schools to take the lead on this.
- Concern about being further away when miss the bus.
- Will there be full-time nursing staff? This sounds like a real opportunity to improve healthcare.
- It’s not a deal breaker, but Rowdeford feels a bit isolated.
- Not being local is a real issue.
- Increase in resource bases and build them into secondary schools more firmly.
- It’s really important to build skills in mainstream schools.
- Encouraging conversation.
- We really have to improve communication with VirginCare.
- We need more joined up approaches.

- Paediatrician clinics on site would be a significant benefit – lots of comments repeated on this.
- Travel and health risk is a key issues – we have to have assurances that our children are not at risk.

### **Theme 3 – Transport/ Bus routes**

The following are the comments, questions and concerns raised by parent carers when asked about transport and bus routes:-

- Location:
  - It will be more inconvenient for me if son has a seizure and I need to go and get him. (Often gets phone call to get him from school.)
  - What about the parents who don't drive? How do we get to the school in an emergency. A local taxi company had quoted the parent £120 for the taxi journey (from Calne).
  - One parent felt that the location/ travelling wasn't a big or fair enough argument as there were already many other children who travel, however, for those who aren't used to it it is going to be a sudden change compared to other children who have been used to travelling to school since the beginning.
  - I would happily move away rather than ship my daughter off – I want her to go to a local school and not shift her out of the community.
  - The impact of emergency vehicles if needed (remote location/ no main road in or out).
  - I live in a village and the bus services only run 2 hourly.
  - I worry about the amount of traffic – the Devizes to Chippenham route is already such a busy road. I'm also concerned about the country roads around Rowde.
  - There will be a lot more travelling – what about parents who work?
  - How do you expect SEN children to use public bus services?
- Choice:
  - We chose Larkrise as we thought it was the best school for our child and now that choice will be taken away from us.
  - Having this one school means there is no option to walk to school. Lots of children will not have the opportunity.
  - You would look up to mainstream parents and say the only school your child can go to is in Devizes. It's not fair and a step backwards.
  - My mainstream daughter doesn't have more choice – there is only one secondary school in our town.
- Provision:
  - If the provision is suitable and what is best for my child I don't mind them having to use transport to get there. My child struggled for years with schools on our doorstep where they didn't fit in. Choice is relative.
  - SEN education is not one size fits all. Hopefully this will be a chance to have more targeted education for children.

- My child will be 15 years old when he's due to move to the new school. He will be there one year and then have to find somewhere else because he will be too old for the school!
- Smaller schools work. We need to follow the pre-school/ primary school local model.
- My child is currently transported from their school to other settings to use their facilities, e.g. currently goes to a local secondary school to use Nessay. If my child is at Rowdeford where are they going to be integrated? How is the transport going to work?
- Concerns about travel times for children:-
  - Where is the SEND transport cut-off for statutory guidance on travelling? (especially with regards to picking up several children).
  - Who is doing the routing? The journey times to Rowdeford will be an extra half an hour at least. It currently takes my child 40 minutes on school transport travelling Trowbridge to Trowbridge (with pick ups, etc.)
  - I don't know whether the journey will be good or bad. It's the unknown and difficult to make a decision now.
  - There were many concerns about how routes would be planned, the amount of time it takes to pick up other children and particular concerns from those who lived in the far north of the county and also right the other side of Chippenham.
  - Many of our children's lives are already limited let alone having to wait for a bus to go or leave school – it's giving our children less time.
- Child's health/ wellbeing/ safety:
  - It panics me because I will be so far away.
  - How will the transport be organised? Will there potentially be 16 year olds on a bus with 3-4 year olds?
  - Will they look at who needs 1 to 1?
  - I'm concerned about the medical side. My child is already travelling longer than they should be already (22 miles).
  - Longer journeys will mean children are exhausted and in the wrong frame of mind for learning, plus a long journey home at the end of the school day.
  - What if my child has a seizure on the bus? Where will they pull over? My child is incontinent so if on longer journeys will be wet all the time.
  - There were concerns about those children with complex medical needs and that transport could be dangerous. Many concerns around those with epilepsy, sleep disorders, etc.
  - Some children will get picked up around 7.30am to get to school on time. That's a crazy time. Will there be breakfast clubs provided? What about those with sleep issues?
  - My child is currently happy to go on transport but gets so tired.
  - It's difficult to let go of my child as they are more vulnerable. If I take him I know he's okay.
  - I don't like the thought of primary-aged children going on transport, especially with parents not having direct contact with the teachers.



- Transport staff:
  - Transport manager/ co-ordination:
    - Will need to take into account parents needing to pick other children up from mainstream school too. There will be extra costs for families if they end up having to pay for breakfast and after school club to manage pick up/ drop off times. Many families also have more than one child with SEN and at different schools. They need to look at the whole family situation. One parent had concerns that neuro-typical children in these families would be put 2<sup>nd</sup> re school choice, etc. due to children attending different schools and children wanting to make it easier for parents.
    - Is the transport going to be flexible? How's it going to work with so many people arriving/ leaving at the same time? Will timings be staggered for different children – could school hours vary? One parent said in response to this that a mainstream secondary has 1000+ pupils and they manage the extra traffic.
    - Don't change the travel plans part way through, e.g. changing driver, transport company or multiple changes to pick up time – our children need consistency and so do the parents.
  - PAs/ drivers:
    - What if a PA is sick? Will there be staff to cover? My child's PAs change frequently.
    - One of my child's TAs used to be a PA as well. It worked well as they recognise that person.
    - Exeter House have TAs who are also PAs.
    - Need to take into account how emotionally draining a TA role can be, especially with those who are supporting young people with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
    - If TAs take on PA role too could there be issues with the Working Time Directive re hours?
    - Many current PAs are older. Are they able to cope physically with children with autism/ behaviour/ those children who are 'runners'?
    - My child is post-16 so doesn't have a PA.
    - Ask if any of the parents want to volunteer to drive the buses (one parent already had the relevant driving licence for this type of vehicle and would be happy to stand in if a driver was off sick).
- Cost:
  - Will the new school have its own transport budget?
  - There have been no decent replies about the travel costings – they have got to go up due to the amount of children currently within walking distance of Larkrise and St Nics who will have a longer journey to the new school.
  - Transport will cost more.
  - I think it will be positive for the school to have its own fleet. Should be cheaper and more cost effective.

- Other SEND transport questions and comments included:
  - If the school has its own fleet of vehicles will the vehicles be purchased or hired? What is the cost involved?
  - You don't get a choice with SEND transport – you are dictated to.
  - What about after school clubs? St Nicks used to transport children to their after school clubs and then home but this stopped a while back.
  - I don't like the idea of central pick up points. (Parent said they had received a letter about this from SEND Transport.)
  - One parent said it was a nasty place to get in and out of. There is only one way in if it rains due to a huge puddle that floods the area.
  - They will need bigger gates/ more access points.
  - One parent felt that confidentiality was currently an issue with taxi drivers discussing pupils in front of others.
  
- Other comments:
  - Is it appropriate/ best for an academy trust to be running an SEN school? They will be running it as a business. It feels like our children should have extra care. Other parents responded that it would be up to the parents and governors to hold them to account and parents need to work in partnership with the school.
  - These same questions will keep coming up until it actually happens. We won't have accurate data as some of the children who will go to this school haven't been born yet. It won't be until over the next 3 or 4 years we know exactly what the needs of these children will be.
  - One parent had concerns about post-16 young people going through travel training, then not being able to cope and not being able to go back to having a taxi through SEND transport (this had happened to her son who was now struggling at the bus stop and refusing to go). Post-16 also have to pay/ contribute towards the bus.
  - Looks great on paper but these people making the decisions don't have children like ours. My daughter will hate it!
  - Does public transport drop outside of the school? One parent said there are no paths and this would be an issue for those young people who were learning life skills including how to use a bus timetable, etc.

## **Themes 4&5 – Post-16 & Community**

### **Post 16 Opportunities**

Poplar College is brilliant. It is independent of St. Nicholas' and it's going really well.

Post 16 provision is really important.

Being with older role models in mainstream settings is really good for our children.

I understand the proposal talks about the new school having a café that the young people could work in and draw people from the community into the school, St. Nicholas' has a coffee morning.

The new school should be an open environment that welcomes the community in.

Rowdeford already does loads to bring the community in, they would be good at doing more of this in the future.

It all sounds a really positive thing.

If the new school manages and runs the transport, I think there will be fewer errors and problems.

In terms of accessing the community and developing important life skills, are the local transport links e.g. buses good enough? I would like children to have lots of opportunities to practise using bus timetables, local to their school.

If you are spending all this money, let's get it right from the beginning; if you extend the provision to 19 it won't cost much more but it will prevent a lot of problems further down the line.

How will Polar College cope with increased numbers? I have heard that Poplar might be being moved to the Chippenham College site, if this is the case, would it not make more sense for Poplar College to move to the Rowdeford site instead?

### **Post 16 Worries**

Chippenham College is not set up to meet the needs of our children.

There needs to be an option for post 16 provision at the new special school. I can't see my son being able to access what is available at colleges we have in Wiltshire.

Going from a very structured environment (special school) to an unstructured environment (college) is frightening to us as parents and difficult for our children, if it is to work, the transition needs to be sympathetic and done over time.

Life education starting at post 16 is way too late. Children need longer to prepare for adulthood and do more to develop life skills; this preparation and education should start in secondary phase of education but the special schools are not great at doing this at the moment. Post 16 should be about continuing life skills, not beginning to learn life skills. Our children need more time to ease them in to things.

There is an issue with support and services for post 16 young people, so many don't meet criteria as often services are designed to meet the needs of those with a learning disability. Some services also change their definition of learning disability as the young person moves into adulthood which further disadvantages young people.

Local established colleges with learning support would struggle to meet the needs of children with more complex needs. How will these children's more complex needs be met if there is no post 16 provision in the new special school? By not having specialist

post 16 provision in the new special school, I think we are at risk of creating a new 'cliff edge'.

If SEND provision is about 0 to 25, then the new school needs to reflect this.

My only concern is that my child who would be transferring from Larkrise, will only be at the new school for a year before he has to transition on again as he will be too old for the proposed provision this will be really unsettling for him and continuity of provision is a big worry for me.

I really like the thought of my child being in school until he is 18, it is one less worry for a parent to think about. The current options available aren't great. I don't think children with complex needs can cope with the post 16 options that we currently have.

How will Polar College cope with increased numbers? I have heard that Poplar might be being moved to the Chippenham College site, if this is the case, would it not make more sense for Poplar College to move to the Rowdeford site instead?

If my only choice of post 16 provision is somewhere like Fairfield Farm College, I would choose for my child to go outside of Wiltshire rather than there.

### **Community Opportunities**

Community to me is about integrating with other children, for example at the local church. Community is also about bringing people into the school.

Our children live in Calne, we don't have a special school in our local community so we have to travel anyway.

I think it would be great to have a swimming pool and a hydrotherapy pool at the new school; they both have very different purposes and would be a great opportunity to offer another facility to the community to come in and use.

I live near Rowde. Rowde is a really inclusive village. HFT (Home Farm Trust) do a lot in the community and the people who live there are well known and welcomed by the community. They integrate well and are really well supported by the community. For example, they go to the pub and order a drink and are always really well supported to do so.

### **Community Concerns**

I don't think people will walk into Rowdeford.

There is no local transport.

The proposal sounds brilliant but it should be happening in other communities.

The current structure in Wiltshire means that our schools and resource bases are separated; they operate in isolation and they are segregated. Good community should also be about all the schools (whether they are mainstream, special or resource bases) working together.

It's nice for our children to be able to walk from their current school to town. The community knows and recognises our children and I don't want to lose this. It also helps our community to be accepting of our children.

### **The Centre of Excellence**

Why aren't there integrated therapies in our special schools now?

Outreach sounds great but I am worried it won't work. Thrive sounded great but I don't really see it working.

Mainstream needs to be more understanding of our children's needs, outreach from the new school could really help with this. Use staff in the new school to provide outreach support to other schools and train staff to be more understanding of our children's needs.

After school and holiday clubs are needed at the new school. A summer camp at the new school would be great.

I don't think anyone would say a shiny new school is a bad idea.

The design of the building and grounds is really important and parents need to be involved at every stage of the planning and development, for instance, we know that security and fencing is really important.

Could the existing special school buildings (St. Nicholas and Larkrise) be used as satellite schools if they close? For instance, one of the schools could become a specialist centre for teaching and developing life skills for post 16 young people, and perhaps work with businesses to develop enterprise opportunities at the other site.

I think the centre of excellence could create lots of new jobs and really develop facilities in the community.



I came expecting a fight today but I am coming away thinking it all sounds very sensible.

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## SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (22 May 2019)

### APPENDIX 6:

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PLEASE NOTE where written permission to share personal information has not been obtained, some names and person identifiers have been redacted or removed to protect the identity of those individuals.

## 6.1 Rowdeford Staff Statements

### 6.1.1 Mr M Loveridge, Head Teacher, Rowdeford School (04.02.19)

#### **Re: Local Authority Special School Consultation – Rowdeford School**

As you are aware, Wiltshire Local Authority have been debating the future of SEND provision across the county for some time. A current focus for the Local Authority is the three complex needs schools in the north of the county. This includes **Rowdeford (Rowde)**, Larkrise (Trowbridge) and St. Nicholas (Chippenham).

The proposal, tabled at the cabinet meeting, on the 27th November 2018, was that all three schools would close to make way for one big school on the Rowdeford site. **Rowdeford School supports the proposal for the one-school solution on the Rowdeford site.**

I am pleased that Directors, Commissioners and Councillors have recognised the need to **maintain a school on the Rowdeford site** for future generations of young people with SEND. I am delighted that proposals indicate that it will remain a part of Wiltshire Special School provision in the future. It is encouraging that Wiltshire Council will be investing a significant amount of money, £20M, to provide for the future of SEND in the county. The staff, parents and governors at Rowdeford believe in the Local authorities' vision, and are excited to support the local authority with their proposal to create a centre of excellence for Special Educational Needs on the Rowdeford site.

Rowdeford School's unique strength is its outdoor provision and how it is used to develop community links, with other stakeholders, both within and outside the county; it has the potential to lead on a National level. **This kind of outdoor provision could never be replicated if it was lost.** Outdoor Learning is so important to students with SEND because it opens doors to rewarding and sustainable futures in the community and workplaces for young people with special needs. Working outdoors helps students to learn more about themselves and as they grow in confidence, they learn to set goals and tackle challenges calmly, learning to be more positive. Research shows that it also has a positive impact on mental health and well-being. Having this facility surrounding, and integral to the new school, will allow all SEND students in the county to benefit from this amazing resource, cutting the counties current bill for alternative education and out of county placements.

**Rowdeford School is highly regarded** both locally and in the wider community. The school has been commended by Ofsted and has been graded as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' for the last ten years.

Rowdeford School is the **best-placed site to serve most parts of the county**, providing easy access for the North, East, West and Centre of the county. It is within 10mins drive of Devizes, Calne and Melksham and 15/20mins drive of Chippenham and Trowbridge. It could also serve a large part of the South of the county; it is within a 45 min drive of many population areas within the south. This makes Rowdeford an ideal central location for a complex needs school and a hub for outside agencies. Its semi-rural location, within 5 minutes of Devizes, delivers the best of both worlds, big town links whilst boasting substantial grounds, traffic free roads

and space to continue to expand in the future. This could not be achieved in an urban environment.

The Rowdeford School estate has the **space to provide the development that the Local Authority are seeking**; enhancement of the site will easily occur without interrupting the day-to-day running of the school. The current proposal will provide a centre of excellence, for the long term, that will provide an integrated system of education and care, without losing the exceptional outdoor space that has enhanced the curriculum for thousands of students over the years. We see **Rowdeford as the option that will “Future proof” the Wiltshire SEND offer** moving forward, as the opportunities to expand on the site, pre and post-2023 are significant.

**Rowdeford School’s consultancy service delivers high quality training for local Schools, Colleges and Universities to understand better the needs of children and young adults with SEND.** The school has already established numerous links with mainstream Primary and Secondary, and Special Schools. Rowdeford School already delivers alternative provision via their Plus programme (now accessed by approximately 45 students a week) and specialist SEND training and support to mainstream staff. Rowdeford School has the capability and the established links, to provide the in-reach and outreach model that the county needs.

The provision at Rowdeford School is amazing; **the magic of Rowdeford** must be retained throughout any planned developments. The **ethos of Rowdeford School**, its **values based curriculum** and the **outdoor learning it promotes must be preserved**. I support the current one-school solution, on the Rowdeford site; however, it appears contradictory to shut Rowdeford School, only to open another school on the same site, when the school has such a fantastic reputation. The school is already set to grow with a larger than expected cohort joining the school in September 2019. This natural growth can be extended to accommodate the development planned. **Growth, not closure, of Rowdeford School will help us to preserve the ethos and magic of the school, ensuring that it is retained for the benefit of all complex needs students in the future.**

The school has always **worked closely with the Local Authority**; recently providing an extension to its designation to support the growth of Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD). More recently, it has been involved in developing resource base provision in partner primaries and a solutions-focused approach to increased provision for students requiring reception-age placements in September 2019. Next year we are already going to grow by 33%; Rowdeford will be providing education for approximately 180 students from September 2019.

Rowdeford School has a **remarkable and dedicated staff team** that have the energy, enthusiasm and vision to manage lessons in outdoor spaces, utilising animal and woodland areas. Alongside this, the school has an estates manager with woodland and animal management experience. Staff are also highly competent in delivering lessons to students who are grouped both chronologically and based on need. The school already has established links with an excellent MAT and is part of a Teaching Schools Alliance. **Rowdeford School has an excellent reputation and is well placed to achieve an ‘Outstanding’ grade at its next Ofsted inspection. Growth of Rowdeford School will help us to avoid losing**

**specialist staff, preserving all of our expertise and fantastic practice, ensuring it is retained for the benefit of all complex needs students in the future.**

Please join me to **ensure that Rowdeford School is retained and that it's Values based curriculum, outstanding practice and Outdoor Learning** is shared for the benefit of all students in Wiltshire. I sincerely believe that the **future of SEND provision is at Rowdeford**, and with the Local Authority we have the vision and drive to make this a reality.

Yours faithfully  
Mr M Loveridge  
Head Teacher

[6.1.2 Jo Darlington, TA to the Plus Programme, Rowdeford School \(10.02.19\)](#)

Dear Councilor/Cabinet Member

**Re: Local Authority Special School Consultation – Rowdeford School**

Further to my letter dated 23rd July 2018 (attached below), I write to reiterate and expand on why Rowdeford should be at the heart of future SEND provision in Wiltshire. With my experience as a Teaching Assistant at Rowdeford and my work with the Riding for Disabled Association, in addition to my knowledge as Rural Chartered Surveyor and Landmark Trees Arboricultural Consultants, I write to detail why Rowdeford School should be retained as the 'one-school solution'. I am also keen to acknowledge that outside of a professional environment, my friendship group includes families who have children with SEND, witnessing firsthand how children have benefitted from the teaching environment at Rowdeford. I would also add my personal experience of working in the Rowdeford Team; I have been fortunate to have been part of high-level professional teams during my career and indeed managed my own team of professionals. In my opinion, the Team at Rowdeford is exemplary and dedicated to a level I have rarely experienced before. To make a decision that jeopardizes this team spirit and leadership would be reckless, destroying years of an irreplaceable and symbiotic teaching environment that allows children and young adults to thrive. The one-school solution should augment this existing team by expanding on the provision that is already available at Rowdeford School.

It has always been my belief that Rowdeford had the capacity to provide outstanding SEND provision on one site. Indeed, my original report strongly advised that this was the most favourable option, organically growing from the heart of excellence that already exists within Rowdeford School. However, I was also mindful of the support for the other two schools in the consultation. It is now reassuring that the proposal, tabled at the cabinet meeting on the 27th November 2018, is for one all-encompassing school on the Rowdeford site.

This letter reiterates the wealth of information provided in my previous submission. Due to the significant volume of information confirming the clear need to retain Rowdeford School, I would like to highlight the following points:

- **Growth, not closure, of Rowdeford School will preserve and expand on the existing ethos and magic of the school, ensuring that it is retained for the benefit of all complex needs students in the future;**
- The rising awareness that the loss of exposure to the natural environment will have negative long-term consequences on all children;

- The existing evidence that will require researchers and policymakers to meet at the interface of research and policy, in order to shape a positive future for all children and **formally include LoTC within the National Curriculum**. I believe we will witness a holistic change in policy emphasis, resulting from the body of irrefutable research and profound need to get the future generation to reconnect with their environment;
- **Rowdeford School represents opportunity for Wiltshire Council to meet the changes that are occurring in longer term educational policy. Rowdeford has the potential to lead on a National level with LOtC provision and providing children with SEND a first class learning environment. This kind of learning environment could never be replicated if lost in this consultation process.**
- The Rowdeford School estate has the space to provide the development that the Local Authority are seeking; enhancement of the site will easily occur without interrupting the day-to-day running of the school. The one-school option at **Rowdeford will provide a center of excellence** with an integrated system of education and care. Furthermore, **bringing the rest of the estate back in-hand for educational use would provide more opportunities to enhance and improve the existing opportunities for LoTC**. Expanding Rowdeford is the option that will “Future proof” the Wiltshire SEND offer moving forward.
- As the map below illustrates, ‘all roads lead to Rowdeford’. **The school and its environs provide an ideal central location for a complex needs school, and a hub for outside agencies**. It is within 5/10mins drive of Devizes, Calne and Melksham and 15/20mins drive of Chippenham and Trowbridge. It could also serve a large part of the South of the county; it is within a 45 min drive of many population areas within the south.
- **Rowdeford’s semi-rural location delivers the best of both worlds**. It has big town links whilst boasting substantial grounds, traffic free roads and space to continue to expand in the future. This could not be achieved in an urban environment, where space it at a premium and costly.
- **The unique strength is Rowdeford’s outdoor provision** and how it is used to develop community links with other stakeholders, both within and outside the county. Furthermore, the pupils are engaged with various communities outside the grounds of the school, including work with the Canal Trust and local farmers;
- There is **strong community support for the school**, with funding from the Rowdeford Charity Trust restoring dilapidated buildings to advance the education of children and young people with disabilities or special needs; as a responsible landowner the Council has accepted this capital input for educational use.
- **The success of the Plus Programme** (a unique school outreach programme that not only provides a valuable educational resource, it also secures the well-being of young adults who are disengaged with the conventional educational system) provides essential links for the Rowdeford School Community. This outreach can be developed further, to provide vital opportunities for other mainstream children to re-engage with education through LOtC. The consultation process needs to recognize that **Rowdeford provides the same outreach experience and support that is being championed by Forest Schools and other similar projects**.
- The school and its resources, both in terms of staff and facilities, are the best within the consultation;

- The success of Rowdeford in placing their students into colleges and providing future employment opportunities, with the corresponding cost-benefit to the Council;
- The opportunities Rowdeford has for income generation and to generate sustainable power;
- **The fact that future uses of the site other than a special school will be extremely constrained** by the Listed Building, AONB, trees and protected wildlife.
- 

If you require any further clarification on any of the points raised above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Jo Darlington BSc (Hons) Rural Land Management, MRICS

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR LETTER SENT TO COUNCILLOR MAYES DATED 23<sup>rd</sup> JULY 2018**

I believe that loss of the Rowdeford School estate would be to the detriment of SEND provision across the county. Rowdeford School site is an exceptional resource that must remain part of Wiltshire Special School provision in the future.

The following pages provide both factual and practical notes to support the above.

#### **Background**

I understand that Wiltshire Council will need an additional 220 places by 2026 for children and young people with special needs and/or disabilities; 50 – 70 more special school places will be required in the north for children and young people with complex needs/SLD. The consultation will also address where the schools are placed to ensure sufficient spaces are available for different needs in the north and south. The consultation is to consider the following three options to provide these additional places:

1. Develop a single school.
2. Develop two schools.
3. Develop/continue the existing three schools: St Nicolas in Chippenham; Larkrise in Trowbridge and Rowdeford School in Rowde

The consultation was supported by yourself, cabinet member for children's services. I believe that your following statements are important to the process: "We know people have concerns about what this will mean and we want to hear from everyone so we get this right..... This is about providing more school places and ensuring our children and young people have the right facilities which help them to thrive and reach their potential." The consultation guidance also noted that SEND pupils need to be educated within a community to allow for their integration into society, rather than their isolation from it.

This letter draws on my experience as a Teaching Assistant supporting the Plus Programme at Rowdeford for three days a week, in addition to my role as a supply Teaching Assistant in the main school on the remaining two days. I also have previous experience as a Rural Surveyor specializing in Rural Land Management, Estate Management, Expert Witness Evidence at Planning Inquiries, EIA for development in rural areas and Arboricultural Impact Assessments. I also have experience as a LOtC Assistant and Chairman of the Parents Association at St Margaret's Preparatory School. I am therefore well placed to provide an informed input into this consultation process.

## **The Importance of Rowdeford**

Rowdeford School cares for and educates pupils with complex learning difficulties, focusing on improving communication, social interaction and preparing pupils to lead independent, adult lives. Rowdeford School is highly regarded both locally and in the wider community. The school has been commended by Ofsted and has been graded as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' for the last 10 years. The house, outbuildings and grounds have been a School within the ownership of Wiltshire Council since 1963, opening originally as a Special School for girls. Rowdeford School's unique strength is its outdoor provision and how it is used to develop community links, with other stakeholders, both within and outside the county. There is international recognition that Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) is so important because it opens doors to rewarding and sustainable futures in the community and workplaces for young people with special needs. Current research proves working outdoors helps pupils to learn more about themselves and as they grow in confidence; they learn to set goals and tackle challenges calmly, learning to be more positive. Pupils also learn how to look after themselves and stay safe so that they can be an active part of their local communities.

The School has recently received a Gold Award LOtC (Learning Outside the Classroom) - a first for a UK Special School recognizing the extremely high quality of this particular aspect of the school's work which extends to training as well as teaching. Rowdeford School's unique strength is its outdoor provision and how it is used to develop community links, with other stakeholders, both within and outside the county. Outdoor Learning is so important because it opens doors to rewarding and sustainable futures in the community and workplaces for young people with special needs. Rowdeford has an exemplary track record of placing their pupils in age-appropriate locations/colleges and finding them relevant work experience. I believe there will be additional future employment opportunities for the pupils, particularly following a successful Brexit agreement where additional workers will be required in agriculture, horticulture and woodland management.

Working outdoors helps students to learn more about themselves and as they grow in confidence, they learn to set goals and tackle challenges calmly, learning to be more positive. Students also learn how to look after themselves and stay safe so that they can be an active part of their local communities. By being able to permanently commit to learning both inside and outside the classroom, Rowdeford is able to allow pupils to learn everywhere, at all times. The outdoor learning experiences at Rowdeford enable pupils to:

- develop reflective and inquisitive thinking along with problem-solving approaches in 'real' situations;
- encourage their holistic development;
- develop resilience and adaptability in occasionally adverse circumstances;
- allow pupils to become more able to identify hazards and risks;
- develop a love, appreciation and respect for nature and all that is living;
- develop an understanding of how we can look after our environment;
- develop self-awareness, confidence and self-esteem;
- develop collaborative-working and communication skills;
- provide positive health benefits – both physically and mentally – and assist gross and fine-motor development;
- give the pupils life skills that open up employment opportunities in agriculture, horticulture and general estate management;



- develop a lifelong love of the outdoors.

I have always known that the outdoor learning environment at Rowdeford plays an invaluable role in securing the well-being of all the pupils at Rowdeford. My role as Teaching Assistant for the Plus Programme over the past two years has provided clear evidence of how outdoor learning benefits mainstream pupils. The young people who attend Rowdeford as an outreach resource base are typically divorced from all forms of outdoor activities and disengaged from learning. The facilities at Rowdeford, in addition to the high caliber staff team that manage them, allow these children to experience the natural world, to understand how to care for it, to learn life skills in terms of horticulture and animal care, to develop an interest in the natural world and so many other invaluable skills. Their well-being, self-confidence, communication and teamwork improves as they begin to embrace the outdoor environment that often initially seems almost foreign to them. By using the John Muir award scheme, we have encouraged many of our plus programme students to get involved in environmental activities. We have also enabled students to gain BTECs in Sustainability and Land Based Studies. This resource should be developed, not closed down.

The LOTC opportunities for the main school meet all of the current guidance that education of all young people should embrace, let alone the benefits to young people with special educational needs. All of the staff are part of a wonderful network of support. The young adults benefit not only from the learning opportunities the grounds provide, but also the tranquility and peace they can seek when particularly anxious or stressed. If you position yourself for a day in the garden, you really understand just how Rowdeford can shape a young person's life so positively.

Rowdeford is the only school that enables pupils to have daily access to animals. The farm animals on the site are not just an educational resource, but an unquantifiable benefit for the pupils with SEND. Through my own experience, it is clear that access to animals has a definitive calming effect on the pupils at Rowdeford. In the classes I assist with, we have pupils who show totally different behaviour characteristics as soon as they are around the pigs and hens. They immediately go from high anxiety to calm, stroking the chickens and scratching the backs of the pigs. There are young people who ask to be taken to the hens when they are experiencing difficulties in class. If you take a group of children outside with baby chicks, all are captivated and calm, listening to instructions and taking it in turns to hold the chicks gently. Even pupils which initially show reluctance to be near animals soon grow in confidence and gain unquantifiable benefits from contact with them.

To verify the findings at Rowdeford, there are recent studies of the impact of animals in educational settings are beneficial for the wellbeing of SEND children. Research has proven that interacting with some types of animals can act as a buffer against social stress in children with autism spectrum disorders. One area that is receiving a lot of attention is the use of animal-assisted therapy for individuals with autism. While research is limited, studies reveal that children with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) laugh, talk, and display other positive social behaviors when they have a companion animal with them. A recent study explored the viewpoints of youth with ASDs. This innovative study finds that animals help individuals with autism combat feelings of loneliness. Additional research finds that animals can reduce the anxiety, depression, and fear that many people with an ASD feel. Furthermore, studies

indicate that behavioral problems decrease while positive social interactions and a desire to participate are gained through animal-assisted therapy.

Rowdeford School benefits wholeheartedly from the generosity and knowledge of a local farmer, Dave. In the light of the fact that research has identified that the types of animals that assist individuals with autism vary, Dave has built up his stock of therapy animals which include rabbits, guinea pigs, sheep, Shetland ponies, alpaca and cattle which he regularly brings to the school. These therapy animals provide unconditional love, calming cuddle sessions and happiness that benefit the vast majority of the pupils at Rowdeford. This would be an unquantifiable loss to the Wiltshire SEND community if Rowdeford should be closed.

Rowdeford has also benefited from a therapy dog, with another dog undergoing training following the retirement of the extremely successful sheepdog called Jack. Jack was so popular with many of the pupils, who would eagerly await his lunchtime visits. Even the anticipation of his arrival helped improve their communication skills. Furthermore, Jack was able to comfort pupils during stressful moments, especially in the boarding house. Like the hens and pigs, Jack was able to calm certain pupils, also acting as an 'ice breaker' giving them a reason to smile and interact socially. It is hoped that Jack's replacement will provide the same tangible benefits.

Our gardener is a vital part of the team, with young adults seeking the calming environment of 'Di's Greenhouse' when they are particularly stressed or unable to concentrate in class. Whilst Di is irreplaceable, a recent injury has required her role to be temporarily filled. I have been lucky enough to spend a day a week in her shoes; only through this role do you get a full picture of uniqueness and value of Rowdeford's learning environment, combined with the expertise and compassion of all the staff. It is the ability for the children to leave the classroom and have animals, garden and woodland just outside. All of the staff utilize the opportunities available to maximize the wellbeing of the pupils. There are children popping over with support staff to see the animals, science lessons using the greenhouse resources, pupils and staff on learning breaks to ensure that the rest of the class could learn whilst ensuring the individual needs could be met productively. These opportunities ensure the young people leave Rowdeford as 'the best that they can be'. No other school in the consultation can provide this. The consultation process must take into account the school's interaction with local community. Rowdeford is in the unique position with the support it receives from The Rowdeford Charity Trust. Whilst the purpose and details of the Rowdeford Charity Trust (RCT) will have been dealt in detail by other correspondents, it is important to re-emphasize that the closure of Rowdeford School could put the Council at risk action from the Trust. It was founded in 2001 (Registered Charity No 1088605) and works with Rowdeford School and the community to advance the education of children and young people with disabilities or special needs, especially by developing, renovating and conserving the building and grounds of Rowdeford School. They have raised millions in good-faith, with Wiltshire County Council fully aware of the financial input to their buildings.

Any sale and alternative use of the site will see the Council financially benefit from all of the work this Trust has done, yet ignore the fact that all of the funds invested have been for children with special needs. Where is the morality of this, let alone the legality of such a sale? The school is an invaluable asset for these children, that should not be used to raise money for the Council.

Rowdeford School has also forged strong links with other local community groups and resources. There is a wealth of educational resources within walking distance, such as the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust. Groups of pupils go and benefit from the knowledge and work of the Trust, in addition to providing their own support by volunteering to undertake vital estate management works for the Trust. The school also benefits from the proximity of the swimming pool at Devizes, in addition to local businesses willing to provide work experience for the pupils in Year 11.

Rowdeford has considerable future potential, not only in the potential to expand educational uses on the school but also to develop Council owned outdoor learning resources to replace the loss of Braeside and Oxenwood. There are a wide range of future opportunities to open up the vital outdoor learning facilities to other local mainstream schools, including 'Forest School' days. In brief, a Forest School is an inspirational process, that offers all learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees. Rowdeford could offer this specialized learning approach, as it already compliments the wider context of outdoor and woodland education that is currently offered. It is important to note that Rowdeford are already widening access to the vital outdoor learning resources it has, seeing the first of the Primary School Days being launched. Furthermore, the boarding facilities still exist, opening the opportunity to expand into residential courses, particularly the Duke of Edinburgh Award which is already operated by the school.

The income generated from lettings is already used to further improve Rowdeford's community facilities as well as additional resources for the pupils. Arts Centre comprising a main hall with seating for 50 at tables or up to 80 in theatre style. The space is fully equipped with ICT, audio and visual equipment. There are two further rooms with a variety of furnishings to provide for break out, meeting or other purposes and a kitchen. There are additional facilities for hire, including the sports hall, outdoor learning center, assembly hall, ICT suite, interactive sensory room, grounds and woodland. The school also offers training courses, in addition to the Rowdeford Consultancy Service. There are opportunities to develop these income-generating activities, given security in the school's long-term future.

Rowdeford has the potential to be so much more. It is important to consider the outdoor learning opportunities in greater detail. With the loss of Braeside as a Council owned outdoor activity resource, Rowdeford could provide a replacement, even benefitting from the relocation of some of the equipment to the Rowdeford School Site. Even without this re-use of equipment, the existing resources and plans for additional outdoor learning classrooms have to be considered in terms of income generation.

There are opportunities to expand the outreach Plus Programme, securing the integration with the mainstream schools. This is a two-fold benefit, where the pupils from mainstream will receive more kinetic and visual learning in an outdoor environment, coupled with skills that will widen future employment opportunities. The Rowdeford Pupils will also benefit from the integration with mainstream Pupils at breaktimes and mealtimes. This integration could be developed further, with shared activities including sport. There is already clear evidence that the Plus Programme Pupils do enhance the sports, including joining activities such as football. The consultation process will be too blinkered about the future, considering the short term financial gain only in what is typically called 'bean counting'. There is a vital need to consider

the facts that in 10 – 20 years there will be a whole new set of pressures on any special school. For example, fossil fuels will run out – power generation will require alternative energy. Rowdeford has the roof-space and grounds for solar panels, coppice in the woodland and already has a bio-mass boiler. Food prices will increase. The ability to be even partly self-sufficient should be taken into account. There is the potential for Rowdeford to meet self-sufficiency in part, then utilize local produce to assist in reducing food miles. There are also developing technologies, such as a solar cell film for windows which lets in visible light, creates electricity from the infrared light rays and reflects the part of the infrared spectrum that generates heat to cool a building. This type of technology will ensure that older, less efficient buildings can become more efficient in the future. In all of the above terms, Rowdeford is extremely well placed to be efficient and cost-effective in the future compared to the other options.

### **The Importance of Learning Outside the Classroom**

There have been many recent news articles and research papers detailing the problems that the digital age is creating for the current generation of young people. As children are exposed to gaming and electronic devices they are leading an ever more sedentary lifestyle. This can result in a “nature deficit disorder,” which is a way to describe the psychological, physical and cognitive costs of human alienation from nature. Whilst not yet proven, it is suggested that “nature deficit disorder” in any child may lead to obesity and possible psychological and academic issues.

“Xbox detox”, is something that researchers have observed repeatedly when studying the effect of nature on the brain. Outdoor learning allows students to put their focus back on nature. Consistent exposure to nature decreases stress and anxiety, helps elevate mood, and helps with emotion. It is therefore vitally important that the Council seek to build learning opportunities that take pupils out of the classroom. This may be mathematics lessons, in which challenges are measuring tasks around the school or counting in the garden, hunting for different types of mini-beasts or a tree survey. All of this is available at Rowdeford.

Similarly, we are becoming ever more risk-averse and wrapped in cotton wool. It is very easy to take the view that something is too difficult, that the problems outweigh the benefits. In short, we give up too easily. By ensuring that Wiltshire special schools can have a curriculum with a strong focus on outdoor learning, the children can be taught to be resilient, determined and to see things through. The consultation process should ensure that Rowdeford is retained so that children in Wiltshire are able to see the world around them and can understand that learning occurs everywhere, inside and outside. The important thing is to enable SEND pupils and other young people to seize opportunities, be positive and seek out new challenges.

In outdoor settings, children are more motivated to work together in groups, which can improve their social skills. They learn to manage conflicts, communicate, and cooperate with their peers in a more effective manner. Any pupil who gets to experience an outdoor learning environment tend to be more attentive and, therefore, have a better recollection of the information that was shared.

Outdoor learning provides children with hands-on experiences in nature. Most children, let alone those with special educational needs, learn better by using their senses. Outdoor environments provide the perfect place to do this. Instead of viewing different types of plants or wildlife on a computer or TV screen, they can see, smell, hear and touch them in nature.

Students at Rowdeford enjoy a garden and grow fruits and vegetables. These hands-on experiences cultivate a love of nature and provide life skills.

A 2010 study from the University of Rochester found that spending time outdoors not only makes you happier, it can lead to an increased sense of vitality. It has also been found to have a calming effect on the mind, ease depression, spark creativity and improve attention and focus. A five-year study, which examined 500 children from 14 primary schools across Melbourne, Australia, found that those children who spend break times in more natural playgrounds as opposed to asphalt ones feel better rested and therefore more able to concentrate back in the classroom. The researchers discovered that had a direct correlation to exam results and attainment. But despite these findings, a recent survey of parents revealed that three-quarters of UK children spend less time outside than prison inmates. This means schools have an opportunity to make a huge difference to young people's mental health by increasing time spent outdoors. This is where the facilities at Rowdeford provide an irreplaceable opportunity to meet the needs of this and future generations of young people.

A further study in 2010 to examine the benefits of outdoor experiences for children with autism was conducted by interviewing teachers, parents and volunteer workers as to how they perceived the benefits of taking a child with autism outside to learn. The main benefits that they reported were improved physical activity, better social interactions and communication, and in some cases that child specific sensitivities decreased when the child spent more time outdoors. Outdoor learning helps to manage difficult behaviour so that children are in a much better, happier and calmer place mentally, and so more ready and open to learning.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is common in children with autism. Research on the physical benefits of exposure to nature has highlighted that time spent outdoors can help fight ADHD, and psychologists have linked contact with nature to restored attention, recovery from mental fatigue and enhanced mental focus. A greater ability to focus immediately after spending time outdoors in nature and shorter recovery periods for stress and anxiety have also been recorded.

It is not just direct contact with nature that makes the difference, but also having a view of and access to more natural settings which has been shown to benefit children's cognitive functioning. While not all autistic children suffer with ADHD, the message here is entirely clear. More time spent engaged in outdoor learning and play has tremendous benefit for autistic children in terms of their behaviour.

Ofsted has produced a range of documents and case studies to demonstrate the importance of LOtC, and to support schools to develop LOtC opportunities for their pupils. A key document is the 2008 report Learning outside the classroom: How far should you go? This is a survey of a range of schools and educational establishments which examines LOtC in practice, and highlights what schools are doing well and where there is room for improvement. Key findings of the report include the following, all of which are being achieved at Rowdeford:

- When planned and implemented well, learning outside the classroom contributed significantly to raising standards & improving pupils' personal, social and emotional development.
- Learning outside the classroom was most successful when it was an integral element of long-term curriculum planning and closely linked to classroom activities.

- The success of learning outside the classroom depended very much on the leadership of the schools and colleges.

The existence of the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (CLOtC) is another example of the growing importance of LOfC. It is a registered charity existing to champion learning outside the classroom. They believe that every child should be given the opportunity to experience life and lessons beyond the classroom walls as a regular part of growing up. The CLOtC ensure that more young people have access to these life-changing educational experiences by providing support on the ground, facilitating the sharing of best practice and promoting the benefits of LOfC in raising attainment and aspirations, reducing truancy and re-motivating those who are disengaged from their education.

There is another organization called Learning Through Landscapes (LTL), which states that learning outdoors brings teaching alive. LTL has built up a comprehensive library of research into the benefits of outdoor learning and play for children. This research builds a substantiated case for increased outdoor learning and play in education. This includes a RSPB report that states: “The consequence of removing nature from children can be likened to a malnourished child whose development is slowed and possibly damaged. How permanent this damage may be is for future generations to research but as discussed earlier the negative attitudes to nature of adults who did not have access to nature as a child are worrying..... For childhood development access to nature should be as important as a good diet, education and activity. In fact, as we have seen, nature is a vital ingredient to help all these areas to develop.”

Rowdeford is an Eco-School. Eco-Schools empowers pupils, raises environmental awareness, improves the school environment and also creates financial savings for schools. Independent research into the Eco-Schools programme in England found evidence of the positive impacts on pupils, including increased confidence, development of leaderships skills, improved pupil well-being and behaviour and greater motivation at school.

Rowdeford meets all of the Council’s Objectives for Healthy schools; it is hard to conceive a ‘super-school’ site that would offer what Rowdeford already provides.

### **Planning Constraints**

In recent planning applications, Wiltshire County Council officers have supported the continued use of the site as a school. The National Planning Policy Framework outlines that “the Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local Planning Authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education”.

The School is well established at the site and the planning history above reveals that the School has been adapted and extended over time. The further expansion of the School is considered acceptable; there is a master plan for the site which proposes an additional phase of development to replace the remaining mobile classrooms. The Council has confirmed that it is the long term aim to replace all temporary classrooms.

It is clear from the planning history that any new build/renovation works have been justified on the basis of securing educational use on the site.

Other constraints that will affect future non-educational uses include archaeology. For example, the bridge that crosses the stream along the eastern boundary is the site of a Civil War rear guard action when 40 Royalist troops were killed in 1643. There are also various mature trees around the site. All trees, regardless of their protected status, have the potential to be a material consideration in a planning application. The British Standard “Trees in relation to construction – Recommendations” BS5837:2012 recommends the steps that should be taken to ensure that trees are appropriately and successfully retained when a development takes place.

Any attempt to consider wholesale non-educational use of the site would also be constrained by the fact that the site lies in the open countryside, is visible from the adjacent North Wessex AONB (see below), contains a County Wildlife Site (Rowdeford Wood) and the protected species on site (mainly bats). This issues are not a barrier to development for educational purposes.

There is clear precedent for the educational use of the site. The existing resources can continue to be sensitively adapted and re-used for such uses. The Rowdeford Charity Trust funding has secured much of the existing resource. Fund raising will continue, although the Council have an opportunity with the Consultation to provide the additional funding already promised for permanent classrooms. It also has an opportunity to fund additional improvements in the outdoor adventure activities, to secure a dual-purpose outdoor activities use of the site (effectively replacing Braeside).

North Wessex AONB



**The Other Schools**

It is clear that there are inadequacies and site-related problems with both Larkrise and St Nicolas’s. Furthermore, the Council are clearly looking for cost savings. The immediate financial considerations allocated to each school cannot be considered in isolation from the unquantifiable benefits offered by each school, the cost-savings offered to the Council from securing employment and self-sufficiency of pupils leaving the schools, or their longer-term viability/sustainability. We must consider the need to balance monetary considerations against the wellbeing of children and young adults with SEND, particularly in terms of the future they have as adults in the local communities.

The map below shows how centrally located Rowdeford is. Bearing in mind that one of the minimal criteria given for the consultation was the need to reduce the travel time, Rowdeford’s central location puts it in a strong position., the door-to-door collection requires a different strategy than mainstream schools in terms of support and monitoring during the journey. Rowdeford could offer economies of scale and increase efficiency through its central location.



I have compiled an initial comparison table of the three schools below.

Clearly each school will hope to add information, although it is clear that the facts that exist today identify Rowdeford as being in a very positive position. The majority of the information has been found on the websites of each school, with additional information gained during the recent meeting with Alan Stubbersfield. It is important to note that Mr Stubbersfield said there were no criteria for assessing the merits of each school, with a 'grey smoke' of information on special schools being analyzed by his team as part of the consultation process.

	<b>Rowdeford</b>	<b>Larkrise</b>	<b>St Nicolas</b>
Location	Rowde Centrally located in the north of Wiltshire	Trowbridge To the west of the County	Chippenham North of the County
OFSTED Rating	Good with outstanding features	Good	Requires Improvement
Current Pupil Numbers	130	85	78
Age of pupils	11 - 16	3 - 19	3 - 19
Range of SEND	MLD and SLD (Also SLCN, ASD and PD) – students not able to access a subject based curriculum	SLD/PMLD (also ASD) – students not able to access a subject based curriculum	SLD/PMLD (Also ASD) – students not able to access a subject based curriculum
Future Capacity	Extensive	None	At capacity/insufficient
Existing Buildings	Good	Poor	Good



Ability to Expand	Extensive	No	No
Outdoor Learning/Sports facilities	Grass and tarmac playgrounds; fitness trail; football pitch; athletics track; outdoor learning centre; walled garden and other horticultural areas; woodland; pond; animal pens with washdown facilities.	Limited within the immediate vicinity of the buildings. Off-site LOtC.	Very limited
Support from the Community	Friends of Rowdeford School The Rowdeford Charity Trust	The Friends of Larkrise School	FoSN Friends of St Nicholas School
Capital value of the site	Likely to be over-estimated; alternative uses limited; further investigation required. Alan Stubbersfield suggested £1.5m	Residential housing use.	Residential housing use.

Within the Council’s own consultation notes, it is highlighted that Larkrise is under pressure from a number of challenges including the school’s site size and quality of the facilities, green space and the expectations from parents and carers on these. This should be extended not only to parents and carers, but also national educational bodies and the organizations/research supporting LOtC. It has a range of ages from 3 – 19, although only provides 85 places in ‘poor’ buildings.

Ariel View of Larkrise (Source: Google)

Currently the main site of St Nicolas’ school is extremely limited in terms of the amount of room for physical expansion and it is operating up to the physical limitations of the site with only 78 pupils. The 2017 Ofsted Inspection noted that this is a school that requires improvement. During the recent meeting with Alan Stubbersfield, it was indicated that the main site of St Nicolas’s School is inadequate. Mr Stubbersfield gave a clear statement of intent to sell the main site for residential use, with the funds generated used to provide a new purpose-built school in a new site in Chippenham. He also noted that there was to be a Central Government funded SEND school in the south of the County.

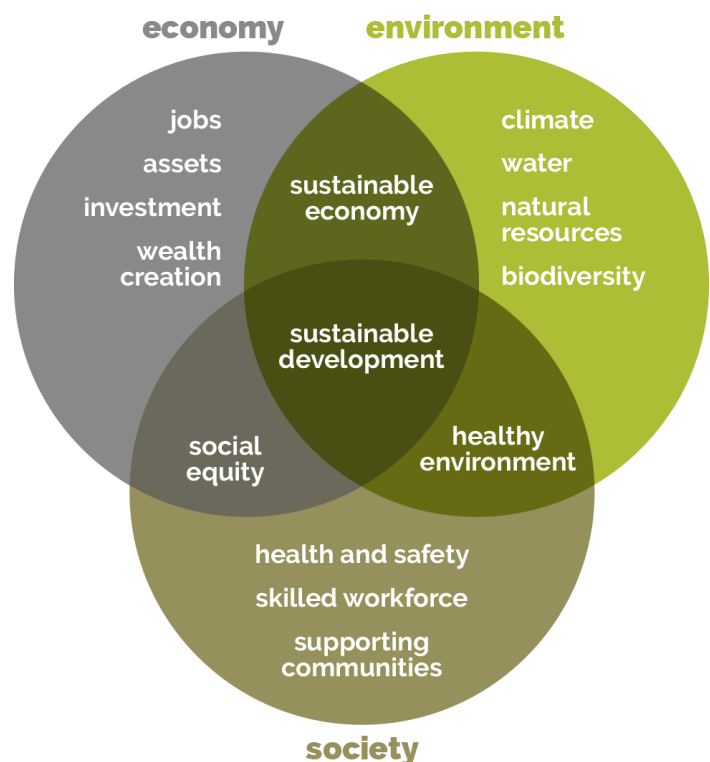


Aerial view of main site at St Nicolas, Chippenham (Source: Google)



My initial thoughts on the relocation of St Nicolas determined that this would give the Council the opportunity to create the ‘Superschool’. However, the one-school solution should surely use the existing site at Rowdeford, which has the clear potential to provide a sustainable solution. Sustainability is most often defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs (Bruntland Report). The three pillars of sustainability are a powerful tool for defining the complete sustainability problem. This consists of at least the economic, social, and environmental pillars. If any one pillar is weak then the system as a whole is unsustainable. The development of a one-school around the heart of the existing school at Rowdeford would ensure a central location providing a strong society pillar (existing and expanded interaction with local communities), a strong economic pillar (utilizing a site with limited alternative uses to provide on-site opportunities to retain and increase a skilled workforce, providing long-term employment opportunities) and a strong environmental pillar (existing biodiversity/natural resources with opportunities for greater enhancement and utilization). Rowdeford is uniquely strong in all these areas.

The three pillars of sustainable development



Rowdeford is not currently at capacity and has the potential to be so much more. This letter has identified that it is the strongest candidate for retention. It is important to consider the outdoor learning opportunities in greater detail. The existing resources and plans for additional classrooms and outdoor learning should not only be considered in terms of the benefits to the existing pupils, but also in terms of additional income generation. There is also potential to expand the outreach Plus Programme, securing the integration with the mainstream schools. This is a two-fold benefit, where the pupils from mainstream will receive more kinesthetic and visual learning in an outdoor environment, coupled with skills that will widen future employment opportunities. The Rowdeford Pupils will also benefit from the integration with mainstream pupils at breaktimes and mealtimes. This integration could be developed further, with shared activities including sport. There is already clear evidence that the Plus Programme pupils do enhance the sports, including joining activities such as football.

### Rowdeford School and Grounds



The capital value of the Rowdeford site will be limited. The Council have had past experience of sites that have been over-valued; for example Urchfont Manor Estate was considered by the Council to be worth £6m, whereas it was eventually sold on the open market for £2.7m.

The consultation process is at considerable risk of being blinkered about the future. The process must consider the fact that in 10 – 20 years there will be a whole new set of pressures on any special school. Fossil fuels will run out – power generation will require alternative energy. Rowdeford has the roof-space and grounds for solar panels, coppice in the woodland and the possibility of using bio-digesters. Food prices will increase. The ability to be even partly self-sufficient should be taken into account. There is the potential for Rowdeford to meet self-sufficiency in part, then utilize local produce to assist in reducing food miles.

New schools in Chippenham or Trowbridge would need to be designed to be flexible in terms of future demands. However, land prices are likely to dictate that it will not have the grounds or resources that are available at Rowdeford. There may be opportunities to use the additional Council land around Rowdeford, which is currently under an agricultural tenancy.

### Conclusion

Whatever the outcome of the Consultation for the other schools, it is vital that Rowdeford is retained in the light of current/emerging evidence of the importance of LOtC and animal therapy. The Consultation must look beyond the bottom-line monetary figures, considering

factors that have invaluable contributions to the well-being and future lives of children with SEND in Wiltshire and the surrounding areas.

A clear set of criteria for the consultation process is required, to ensure transparency. These criteria must include LOfC and the success of each establishment in providing the life-skills to be self-confident, self-sufficient and integrated within local communities. This would ensure that Rowdeford is given a fair assessment and all of its attributes are valued within the process, not just the monetary factors.

### 6.1.3 Rowdeford School Full Governing Board's response (12.02.19)

#### **SUMMARY**

Having given due consideration to Wiltshire Council's proposal for special needs education in the central and northern part of Wiltshire, the FGB of Rowdeford School believe that the one school solution on the Rowdeford site is the best option to provide outstanding learning and teaching for the full range special needs students in the central and northern parts of Wiltshire. However the FGB of Rowdeford School consider that this can be achieved by the growth of Rowdeford School rather than its closure.

#### **STATEMENT**

The Full Governing Board (FGB) of Rowdeford School recognises that the number of pupils in Wiltshire needing Special School places is growing and that there is insufficient space for the number of pupils.

The FGB of Rowdeford School acknowledges that Wiltshire Council proposes that the Rowdeford School site will remain open and that a new school accommodating 350 students will be built on the site with some existing buildings also being used. The Rowdeford School site provides 'Future Proof' opportunities for further expansion that are likely to be needed in subsequent years.

Having reflected on its position and made enquiries including visits by the Chair of Governors to Three Ways School in Bath and Milestone School in Gloucester, the FGB of Rowdeford School believe that the one school solution on the Rowdeford site is the best option to provide outstanding learning and teaching for special needs students in the northern part of the county from 2023 and beyond.

There is already planned growth at Rowdeford School in September 2019. This will mean a 23% increase in Rowdeford School's PAN. It is testament to Rowdeford School's willingness to work with the Local Authority that they have already flexed the school's designation and age range.

The FGB of Rowdeford School wish to encourage and support those students and staff from other local special schools and are sensitive to the feelings of students and staff of those special schools.

The FGB of Rowdeford School believe that significant growth in student and staff number on the site can best be achieved if the Local Authority moved to allow Rowdeford School to



remain open and have an active and full role in the development of the site with input from senior staff from St Nicholas' and Larkrise schools.

The vision of Rowdeford School is growth of the present school. The FGB of Rowdeford School consider that growth of Rowdeford School rather than its closure is needed for the following reasons:

- (a) Learning outside the classroom is its unique strength and is outstanding both in its facilities and the teaching. This is only achievable due to the uniqueness of the Rowdeford School site. This could not be replicated in any other location. If it is lost, it would never be replaced.
- (b) The excellent skills set of teachers and teaching assistants will be maintained and improved further. All the staff have an outstanding commitment to delivering excellent teaching and support for the students.
- (c) Rowdeford School has an amazing community spirit and the students are an integral part of that. Growth will ensure that community feeling amongst students will continue to be promoted and nurtured. Students at Rowdeford School benefit from the links with other schools, parish councils and community groups which fully support the students towards independence.
- (d) The ability of Rowdeford School to be flexible in working with its many stakeholders.
- (e) The ability of Rowdeford School to remain a small community and centre of excellence and yet embrace significant growth in student numbers, teaching staff and buildings.
- (f) The ability and willingness of Rowdeford School to adapt and respond to the changing needs of students and ever changing funding constraints.
- (g) The Leadership team and the Governors have the vision, enthusiasm and drive to fulfil the Local Authority's vision of a Centre of Excellence based at Rowdeford School.
- (h) The ability of Rowdeford School (already recognised by the careful management of its finances) to manage economies of scale.
- (i) The ability of Rowdeford School to develop teaching and learning. Rowdeford School has a values based curriculum, which has achieved the VbE Gold award. This makes it unique. Rowdeford School was the first SEND provision in the country to achieve this status.
- (j) The students, who are amongst the most vulnerable young people in society, thrive at Rowdeford School. They feel safe in our educational setting. The parents and carers also recognise that their children thrive and feel safe. This is due to the recognised exceptional safeguarding practices of the school.

## **CONCLUSION**

Rowdeford School has been consistently graded by OFSTED as an outstanding school or good school with outstanding features for a number of years. The FGB of Rowdeford School supports outstanding learning and teaching of **all** special needs students irrespective of their needs and abilities.

This can be achieved in the central and northern parts of Wiltshire by the one school option allowing the significant development and growth of Rowdeford School. This growth would enable all special needs students to retain the 'small setting' educational environment in which many thrive and yet satisfy the ever increasing numbers of special needs students in a cost effective and outstanding setting and environment.

Annette Foster  
Chair of Governors  
Rowdeford School

#### 6.1.4 Staff member, Rowdeford School (26.02.19)

Dear Wiltshire Council,

Following on from my attendance at a meeting at Rowdeford School this afternoon I would like to address some of the questions raised by Wiltshire Council representatives, as well as points raised as potential concerns as to the suitability of Rowdeford as the best site for a school to serve our students with special educational needs.

- Recruitment - a question was asked as to how difficult it is recruiting staff at Rowdeford given it's perceived rural and isolated location. I have worked in a number of schools in both rural and central locations, including inner city, and can report that we do not have the same recruitment barriers as other schools. Staff wish to come and work here from a range of locations. Our existing staff commute from up to one hour away, part time staff hail from Trowbridge, Chippenham, Calne, Rowde, Bromham, Devizes and all surrounding areas in between. I have been at Rowdeford for just over a year. I worked as a consultant for the school 6 years ago and when the opportunity arose to apply to work at Rowdeford I leapt at the chance, despite being very happy in a mainstream secondary school (neighbouring authority). I understand the concern is that the roles for part-time support staff may be difficult to fill given the location, but I can assure the council that this is not the case. People want to work here, it's a very special place and staff return routinely after working in other places as Rowdeford is unique, as I have done.
- There is concern about the plan to close all 3 schools and re-open with a new school. I share my colleagues concerns very strongly. The risk of losing staff with expertise is a valid risk as this process moves forward. Why close all three, why not integrate Larkrise and St Nicks on the Rowdeford Site? The question was around how we would suggest facilitating an evolution rather than a shut-up-shop exercise. Each school has different strengths, by allowing all of us ownership of the process of integration we all have a stake in what should be a continuation of Best Practice in one place, rather than starting from scratch. It makes sound financial sense to have this continuity, the cost financially of recruitment is massive, not of course forgetting the loss of skills, disruption to students and the inevitable dip in stability and outcomes. in the early stages. Across our schools, we already meet and share knowledge and good practice, I belong to a group of (job role) from Larkrise, St Nicks, Downland and Exeter House. We meet regularly to support our students with our differing skill sets. Other groups of colleagues, including teaching staff, senior leaders, and admin staff meet in each other's schools so the idea of coming together now to create the new school together makes perfect sense.
- One of the issues around student participation in the local community that needs addressing is the lack of suitable and safe pavements from the school to Rowde Village, and the 50mph speed limit past the school. I walk to school, but it's quite

unsafe once you leave the village boundary as the pavement stops and I have to cross the road. The pavement on the other side of the road once I have crossed is really narrow, due to not being cleared, and as the speed limit is 50mph past the school (!) it's not a pleasant walk and is at the moment unstable for walking by students with special needs, or those in a wheelchair. This of course has not prevented our students from integrating and engaging fully with the local communities around the school. We have a path from the woods to the centre of the village and this is planned to be fully accessible with the addition of a boardwalk, and students visit areas all around by minibus, bus, train and even barge.

I hope that the points above will assist with the final decision making process, I do sincerely hope that the decision to close and re-open is one that the council will reconsider.

Kind Regards,

6.1.5 [Libby Mornement, Behaviour Support Manager, Rowdeford School \(26.02.19\)](#)

**To Whom it may concern:**

**Rowdeford School site is an exceptional resource**

- Learning outside the classroom - totally unique - totally successful - skills, training and qualifications allowing realistic employment opportunities - currently for Rowdeford pupils and a host of others from around the county.
- If it is lost to special education it will be lost forever - losing a valuable resource - completely environmentally un-friendly approach.
- Large enough to accommodate a 'super' school. - central in the county - close links to both communities of Bromham and Rowde with added advantage of rural, natural, awe-inspiring campus.

**Rowdeford can grow to accommodate the increase in numbers rather than needing to close.**

- Huge resource of expertise
- strong senior leadership and wider leadership able to work collaboratively toward solutions
- A values based curriculum established forming a valuable foundation.
- Already proven to accommodate increasing numbers
- A ethos and culture that proves successful with it's magic time and time again.

Many thanks for taking the time to take on board our opinions.

Libby Mornement  
Behaviour Support Manager

6.1.6 [Terri Chard, Deputy Head Teacher, Rowdeford School \(27.02.19\)](#)

Dear Council Members,

I just wanted to share my expertise and experiences of Rowdeford School.

I joined Rowdeford at the start of 2018 as the Deputy Head. I had previously taught in Mainstream Schools in South Gloucestershire and Bristol. I had decided to leave mainstream education because I had become increasingly uncomfortable with the “games” that schools were playing to ensure that the league tables were positive; most of these decision were counter intuitive to student welfare.

The moment I stepped into the grounds of Rowdeford, I knew this was a special place. Although a bit daunted at my first experience into SEND, I was completely overwhelmed with the environment, atmosphere and values of the school. For once I had joined a school that made decisions in the best interest of children.

Rowdeford Children thrive at School. It is a bright, happy place where children are valued, build independence and are cared for and nurtured. I believe a large part of this is due to the uniqueness of the grounds, house etc and the expertise of the staff members who know how to use these to get the best out of the children.

I think all children should have the right to be educated at a place like Rowdeford. I understand that some of the other parents have concerns about transport. However I would draw attention to the fact that only 23% of current children are educated in their communities and student already have long taxi journeys to Larkrise and St Nicks.

We are the only school to provide annual training to all of its Pas and Taxi drivers. This ensures that the transport is a positive experience that is used as a learning opportunity to help student be more independent.

I also wanted to share some of the quotes I have gathered from children today about their taxi transport.

*“I love the time in the morning when I on my taxis, I get to see friends I don’t normally see. We chat and listen to music and then we do it all again going home.”*

*“I love my taxi driver, he is friendly and helps me, he’s like my second dad.”*

*“We have soooooo much fun in our taxi”*

*“I like helping the two yr 7’s I have in my taxi, we talk about anything they are worried about and I make sure they are happy. If I can’t help I tell a teacher who then helps them”*

*“I like that we are all different ages on the taxis, but we all live in the same place. Because I know them from the taxi, we go and play with each other in the evening.”*

*“Taxis are really important for making you start the day happy”*

*“I had a problem, I told my PA and she fixed it for me”*

*“I like my PA because they are not like teachers, you can laugh and joke with them”*

*“It’s the best bit of the day”*

*I like the time in the taxi, I can fall asleep and relax”*

*“I love my PA she is kind and helps me”*

*“I like the taxi as I get to see my friend from Yr 11”*

*“I like talking to people in the taxi – we have fun”*

*“I like looking out the window –we play games like I spy”*

To sum up, I believe the opportunity to give all SEND students in Wiltshire a “Rowdeford Education” is just too good to miss. I would suggest one adaptation to the proposal and that



is to allow Rowdeford to remain open. With the current proposal of closure, I fear that a lot of staff (me included) would have to reassess their current employment and may seek a permanent guaranteed job elsewhere.

I believe that Rowdeford has the expertise, vision and Leadership to allow it to develop and grow to meet the needs of all children in the area.

T.L Chard  
Deputy Headteacher  
01380 850309

[TerriChard@rowdeford.wilts.sch.uk](mailto:TerriChard@rowdeford.wilts.sch.uk)

6.1.7 Staff member, Rowdeford School (27.02.19)

To whom it may concern,

Regarding the consultation on Rowdeford School, I would like to make the following points.

I have worked at Rowdeford school for over 10 years, initially as a TA and currently as a teacher. During this time I have seen many changes at the school which is a testament to our flexibility and ability to adapt to the varying needs of our students.

During my time at the school, the number of pupils on roll has grown significantly and our designation has changed to embrace a wide variety of needs and disabilities, most recently the inclusion of students with SLD. This forward thinking mindset has always been a fundamental part of the forward thinking ethos of the school.

We are well known and respected in the local community and take every opportunity to provide active and positive experiences for our students. This, combined with the school's fantastic outdoor learning environment, allows them to gain the independence and skills they need to take them into adulthood in a safe and stimulating setting.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this response.

Yours faithfully,

6.1.8 Adrian Paviour, DT/Enterprise Coordinator, Rowdeford School (27.02.19)

Dear Councillors,

I am the Design Technology/ Enterprise Co ordinator at Rowdeford School.

I would like to take the opportunity to mention a number of community based events that I have been involved in during my time as DT/Enterprise Coordinator at Rowdeford School.

- It has been a pleasure to invite students from Larkrise School to take part in Technology days where they have accessed the Rowdeford Technolgy room to design, make and take home a number of functional products. Accompanying staff who came with students had feedback how rewarding it had been for students to makend take home a Clock. It also gave Rowdeford Students the opportunity to work with younger members of a different special school.

- Enterprise Co ordinator has given Rowdeford Students the opportunity to appreciate and understand the real world of Enterprise. Rowdeford Students take part in 3 Enterprise Days per year where they have the opportunity to design and make a variety of functional products to sell. We have developed a small Enterprise Shop that has given Students to market and sell products to the public at the Garden Fete and Summer Fair. It has been great to see Rowdeford students representing and engaging with public at these events. Students seeing the design process through to the making and finalling the marketing and selling of many useful and fuctional products made with Computer aided design and technology.

I hope this information highlights the hard work put in by Students and Staff and reflects a small but important part of the practical Technolgy based curriculum at Rowdeford School.

Best Wishes,

Adrian Paviour, Design Technology and Enterprise Co ordinator.

#### 6.1.9 Staff member, Rowdeford School (27/02/19)

To whom it may concern

I am writing to share my views on the consultation relating to Rowdeford School.

I strongly agree with the proposal to site the new special school at Rowdeford School but would suggest that Rowdeford School stays open rather than closing to open a new school on the same site. My reasons for this are that:

Rowdeford School has established community links – keeping the school open will help keep these ties and enable them to grow. Students joining from other schools will benefit from these links and Rowdeford School is more than capable of expanding/growing these links in a holistic manner to reflect the changing profile of its students.

The school already has established links with hospices and other agencies and charities – closing the school to open a new one on the same site will certainly not have a positive impact on these links but may complicate things. An established school like Rowdeford is known and respected which makes networking much easier, allowing greater access to local and national resources.

Rowdeford is a school that can change and has changed – it has doubled in size in the last 15 years and can double again. Expertise has developed and expanded from SPLD to include ASD and other needs and staff are keen and proactive in gaining relevant CPD that helps them better-support the students.

Rowdeford's location is particularly central. I am the (job role) at Rowdeford and I meet up with other Coordinators in Wiltshire on an annual basis. Teachers always request Rowdeford as the meeting point because of its central location within the county. This also has a positive impact on transport time on taxis; a central location is paramount to minimise student travel time.

Rowdeford School may be set in a rural location but it has years of experience utilising that to the maximum; this makes the fact a positive rather than negative, in my opinion. Rowdeford engages effectively with the local community and students have positive experiences outside of the school which encourages them to be a part of the community; they engage with the community through sports trips where they do actually compete, rather than passively spectating and also learn to use public transport – the school runs trips to Devizes, Chippenham and Bath using public transport where students proactively buy their own tickets and take responsibility for themselves throughout the trip. This is an important life skill and one of many that the school instils throughout students' time at the school. Rowdeford challenges students and empowers them to interact within the community.

The fact that Rowdeford is so close to Devizes is very significant with respect to medical emergencies – we have a number of students who have medical diagnoses that indicate that they may require immediate treatment and have care plans and risk assessments that meet all of their needs.

Rowdeford School is very adaptive – it has extensive experience of students with life limiting medical needs and affords all students the same opportunities and experiences. The school has successfully adapted its Duke of Edinburgh activities to ensure that everyone can participate. This is just one example of a number of instances where the school has ensured that equal access is available for all.

Finally, Rowdeford has an amazing team and everyone is keen to learn new skills and to work with other experts and new team members. It is highly supportive and encourages sharing and supporting with an SLT that strongly feels that the Health and Safety of all, both students and teachers, is of utmost importance.

Thank you very much for your attention with in this matter.  
Kind regards

#### [6.1.10 Staff member, Rowdeford School \(27.01.19\)](#)

Dear Councillors,

I am writing to you, following the consultation meeting at Rowdeford School yesterday. I am the SENCO at Rowdeford School, and have worked here for approximately 17 years. I am passionate about the school, the site, the staff I work with and the incredible children I work for.

Rowdeford's rural setting has been mentioned a great deal, and there is no denying that the school is rural. However, the school has much to offer because of this and the setting is in no way a barrier to us engaging with, and being part of our wider local community. When our students leave the school site, on the many trips we organise, they are fully engaged with the community. They take part in trips, competitions, activities alongside mainstream peers. They are actively involved in activities, showing how young people with disabilities are empowered and able to demonstrate personal autonomy. The value of 'being the best I can be' is a golden thread that is in all we do in the school. We carry this forward into the local community and act as ambassadors for all young people with visible and less visible disabilities.

I have the privilege of being the tutor for a class called Willow, which is the tutor base for 9 of our most vulnerable young people within the school. I am devoted to ensuring that these young people are included in all aspects of community life, and we each of our terms is based around a trip or visit. For example this term our topic is 'Having Fun and making friends'. We are practising our life skills and learning to play together in school, with trips planned to visit a local cafe and a local park in Devizes. This is just one example of how we adapt our curriculum, giving it a life skills focus and make good use of our community links.

One of the barriers we have to accessing our community would be the pavement and the road outside the school, and any improvements to this would be incredible. However, you will be amazed to the lengths we go to to ensure we break down the barriers, ensuring that we continue to get out and about.

In terms of change, I have seen the school double in size already during my time here. We have changed our designation to include young people with Severe Learning Difficulties just a year ago. Around 15 years ago, we were able to offer Wiltshire's only secondary specialist provision for ASD and the Prospect Centre was build and developed. The work that took place, demonstrates our 'can do' attitude, our team work, our ability to request advice and act on this, our ability to upskill and learn new skills, our ability to welcome new students with a wide variety of needs, and our ability to include them and value them in our school. This should be considered by yourselves, and to consider allowing Rowdeford School to grow and develop further into Wiltshire's centre of expertise for young people with SEND. We have the drive to grow, we have the compassion to care and we have the humility to know that we do not have all the answers, and want to work with others to ensure we get the very best outcomes for all young people in Wiltshire.

Yours sincerely

[6.1.11 Ken Barker, PE/Dance Coordinator, Rowdeford School \(27.02.19\)](#)

Dear Director, Commissioner, Councillor,

I am a teacher at Rowdeford School, and have been working at the school for the past three years. My role is as PE/Dance coordinator, however I have taught a variety of subjects within the school.

I am writing to express my thoughts regarding the consultation around the provision of SEN within Wiltshire, specifically involving Rowdeford, St Nicks, and Larkrise. As I am a teacher at Rowdeford, I am extremely concerned regarding the possible closure of our school, and indeed not having a school within the mazing grounds that Rowdeford has.

Rowdeford is located in a rural part of the county, however is close to Devizes, and we run many engaging trips throughout the county for our entire student body. These trips are not just about getting our students out into the community but indeed are about are students actively involving themselves within the communities within Wiltshire. Examples of this are the variety of sporting activities that we take students to, through the Mid Wilts sports organisation. These have included New Age Curling, Boccia, Football, Swimming, Trampolining, Tag rugby, Table cricket competitions. Through these activities our students

have actively been engaged with students throughout Wiltshire both SEN and mainstream. Gaining valuable life skills and experience in the process. We indeed have been one of the founders along with the Mid Wilts school organizer in a Special Schools Sporting Organisation – this would allow a variety of sporting opportunities between all the SEN schools throughout the region allowing all diversities of needs to access sports in an environment that includes students outside their school.

We have had all our students involved within sporting competitions regardless of their needs; this has ranged from medium to severe learning difficulties as well as disabilities. In terms of our more able students we are currently, the only SEN school within Wiltshire to have had a number of our students trained up to be Sports Leaders. These students actively help promote sport within the school by organising and running events at break times, but also go out to competitions and help officiate and run them. Recently our sports leaders were invited to help officiate at the schools county finals of New Age Kurling that was hosted at Dauntsey School.

Throughout the school and over the time I have been here the school has continually adapted to the needs of the students that we have. With the change in our classification to SLD. We have the expertise to integrate fully, students with all needs, and this has been done successfully throughout my time here. To have a school that is in such a wonderful environment is a positive impact on all the students here at Rowdeford and I think it should be an opportunity for any SEN students to be educated and experience such a rich and fulfilling environment to be educated in.

To me this idea of closing three schools, or any schools is not necessarily the right way to think about things. I think the merger of the three schools into one school that draws on the expertise of all the staff, in an environment that can only enrich the lives of students that are fortunate enough to be educated within it. Rowdeford's school mission statement 'Is to be at the forefront of Special education needs' we have an opportunity to create this under the 1 school proposal, and give the amazing benefits to a wider variety of SEN students around the county.

Already Rowdeford School has a number of students that may require urgent medical attention at times. These needs are more than able to be met again by the support teams we have in school, first aiders we have, Devizes ambulance service just up the road, and if necessary the Wiltshire Air ambulance based also in Devizes.

In short yes our school is located in a rural environment, however we are fully ENGAGED within communities around the county, and always have the safety and wellbeing of our students in the forefront of everything we do.

I very much hope that Rowdeford School continues to be, and that the amalgamation of the three schools onto the site is regarded as an opportunity to give the very best care, education, experiences and support to all our SEN students and families within the region.

Kind regards,  
Mr Ken Barker  
Head of PE and Dance

### **Local Authority Special School Consultation – Rowdeford School**

As a teacher at Rowdeford School, I would like to make the following points for consideration as part of the Local Authority Special Schools Consultation.

I support the proposal, tabled at the cabinet meeting, on the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2018, that one big school be created on the Rowdeford site. However, I would suggest that a merger of the three schools, rather than their closure, on the Rowdeford site and under the respected name **Rowdeford School** would be more effective and efficient.

It is great that Directors, Commissioners and Councillors have recognised the value of and need to maintain a school on the Rowdeford site for future generations of young people with SEND. It is exciting and cost efficient that the proposals indicate that it will remain a part of Wiltshire Special School provision in the future. Similarly, it is encouraging that Wiltshire Council will be investing a significant amount of money, £20M, to provide for the future of SEND in the county. The staff, parents and governors at Rowdeford believe in the Local authorities' vision, and are excited to support the local authority with their proposal to create a centre of excellence for Special Educational Needs on the Rowdeford site.

As you will be aware, one of Rowdeford School's special strength is its outdoor provision and how it is used to develop community links, with other stakeholders, both within and outside the county; it has the potential to lead on a National level. This kind of outdoor provision could never be replicated if it was lost. Outdoor Learning is so important to students with SEND because it opens doors to rewarding and sustainable futures in the community and workplaces for young people with special needs. Working outdoors helps students to learn more about themselves and as they grow in confidence, they learn to set goals and tackle challenges calmly, learning to be more positive. Research shows that it also has a positive impact on mental health and well-being. Having this facility surrounding, and integral to the new school, will allow all SEND students in the county to benefit from this amazing resource, cutting the County's current bill for alternative education and out of county placements. Maintaining a school at Rowdeford safeguards this unique resource for the future.

Rowdeford School is highly regarded both locally and in the wider community. The school has been commended by Ofsted and has been graded as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' for the last ten years. Our work with Eco Schools and Values Based Education mean that other schools from all over the country, have sent staff here to find out how we do it! For example, in this academic year staff came from a special school in Kent for a fact-finding day. Many trips out to places like Devizes or Chippenham using either school transport or public buses (there is a bus stop at the end of the drive for a route between Chippenham and Devizes, sometimes via Calne) take place over the year. These provide valuable lessons in life skills for the students, as well as raising the profile of students with SEND and their abilities and needs with local people and the general public.

Geographically, Rowdeford School is the very well placed to serve most parts of the county, providing easy access for the North, East, West and Centre of the county. It is within a ten-minute drive of Devizes, Calne and Melksham and fifteen to twenty minutes' drive of

Chippenham and Trowbridge. Maintaining a school at Rowdeford also makes it possible to serve a large part of the South of the county; it is within a forty-five minute drive of many population areas within the south, including Salisbury and Amesbury. This makes Rowdeford an ideal central location for a complex needs school and a hub for outside agencies. Its semi-rural location, close to Devizes, delivers the best of both worlds, that is, links to big towns and rural, peaceful, well-used substantial grounds, traffic free roads and space to continue to expand in the future. This could not be achieved in an urban environment. If a medical emergency were to occur, we are close to the Devizes Ambulance Station, and if needs be, have space for the emergency helicopter to land to take a casualty further afield in the shortest possible timeframe. Surely Julia's House (the children's hospice), Canon's House (respite/short breaks for children with a range of difficulties) and Bradbury Manor (a care home for people with learning disabilities and physical disabilities) would not all be located on the edge of Devizes if access to medical expertise and facilities were an issue?

I believe that the Rowdeford School estate has the space to provide the development that the Local Authority are seeking; enhancement of the site will easily occur without interrupting the day-to-day running of the school. The current proposal will provide a centre of excellence, for the long term, that will provide an integrated system of education and care, without losing the exceptional outdoor space that has enhanced the curriculum for thousands of students over the years. Furthermore, Rowdeford is the option that will "future proof" the Wiltshire SEND offer moving forward, as the opportunities to expand on the site, pre- and post-2023 are significant.

I would urge you to recognise that Rowdeford School's consultancy service delivers high quality training for local Schools, Colleges and Universities to understand better the needs of children and young adults with SEND. The school has already established numerous links with mainstream Primary and Secondary, and Special Schools. Rowdeford School already delivers alternative provision via their Plus programme (now accessed by approximately 45 students a week) and specialist SEND training and support to mainstream staff. Rowdeford School has the capability and the established links, to provide the in-reach and outreach model that the county needs.

The provision at Rowdeford School is amazing; the magic of Rowdeford must be retained throughout any planned developments. The ethos of Rowdeford School, its values based curriculum and the outdoor learning it promotes must be preserved. I support the current one-school solution, on the Rowdeford site; however, it appears contradictory to shut Rowdeford School, only to open another school on the same site, when the school has such a fantastic reputation. The school is already set to grow with a larger than expected cohort joining the school in September 2019. This natural growth can be extended to accommodate the development planned. Growth, not closure, of Rowdeford School will help us to preserve the ethos and magic of the school, ensuring that it is retained for the benefit of all complex needs students in the future.

The school has always worked closely with the Local Authority; recently providing an extension to its designation to support the growth of Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD). More recently, it has been involved in developing resource base provision in partner primaries and a solutions-focused approach to increased provision for students requiring reception-age



placements in September 2019. Next year we are already going to grow by 33%; Rowdeford will be providing education for approximately 180 students from September 2019.

Rowdeford School has a remarkable and dedicated staff team that have the energy, enthusiasm and vision to manage lessons in outdoor spaces, utilising animal and woodland areas. Staff are keen to work here, being prepared to travel long distances and to move from distant areas in order to work here. Alongside this, the school has an estates manager with woodland and animal management experience. Staff are also highly competent in delivering lessons to students who are grouped both chronologically and based on need. The school already has established links with an excellent MAT and is part of a Teaching Schools Alliance. Rowdeford School has an excellent reputation and is well placed to achieve an 'Outstanding' grade at its next Ofsted inspection. Growth of Rowdeford School will help us to avoid losing specialist staff, preserving all of our expertise and fantastic practice, ensuring it is retained for the benefit of all complex needs students in the future.

Our annual student and parent surveys show that students feel safe here, and that their parents agree. There are many strong processes and procedures in place to avoid absconsions, and in fact, students are taught to use certain parts of the outside as an area to go to to calm down and benefit from. The taxi journey that all students take is perceived as a joy by the students; an enjoyable time to develop social skills in a safe environment and a time in which to notice the beautiful Wiltshire countryside as it changes throughout the year.

It must be recognised that to make the new school on the Rowdeford site work, work should be done to improve the condition of the public footpaths outside so that ambulant students and wheelchair users can safely travel along them to facilities in Bromham and Rowde.

I urge you to ensure that Rowdeford School is retained and that its Values based curriculum, outstanding practice and Outdoor Learning is shared for the benefit of all students in Wiltshire. I sincerely believe that the future of SEND provision is at Rowdeford, under the Rowdeford umbrella, and with the Local Authority we have the vision and drive to make this a reality.

Yours faithfully  
Kate Walling (Mrs)  
Rowdeford School

6.1.13 Georgina Turner, Art Coordinator, Rowdeford School (27.02.19)

Dear [specialschools@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:specialschools@wiltshire.gov.uk)

I am the Art Coordinator at Rowdeford School and I would like to raise the following points regarding the consideration of the future of Special Education at the Rowdeford site.

- Rowdeford has well-established links with our immediate community and beyond. Our students go on many trips which enable them to engage with their peers and the community as a whole. These include life skills experiences, creative workshops and projects linked to sustainability and environmental awareness projects. Our students truly are ambassadors for young people with SEND and we receive lots of positive feedback about their conduct and outlook.



- Rowdeford is a rural site providing a unique environment which cannot be replicated in an urban area. The benefits of outdoor spaces on mental health and wellbeing are well documented and are even more relevant when considering learners with SEND. As mentioned above, our georgic location does not impede our community involvement. Indeed, we make more effort to create community links which enhance our students' learning and allow them to integrate fully with the villages and towns surrounding the school.
- Our artistic cohort regularly exhibits in local spaces (including Rowde Village Hall) and we were a part of the Poly-Olbion project which toured nationally. Exhibiting in this way provides a fantastic opportunity for our learners and outside communities to share their artistic expression.
- We can, with the expansion of the school, ensure that we provide spaces and technology to meet the needs of all learners. We already have an ambitious Accessibility Plan which we are following to enable safe access to all areas of the site. This can be further built upon to re-enforce our community links- for example improvement of the footpaths into Rowde and Bromham and decreasing the speed limit outside the school gate. The addition of a café or similar would further provide opportunity for the local community to benefit from our ethos and values.
- Alongside the physical expansion of the site, we are keen to expand our knowledge so that we can continue to provide exemplary specialist education to all learners. This would of course involve drawing on the expertise of external agencies, medical experts and staff who will hopefully join us from the other Specialist Schools.

Thank you. I hope you will consider these points.

Best wishes

Georgia Turner

[6.1.14 John Craze, Outdoor Learning Devlpt Coordinator, Rowdeford School \(27.02.19\)](#)

**Dear Councillor/Cabinet Member**

**Re: Local Authority Special School Consultation – Rowdeford School**

Following the recent consultation evening at Rowdeford School I felt it was important to outline the way that we access and use both the local and greater community to benefit learning and also how the school benefits from its community links. Part of my role at Rowdeford is that of the EVC, (Educational Visits Coordinator) and I therefore have oversight of how regularly and for what reason we leave our school site.

Attached is a summary of visits from the last two terms of the last academic year. It demonstrates the regularity and diversity of the educational and community experiences we provide for our students.

There is so much to report so I have summarised some of what we do;

Art

In the last four years our students art work has featured in both local and national exhibitions. Rowde Village Hall, The Flower Show, The Pound Art Centre, Corsham, The Holborne

Museum, Bath and The Poly Olbion Exhibition which toured the country and visited Devizes. Pupils artwork features in the exhibits and the pupils also visit the locations, take part in workshops and meet local artists.

## PE

Our PE Department have been central to setting up a special schools sporting alliance as part of the Mid Wilts School Games Programme. Rowdeford School was often the only special school represented at tournaments and students wanted more opportunities to connect with other schools and compete. This year the school have taken students to target sports tournaments such as New Age Curling and Boccia, football, Tag Rugby, table cricket and trampolining at Lavington, Devizes and Dauntseys Schools. We use Devizes Leisure Centre for swimming classes up to three times a week which is just a ten minute drive from the school.

## DT

We have the only specialist Design Technology facility in the three school and our subject specialist has developed this resource previously working with George Ward School. In recent years he has worked with Larkrise enabling their students and staff to access the facilities to complete single project days.

## Drama

Shakespeare Schools Festival, Wyvern Theatre, Swindon – each year a drama group get the opportunity to perform at the festival, they visit the theatre and complete dress rehearsals before the big show in front of members of the public. Drama groups have also performed at the Wharf Theatre in Devizes

Willow Class represent our most vulnerable learners, their curriculum programme works towards a community centred visit each term. Last term they developed the skills needed to visit Pizza Express in Devizes, a short drive from the site. This term they will be visiting Hillworth Park in Devizes and learning how to stay safe in a community park area.

Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day – three different year groups entered the bee and honey related competitions and classes which took place in the Corn Exchange in Devizes. Several of our students won prizes and featured in the local media.

St Mary's Church Devizes – we have a long standing relationship with the church and help adopt and decorate their Christmas trees each year.

Carol Festivals at Bromham and Rowde Churches – These take place every year for KS3 and 4. We have good relationships with both parishes and the Reverends regularly attend the school on occasions such as the Harvest Festival. We donate our harvest to Devizes Food Bank. We also support the food bank as our DofE students visit their twice a term to pack food relief boxes. We regularly walk in both parishes and have conducted litter picks in their community sports fields.

## DofE and Plus Programme

Both groups of learners have volunteered in the local community at the Jubilee Woods completing conservation work for the Canal and Rivers Trust. This relationship is extended with an annual residential trip on the canal on one of the trusts specialist barges. The school has worked hard with the county footpaths officer in re-establishing and improving local

footpaths that lead away from the site. Volunteers from RWB Academy helped put in new kissing gates in 2016. These footpaths connect the school with the local area and enable our groups to experience the rural, countryside surroundings. We are able to access the whole of the Kennet and Avon Canal, the North Wilts Downs, the White Horse Way, The Wansdyke and Roundway Hill. Our practice walk goes from the school to Blackland Lakes on the outskirts of Calne. This demonstrates how close the communities are geographically. For our assessed silver expeditions we travel to the Quantock Hills in Somerset. Over the last three years I have supported St Nics, Exeter House and Springfields in the development of their DofE provision. Both Exeter House and St Nics use our site and the local walking opportunities for their bronze expeditions. This year a wheel chair user from St Nics was able to stay under canvas in our yurt but still have the necessary support required to enable him to complete the expedition.

In addition to the DofE programme all pupils from YR8 – 11 take part in the sponsored wheel and walk every September. The walk follows the Kennet and Avon Canal from Semington to Devizes. Local businesses along the route support the school and we raise a significant amount each year to give to our chosen charity.

The school site also provides a facility to the local community and this is something we are developing further in our SIP. Several local clubs or businesses currently or have hired out our facilities, including Devizes Judo Club and Julia's House. We have volunteers from RWB Academy every year and have worked with the local branches of Lloyds Bank. Our school is well linked and represented by the Friends of Rowdeford and Rowdeford Charity Trust organisations in the local community. Each year the RCT Garden Fair receives hundreds of visitors and raises thousands of pounds to support the school.

This week I am meeting with the local Parkrun Ambassador to facilitate the creation of a Parkrun for Devizes at Rowdeford School. We already have a committee of enthusiastic people who want to make this happen. This will provide further links with our local community and demonstrates the close relationship we have with the surrounding town and residential areas.

I hope this brief summary has demonstrated that we are not an isolated rural school but we are in fact an outstanding school on the outskirts of Devizes that is very much a part of the local and wider community. We make the most of our position by providing a diversity of important and beneficial learning opportunities that will help prepare our students for life after school and into college or the work place.

Yours faithfully,

**John Craze, Outdoor Learning Development Coordinator**

Type	Establishment	ID	Name	Start	Destination	External Providers	Primary Purpose
Other	Rowdeford School	23448	Drews Pond	16/04/2018	<a href="#">Drews Pond</a>	<a href="#">Drews Pond</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional
Other	Rowdeford School	23534	Hillworth Park	18/04/2018	<a href="#">Hillworth park</a>	<a href="#">Hillworth park</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional
Other	Rowdeford School	23536	Heavens Gate				Personal, Social and Emotional
Other	Rowdeford School	23055	Egg Theatre Bath 2018				English/Drama
Other	Rowdeford School	23677	Barbary Castle				Personal, Social and Emotional
Residential, Adventurous (Staff)	Rowdeford School	23686	DofE Practice Expedition			<a href="#">1 ONOQ</a>	Duke of Edinburgh
Other	Rowdeford School	23678	west kennet long barrow			<a href="#">arrow</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional
Other	Rowdeford School	23679	lydiard park				Personal, Social and Emotional
Other	Rowdeford School	23680	cherhill monument	30/04/2018	<a href="#">8XY</a>	<a href="#">8XY</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional
Other	Rowdeford School	23683	Hope nature centre	03/05/2018	<a href="#">Hope Nature Centre (BA14 9QD)</a>	<a href="#">Hope Nature Centre (BA14 9QD)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional
Other	Rowdeford School	23657	Bristol Hippodrome Yr7	04/05/2018	<a href="#">Bristol Hippodrome (BS1 4UZ)</a>	<a href="#">Bristol Hippodrome (BS1 4UZ)</a>	English/Drama
Residential	Rowdeford School	22595	canal trip 2018	08/05/2018	<a href="#">The Bruce Trust (RG17 9YY)</a>	<a href="#">The Bruce Trust (RG17 9YY)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional
Other	Rowdeford School	23966	Bus trip to Chippenham	08/05/2018	<a href="#">Chippenham Town Centre</a>	<a href="#">Chippenham Town Centre</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional
Other	Rowdeford School	23984	Devizes Bus Trip Year 10	08/05/2018	<a href="#">devizes town centre</a>	<a href="#">devizes town centre</a>	Personal Development
Other	Rowdeford School	23985	Life Skills Day trip to Bath	08/05/2018	<a href="#">Chippenham Train station</a> <a href="#">Bath Spa (BA1 1JP)</a> <a href="#">Odeon Cinema (BA1 2BX)</a> <a href="#">SouthGate Retail Centre (</a>	<a href="#">Chippenham Train station</a> <a href="#">Bath Spa (BA1 1JP)</a> <a href="#">Odeon Cinema (BA1 2BX)</a> <a href="#">SouthGate Retail Centre (</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	24059	Odeon cinema trowbridge	09/05/2018	<a href="#">Odeon Cinema (BA1 2BX)</a>	<a href="#">Odeon Cinema (BA1 2BX)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional
Residential, Adventurous (Staff)	Rowdeford School	24142	DofE Exped Second Practice Camp -	09/05/2018	<a href="#">Not Applicable- Rowdeford School</a>	<a href="#">Not Applicable</a>	Duke of Edinburgh
Other	Rowdeford School	24170	8MB Swimming Devizes	09/05/2018	<a href="#">Devizes Leisure Centre</a>	<a href="#">Devizes Leisure Centre</a>	PE
Other	Rowdeford School	23980	Y11 Horticulture visit to Posies With Pride	10/05/2018	<a href="#">Posies with Pride</a>	<a href="#">Posies with Pride</a>	Science
Other	Rowdeford School	24098	Wilts and Berks canal Towpath Project	10/05/2018	<a href="#">Wilts and Berks Canal</a>	<a href="#">Wilts and Berks Canal</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional
Other	Rowdeford School	24219	10S trip to Pound Arts	11/05/2018	<a href="#">The Pound Arts Centre</a>	<a href="#">The Pound Arts Centre</a>	English/Drama

Other venues that have been used in previous terms that hold an LOTC Quality Badge are;  
The Corinium Museum  
Life Skills Centre Bristol  
The GWR Steam Museum  
Wiltshire Outdoor Learning Team  
Paulton Park

Runways End HCC Outdoor Learning Centre will be used for next years YR8 residential. Chateau Beaumont is under consideration for a French Trip in 2019/20. The quality badge status is one of the reasons we are looking at this venue following a poor experience at PGL Le Pre

Other	Rowdeford School	23981	Year 10 Horticulture visit to Posies With Pride	14/05/2018	<a href="#">Posies with Pride</a>	<a href="#">Posies with Pride</a>	Science
Other	Rowdeford School	24269	Victoria Park Bath	14/05/2018	<a href="#">Royal Victoria Park (BA12NQ)</a>	<a href="#">Royal Victoria Park (BA12NQ)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	24244	Paris Smith College Visit	15/05/2018	<a href="#">Wiltshire College Chippenham (SN15 3QD)</a>	<a href="#">Wiltshire College Chippenham (SN15 3QD)</a>	Personal Development
Other	Rowdeford School	23685	West woods	17/05/2018	<a href="#">West Woods</a>	<a href="#">West Woods</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	24222	Wharf Theatre Y11	17/05/2018	<a href="#">Wharf Theatre (SN10 1EB)</a>	<a href="#">Wharf Theatre (SN10 1EB)</a>	English/Drama
Other	Rowdeford School	24271	Sheerwater lake walk	21/05/2018	<a href="#">Sheerwater lake</a>	<a href="#">Sheerwater lake</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Residential, Adventurous (Staff)	Rowdeford School	24309	DofE Quantocks Expedition	22/05/2018	<a href="#">Quantock View Camping Field (TA4 3FF)</a>	<a href="#">Quantock View Camping Field (TA4 3FF)</a>	Duke of Edinburgh
					<a href="#">Quantock Orchard Caravan Park (TA4 4AW)- Both of the above. QUantock View on the first night</a>	<a href="#">Quantock Orchard Caravan Park (TA4 4AW)</a>	
Other	Rowdeford School	24272	Alton Barnes	24/05/2018	<a href="#">Alton Barnes White Horse</a>	<a href="#">Alton Barnes White Horse</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	23843	SS Great Britain and Za Za Bazaar	05/06/2018	<a href="#">SS Great Britain (BS16TY)</a> <a href="#">Za Za Bazaar (BS15UH)</a>	<a href="#">SS Great Britain (BS16TY)</a> <a href="#">Za Za Bazaar (BS15UH)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	24884	Fairfield Transition Visit	06/06/2018	<a href="#">Fairfield Farm College (BA13 4DL)</a>	<a href="#">Fairfield Farm College (BA13 4DL)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	25119	skittles	11/06/2018	<a href="#">Bromham Social Centre (SN15 2JB)</a>	<a href="#">Bromham Social Centre (SN15 2JB)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	24994	Bingo in Bromham	12/06/2018	<a href="#">Bromham Social Centre (SN15 2JB)</a>	<a href="#">Bromham Social Centre (SN15 2JB)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	24561	Longleat (KDO)2018	13/06/2018	<a href="#">Longleat Safari Park &amp; Adventure Park (BA12 7ND)</a>	<a href="#">Longleat Safari Park &amp; Adventure Park (BA12 7ND)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	24763	vue cinema trowbridge	13/06/2018	<a href="#">Vue Cinema (BA14 8TQ)</a>	<a href="#">Vue Cinema (BA14 8TQ)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	24997	Alton Barnes picnic tea and walk	18/06/2018	<a href="#">Alton Barnes White Horse</a>	<a href="#">Alton Barnes White Horse</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	25351	Fairfield visit	18/06/2018	<a href="#">Fairfield Farm College (BA13 4DL)</a>	<a href="#">Fairfield Farm College (BA13 4DL)</a>	Personal Development
Other	Rowdeford School	25353	Poplar College Transition visit	19/06/2018	<a href="#">Poplars Sixth Form (SN15 3QH)</a>	<a href="#">Poplars Sixth Form (SN15 3QH)</a>	Personal Development
Other	Rowdeford School	24764	Poulshot Vintage Cars	20/06/2018	<a href="#">The Green (SN10 1BT)</a>	<a href="#">The Green (SN10 1BT)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	25016	Walk in Avebury	21/06/2018	<a href="#">Avebury Stones (SN8 1BF)</a>	<a href="#">Avebury Stones (SN8 1BF)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	25017	Trowbridge park and hungry horse	25/06/2018	<a href="#">Trowbridge Park (BA14 8AH)</a> <a href="#">Hungry Horse</a>	<a href="#">Trowbridge Park (BA14 8AH)</a> <a href="#">Hungry Horse</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	25539	Lackham Transition	25/06/2018	<a href="#">Lackham College (SN15 2NY)</a>	<a href="#">Lackham College (SN15 2NY)</a>	Personal Development
Other	Rowdeford School	25397	Christie Miller Bowling PDY11	26/06/2018	<a href="#">Christie Miller Sports Centre (SN12 6QU)</a>	<a href="#">Christie Miller Sports Centre (SN12 6QU)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Other	Rowdeford School	25019	Avoncliffe walk	28/06/2018	<a href="#">Bradford on Avon</a>	<a href="#">Bradford on Avon</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford	25573	Prize Giving 2018	29/06/2018	<a href="#">Bromham Social Centre (SN15 2JZ)</a>	<a href="#">Bromham Social Centre (SN15 2JZ)</a>	Reward
Other	Rowdeford School	25022	Hillworth Park	02/07/2018	<a href="#">Hillworth Park</a>	<a href="#">Hillworth Park</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	25560	PP Longleat	02/07/2018	<a href="#">Longleat (BA12 7Nw)</a>	<a href="#">Longleat (BA12 7Nw)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	25561	PP Longleat Tuesday	03/07/2018	<a href="#">Longleat (BA12 7Nw)</a>	<a href="#">Longleat (BA12 7Nw)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	24768	Swimming and McDonalds	04/07/2018	<a href="#">Oasis Leisure Centre (SN2 1EP)</a> <a href="#">McDonalds Restaurants</a>	<a href="#">Oasis Leisure Centre (SN2 1EP)</a> <a href="#">McDonalds Restaurants</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	25564	PP Longleat Wednesday	04/07/2018	<a href="#">Longleat (BA12 7Nw)</a>	<a href="#">Longleat (BA12 7Nw)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	25882	life skills day-bowling and cafe	04/07/2018	<a href="#">Christie Miller Sports Centre (SN12 6QU)</a> <a href="#">Whitehall Garden Centre (SN15 2LZ)</a>	<a href="#">Christie Miller Sports Centre (SN12 6QU)</a> <a href="#">Whitehall Garden Centre (SN15 2LZ)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	25023	christie miller bowling	05/07/2018	<a href="#">Christie Miller Sports Centre (SN12 6QU)</a>	<a href="#">Christie Miller Sports Centre (SN12 6QU)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	25955	Canal and Rivers Trust, Jubilee Woods and Towpath	05/07/2018	<a href="#">Jubilee Woodland / Caen Hill (SN10 1HE)</a>	<a href="#">Jubilee Woodland / Caen Hill (SN10 1HE)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Residential,	Rowdeford	26004	Yr10 Overnight School Camp	09/07/2018	<a href="#">Not Applicable- Rowdeford School</a>	<a href="#">Not Applicable</a>	Duke of Edinburgh
Other	Rowdeford	26045	Roundway Walk - Monday	09/07/2018	<a href="#">None (None)</a>	<a href="#">None (None)</a>	PE
Other	Rowdeford School	26089	Victoria Park Bath	09/07/2018	<a href="#">Victoria Park</a>	<a href="#">Victoria Park</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford	26047	Roundway Walk - Tuesday	10/07/2018	<a href="#">None (None)</a>	<a href="#">None (None)</a>	PE
Other	Rowdeford	26048	Roundway Walk - Wednesday	11/07/2018	<a href="#">None (None)</a>	<a href="#">None (None)</a>	PE
Residential, Adventurous	Rowdeford School	25302	Pencelli 2018	16/07/2018	<a href="#">Flax Pencell Outdoor Education Centre (LD3 7LJ)</a>	<a href="#">Flax Pencell Outdoor Education Centre (LD3 7LJ)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford	25844	Yr7 Activity Week Walk	16/07/2018	<a href="#">Caen Hill</a>	<a href="#">Caen Hill</a>	Personal Development
Other	Rowdeford School	25846	Yr10 Activity Week Walk	17/07/2018	<a href="#">Clinghall Woods</a>	<a href="#">Clinghall Woods</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford School	25936	Trinity School play	17/07/2018	<a href="#">The Trinity School</a>	<a href="#">The Trinity School</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford	26132	Hawk Conservancy 2018	17/07/2018	<a href="#">Hawk Conservancy Trust</a>	<a href="#">Hawk Conservancy Trust</a>	Environmental
Other	Rowdeford	26005	Y10 Lydiard Park Activities	18/07/2018	<a href="#">Lydiard Park</a>	<a href="#">Lydiard Park</a>	PE
Other	Rowdeford School	26114	Day trip to Devizes	18/07/2018	<a href="#">Devizes Museum (SN10)</a>	<a href="#">Devizes Museum (SN10)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford	26192	Yr 9 Swimming Trip	18/07/2018	<a href="#">Devizes Leisure Centre</a>	<a href="#">Devizes Leisure Centre</a>	PE
Other	Rowdeford School	25781	Cotswold Wildlife Park Yr7	19/07/2018	<a href="#">Cotswold Wildlife Park and Gardens (OX18 1JF)</a>	<a href="#">Cotswold Wildlife Park and Gardens (OX18 1JF)</a>	Science
Other	Rowdeford	25847	Yr9 Roundway Walk	19/07/2018	<a href="#">Roundway Hill</a>	<a href="#">Roundway Hill</a>	Personal Development
Other	Rowdeford School	26268	YR9 Caen Hill Flight Walk	19/07/2018	<a href="#">Caen Hill</a>	<a href="#">Caen Hill</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Other	Rowdeford	25831	We the curious	20/07/2018	<a href="#">We The Curious (BS1 5DB)</a>	<a href="#">We The Curious (BS1 5DB)</a>	Science
Adventurous	Rowdeford School	25779	Jungle Parc Merit Trip 23.7.18	23/07/2018	<a href="#">Jungle Parc (SM5 3PA)</a>	<a href="#">Jungle Parc (SM5 3PA)</a>	Personal, Social and Emotional Development



**Dear Sir/Madam,**

**Re: Local Authority Special School Consultation – Rowdeford School**

As you are aware, Wiltshire Local Authority have been debating the future of SEND provision across the county for some time. A current focus for the Local Authority is the three complex needs schools in the north of the county. This includes Rowdeford, Larkrise (Trowbridge) and St. Nicholas (Chippenham).

The current proposal is that all schools would close to make way for one big school on the Rowdeford site. As a teacher at Rowdeford School I support the proposal for the one-school solution to be based on the Rowdeford site. This site cannot be lost for the young people of Wiltshire, it is essential to maintain a school here for the future generations of young people with SEND.

Investment and new infrastructure is well needed, so I am pleased that Wiltshire Council will be investing a significant amount of money, £20M, to provide for the future of SEND in the county. At Rowdeford we are all excited to support the local authority with their proposal to create a centre of excellence for Special Educational Needs on the Rowdeford site.

Rowdeford School's unique strength is its outdoor provision and the learning that goes on in the outdoor environment. This resource is used to develop community links, with other stakeholders, both within and outside the county, and we have the potential to lead on a National level. This kind of outdoor provision could never be replicated if it was lost. Outdoor Learning is so important to students with SEND because it opens doors to rewarding and sustainable futures in the community and workplaces for young people with special needs. Working outdoors helps students to learn more about themselves and as they grow in confidence, they learn to set goals and tackle challenges calmly, learning to be more positive. Research shows that it also has a positive impact on mental health and well-being. Having this facility surrounding, and integral to the new school, will allow all SEND students in the county to benefit from this amazing resource, cutting the counties current bill for alternative education and out of county placements. The advantages of the impact on positive wellbeing is well needed in this age of austerity- CAMHS are suffering from budget cuts, and prevention is better than cure.

Rowdeford School is highly regarded both locally and in the wider community, by parents and pupils. The school has been commended by Ofsted and has been graded as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' for the last ten years.

Rowdeford School is the best-placed site to serve most parts of the county, providing easy access to all areas of the county. Rowdeford is an ideal central location for a complex needs school and a hub for outside agencies. Its semi-rural location, within 5 minutes of Devizes, delivers the best of both worlds, big town links whilst boasting substantial grounds, traffic free roads and space to continue to expand in the future. This could not be achieved in an urban environment.

We have already developed many ways engage with community whilst continuing to benefit from our great rural location. We are a few minutes from a large town and provide the pupils with the skills to engage fully with our local community. We also access trips and visits to the wider area.

The Rowdeford School estate has the space to provide the development that the Local Authority are seeking, and still have lots of space left for our essential outdoor learning. We also have space to develop without interrupting the day-to-day running of the school. The current proposal will provide a centre of excellence, for the long term, that will provide an integrated system of education and care, and we will still have the exceptional outdoor space that has enhanced the curriculum for thousands of students over the years.

Rowdeford School's consultancy service delivers high quality training for local Schools, Colleges and Universities to understand better the needs of children and young adults with SEND. The school has already established numerous links with mainstream Primary and Secondary, and Special Schools. Rowdeford School already delivers alternative provision via their Plus programme (now accessed by approximately 45 students a week) and specialist SEND training and support to mainstream staff. Rowdeford School has the capability and the established links, to provide the in-reach and outreach model that the county needs.

The provision at Rowdeford School is amazing; the magic of Rowdeford must be retained throughout any planned developments. The ethos of Rowdeford School, its values based curriculum and the outdoor learning it promotes must be preserved.

I support the current one-school solution, on the Rowdeford site; but do not shut Rowdeford School. Why would we shut this school, and then open another school on the same site, when this school has such a fantastic reputation?

We are already set to grow with a larger than expected cohort joining the school in September 2019. We have developed and grown many times in the past and continue to move forward-recently changing designation. We and are flexible and adaptable.

The natural growth that we expect can be extended to accommodate the development planned. Growth, not closure, of Rowdeford School will help us to preserve the ethos and magic of the school, ensuring that it is retained for the benefit of all complex needs students in the future.

I am part of a remarkable and dedicated staff team that have the energy, enthusiasm and vision to manage lessons in outdoor spaces, utilising animal and woodland areas across the curriculum. As a staff we are highly competent in delivering lessons to a wider variety of pupils with differing needs. We are a team, and learn from and lean on each other. We look forward to working with colleagues that are more skilled in other areas than we are. We love to learn, and to help others learn.

Rowdeford School needs to grow to avoid losing our specialist staff, preserving all of our expertise and fantastic practice, and providing a base for all the other staff that will work with us here to provide the best education for the pupils.



Please ensure that Rowdeford School is retained. We must keep our key strengths and build on this with the expertise and strength of others.

Yours faithfully  
Charlotte Read

[6.1.16 Staff member, Rowdeford School \(27.02.19\)](#)

**Dear Councillor/Cabinet Member**

**Re: LA Special School Consultation – Rowdeford School**

Wiltshire Local Authority have been debating the future of SEND provision across the county. A current focus is the three complex needs schools in the north of the county. This includes **Rowdeford (Rowde)**, Larkrise (Trowbridge) and St. Nicholas (Chippenham).

The proposal was that all three schools would close to make way for one big school on the Rowdeford site. **Rowdeford School supports the proposal for the one-school solution on the Rowdeford site.**

I am pleased that the need to **maintain a school on the Rowdeford site** has been recognised for future generations of young people with SEND. The staff, parents and governors at Rowdeford believe in the Local authorities' vision, and are excited to support the local authority with their proposal to create a centre of excellence for Special Educational Needs on the Rowdeford site.

Rowdeford School's unique strength is its outdoor provision and how it is used to provide active and positive experiences which build independence and ensures we engage with our community. **This kind of outdoor provision could never be replicated if it was lost.** Outdoor Learning is so important to students with SEND because it opens doors to rewarding and sustainable futures in the community and workplaces for young people with special needs. Working outdoors helps students to learn more about themselves and as they grow in confidence, they learn to set goals and tackle challenges calmly, learning to be more positive. Research shows that it also has a positive impact on mental health and well-being. Having this facility surrounding, and integral to the new school, will allow all SEND students in the county to benefit from this amazing resource.

**Rowdeford School is highly regarded** both locally and in the wider community. The school has been commended by Ofsted and has been graded as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' for the last ten years.

Rowdeford will need to grow and develop its experience and expertise in pupils with PMLD but we are school for change, we have historically already doubled in size and made provision for pupils with SLD and will be providing for reception aged pupils in the near future. As a teaching body we have always been open to change, are flexible and are forward thinking. It is my belief that PMLD pupils have the right to be educated in the same amazing environment as all pupils at Rowdeford, they would be an integral part of the school treated inclusively and not excluded. We already have pupils with life-limiting conditions and those who need emergency care, we are vvery adaptive to these pupils needs.

Rowdeford School is the **best-placed site to serve most parts of the county**, providing easy access for the North, East, West and Centre of the county. Rowdeford an ideal central location for a complex needs school and a hub for outside agencies. Its semi-rural location, within 5 minutes of Devizes, delivers the best of both worlds, big town links whilst boasting substantial grounds, traffic free roads and space to continue to expand in the future. This could not be achieved in an urban environment.

We see **Rowdeford as the option that will “Future proof” the Wiltshire SEND offer** moving forward, as the opportunities to expand on the site, pre and post-2023 are significant.

**Rowdeford School’s consultancy service delivers high quality training for local Schools, Colleges and Universities to understand better the needs of children and young adults with SEND.** The school has already established numerous links with mainstream Primary and Secondary, and Special Schools. Rowdeford School already delivers alternative provision via their Plus programme (now accessed by approximately 45 students a week) and specialist SEND training and support to mainstream staff. Rowdeford also has excellent links and reputation with outside agencies. Travel time has been mentioned as a concern for some, however it is my experience that being in a semi-rural location can actually reduce anxiety and travel time despite being longer distance. I choose to travel from Swindon to work at Rowdeford because I love working within this amazing environment with such and excellent group of colleagues. It takes the same time to travel the 25 mile journey from Swindon to Rowdeford as it would to travel the 3 miles across Swindon as there is very little traffic and journeying through the fields and trees is a lovely way to start or end the day.

The provision at Rowdeford School is amazing; **the magic of Rowdeford** must be retained throughout any planned developments. I support the current one-school solution, on the Rowdeford site; however, it appears contradictory to shut Rowdeford School, only to open another school on the same site, when the school has such a fantastic reputation. **Growth, not closure, of Rowdeford School will help us to preserve the ethos and magic of the school, ensuring that it is retained for the benefit of all complex needs students in the future.**

The school has always **worked closely with the Local Authority**; recently providing an extension to its designation to support the growth of Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD). More recently, it has been involved in developing resource base provision in partner primaries and a solutions-focused approach to increased provision for students requiring reception-age placements in September 2019. Next year we are already going to grow by 33%; Rowdeford will be providing education for approximately 180 students from September 2019.

Rowdeford School has a **remarkable and dedicated staff team** that have the energy, enthusiasm and vision to manage lessons in outdoor spaces, utilising animal and woodland areas. Staff are also highly competent in delivering lessons to students who are grouped both chronologically and based on need. **Rowdeford School has an excellent reputation and is well placed to achieve an ‘Outstanding’ grade at its next Ofsted inspection. Growth of Rowdeford School will help us to avoid losing specialist staff, preserving all of our expertise and fantastic practice, ensuring it is retained for the benefit of all complex needs students in the future.**

Please join me to **ensure that Rowdeford School is retained and that it's outstanding practice and Outdoor Learning** is shared for the benefit of all students in Wiltshire. I sincerely believe that the **future of SEND provision is at Rowdeford**, and with the Local Authority we have the vision and drive to make this a reality.

Yours faithfully

[6.1.17 Vanessa Allen, Teacher, Rowdeford School \(27.02.19\)](#)

To whom it may concern:

I write in support the decision to use the Rowdeford site as the new centre for excellence and SEN.

Having worked in a wide variety of settings, including other SEN settings, I am confident that Rowdeford is the ideal location for the new development; it is in a unique rural position within quick and easy access of Devizes and so offers the best of both worlds. The woodlands, farm animals, outdoor learning centre, river and spacious site give our students the best opportunities to explore the world around them whilst learning in a way that suits them best. The effects of a calming, natural environment have been well documented.

Because of our rural position we work harder than a lot of schools to ensure that we have strong links with the community and that our students interact on a regular basis with 'the wider world'. Our Citizenship programme of study also ensures that our pupils feel that they are taking an active and useful part in their society.

For many years the school has proved that it is flexible in its approach to inclusion; PMLD students have always been an integral part of the school community, the priority being to focus on their ability rather than disability. They are embraced and accepted by our students who understand our school values, which include respect and kindness. The school is forward thinking and has doubled its size effectively, proving that we have the experience to remain open and do the same in the near future.

Our students leave us as happy, confident young people who have high levels of self-worth; Rowdeford is a location that promotes and nurtures this.

I trust that you will continue to support the decision to keep Rowdeford open and merge the three excellent schools at our site.

Vanessa Allen

[6.1.18 Terri Chard, Deputy Head Teacher, Rowdeford School \(27.02.19\)](#)

**Dear Councillor/Cabinet Member**

**Re: Local Authority Special School Consultation – Rowdeford School**

I am writing in my support of the proposal to site the new Centre of Excellence at Rowdeford School. I would like for the proposal to be adapted to recognise that for improved continuity of service and to ensure smooth transition, that Rowdeford should remain open.

Rowdeford has proved over the years to be flexible enough to double in numbers over the last 10 years. Recently will have seen a further increase in PAN in 2019/20 and a change in designation.

The flexibility of staff will be the difference between this venture being a success and becoming a true Centre of Excellence. I am concerned that if the proposal is adopted without this change, than retention of current Rowdeford staff will be difficult.

Rowdeford is fully staffed and has never had any difficulties with recruitment. This is an amazing school in a great environment that promotes staff mental health and well-being. Personally I took an £10,000 pay cut in order to work in such an inspiring setting.

I believe the Rowdeford Site has got a good mix between site security and aesthetics. I have worked in Mainstream schools with 10ft high perimeter fencing surrounding the school. The net outcome is that students and staff feel like they are living and working in a prison. I also believe that these physical barriers give a false sense of security to students and do not teach them how to keep themselves safe. At Rowdeford, we spend time teaching students about road safety and how to keep themselves safe on the site. Parents and students unanimously state that their children is safe and feels safe within the school

At Rowdeford school we have a number of students with conditions that often constitute medical emergencies eg epilepsy, severe nut allergies, tracheotomies etc. On average, it takes 3 minutes for an ambulance to arrive from Devizes. The school is used to merging health and education together to provide a wrap around service. We already have Virgin care staff based at the school to support our young people and this would only grow in the new proposal.

Yours faithfully  
Terri Chard

#### [6.1.19 Staff member, Rowdeford School \(27.02.19\)](#)

Dear Directors, Commissioners and Councillors overseeing the consultation of Specialist Schools in North Wiltshire,

I am the (job role) at Rowdeford School. I have been in this role just over 18 months. I commute over an hour from (x) in Dorset to attend work every day. I am writing in support of the proposal to keep Rowdeford School open and to expand the one school site as we move towards 2023.

One of Rowdeford School's unique strengths is its outdoor provision and how it is used to develop community links, with other stakeholders, both within and outside the county. Outdoor Learning is so important because it opens doors to rewarding and sustainable futures in the community and workplaces for young people with special needs. Working outdoors helps students to learn more about themselves and as they grow in confidence, they learn to set goals and tackle challenges calmly, learning to be more positive. Students also learn how to look after themselves and stay safe so that they can be an active part of their local communities.

We are committed to delivering a mainstream support programme (Plus Programme) that recognises the need for smooth, calm and secure transition between educational environments, in addition to supporting pupils in their mainstream school life and as they prepare for college. Our Plus Programme is a fully staffed suite of outdoor courses designed to offer learning experiences and qualifications that emphasise the development of social communication, alongside functional skills, better preparing pupils for the challenge of change and the diversity of the community in which they live and learn.

The Plus Programme is just one part of the many great educational provisions currently at the school and it provides a strong link with 12 secondary mainstream schools and 5 Primary Schools in the North Wiltshire Area. With the capacity to grow this in the future. We currently have a waiting list for our Key Stage 3 provision and are already looking to expanding this provision in the near future. The Rowdeford mission is to be at the forefront of specialist education; providing excellent learning in inspirational environments and developing core values, communication and independence. The Plus Programme is just one example of how Rowdeford does this and will continue to do this in the future.

Thank you for taking the time to read my comment.  
Kind regards

[6.1.20 Nick Fletcher, Teacher and Staff Governor, Rowdeford School \(28.02.19\)](#)

**Dear Councillor/Cabinet Member**

**Re: Local Authority Special School Consultation – Rowdeford School**

In response to your consultation, debating the future of SEND provision across the county and particularly the schools provision for North Wiltshire, (including Rowdeford Rowde) I want to demonstrate my support for the proposal of a one school solution at the existing Rowdeford site and make the following comments.

As a teacher and staff governor at Rowdeford, I am passionate about the future of both SEND provision and the school environment and community in which I work. I was therefore delighted that Directors, Commissioners and Councillors envisaged a future that not only includes, but also further develops the school. It is my belief that the significant investment earmarked for SEND school provision allows for a further development of Rowdeford to create a community hub, integrating our students into a vibrant Wiltshire where everybody matters. I would add that we are uniquely and centrally placed within the county and that the right investment and development will allow us to invite the community to join us and be a part of our daily routines. Co-operation is an underpinning value of the school and a centre of excellence at our site is a resource that we are excited to develop in collaboration and share.

Another unique feature of the Rowdeford site is the opportunity to develop outdoor learning opportunities. We already offer a curriculum that incorporates our outdoor facilities into all areas of learning. Additionally our space allows us to deliver specific courses, such as the Duke of Edinburgh award; Land based studies qualifications and our own tree awards curriculum. The importance of such courses cannot be understated and they are part of a desirable offer that we extend to primary and secondary schools across Wiltshire, through our Plus Programme. This outward facing programme of study offers mainstream students,

struggling to access their curriculum the chance to develop social and communication skills and engage with confidence in their community. The loss of outdoor space on the scale of the Rowdeford estate would be immutable. Furthermore, the negative affect of such a lost opportunity to develop the learning and outdoor experience of all Wiltshire residents would be immeasurable. Outdoor Learning is so valuable to students, particularly those with SEND, because it helps them learn more about themselves, developing self-esteem confidence and a sense of self in relation to space. I offer this as further evidence that the Local Authority is correct in its initial decision and I assume has considered these huge benefits.

That the Local Authority recognises our potential is clear at this stage of the consultation, but I feel it is important to reiterate how well suited our school is to expansion and development. We have a loyal and committed board of governors, parent body and charity trust who have worked over many years to develop our school community. In both physical and ideological terms, we have grown together and changed as SEND has changed within the county. In my opinion, these strong relationships demonstrate a flexible community mind-set, which is open and welcoming. It is further evidence of Rowdeford's suitability for the delivery of the future vision of SEND in Wiltshire. Our school is about more than the buildings, epitomised by those long-standing relationships we have nurtured. The opportunity to repay that loyalty through a growth in our services – perhaps the development of a community farm and café, perhaps through arts spaces and regularly attended performance events, made possible by our expansion is exciting. Particularly because at its heart we would be realising the education of so many students with diverse needs, enhancing their quality of life and equipping them with the appropriate skills for their independent futures. We are also keen to invite along anybody who wants to join us for some or that entire journey.

My final comment is perhaps related to the most important voice of all, that of the pupils. Throughout the process so far, we have kept our pupils informed and involved regarding the consultation. The concepts are difficult and changing; our school council body has taken ideas from meetings and shared them in class. Additionally, the pupils have met with members of the council and represented their thoughts with clarity and maturity. Last year pupils were keen to represent what they loved about the school to a television reporter and this year, music students have embraced their Rowdeford identity: you will receive their statement and contribution sent to you separately. Overall, their feeling is one of Excitement mixed with uncertainty. Pupils I have spoken with hate any notion that the school might close, but love the idea of making new friends and of developing facilities in areas of the curriculum that they currently enjoy. Many of the children at Rowdeford like the idea that we may have younger children to help and work with and some would be keen on the idea of staying beyond 16. In other words, they have plans and aspirations that go beyond their own horizons, because they want to share the things they love about Rowdeford – the animals, the woods, the music and fun with as many people as possible. From a body of students who overall find that level of communication complex and confusing, I find that message impressively empathic. It would seem that they are urging for growth, not closure, of Rowdeford School, ensuring that it the council retains it ideologically as well as physically for the benefit of all complex needs students in the future.

Yours faithfully  
Nick Fletcher  
Teacher and Staff Governor

#### 6.1.21 Staff member, Rowdeford School (28.02.19)

Dear Sirs,

Concerning the consultation, I want to make the following points:

I agree with your proposal but want to raise how Rowdeford already holds strong community links. Teachers, other staff and every single student at the school actively use the community buildings of Rowde, the church, the local shop and the Rowdy Cow cafe, being prime examples. The local bus service, which incidentally runs right past the school, is regularly used for 'Learning Outside the Classroom' experiences, particularly in the town of Devizes. These connections are by no means passive: everyone at Rowdeford School actively engages with the community.

Recently, during work experience (offered to all Year 11 pupils, regardless of their learning needs and difficulties) the HFT Day Care centre in Rowde, provided an amazing learning experience for many of our students. Again, this highlights the visible community links available to Rowdeford School.

For those with concerns about medical emergencies, I have personal first-hand experience of needing to access the ambulance service for a pupil at the school. There was no delay in the services attending to the needs of this pupil with a potentially, life-threatening condition.

An amazing team of people work across the whole site. They are all willing to, not only share their expertise, but they will also openly welcome any advice or sharing of skills from other educational experts. Outside agencies also have strong links with the school: referrals are regular occurrences.

Rather than close the site and re-open as a completely new entity I would like to see the merger of three schools, to reflect the amazing work, and dedication of all staff at all of the three sites.

#### 6.1.22 Zoe Back, Life Skills Coordinator, Rowdeford School (28.02.19)

Dear Director/Commissioner/Councillor

I would like to take this opportunity to present my thoughts and experiences about Rowdeford School and the future of our school. I am the Life-skills Co-ordinator and have been since 2017. Having taught in SEN environments since 2002 in Cardiff, Bristol, Birmingham and Melksham I visited this school and was blown away by what I saw. The first opportunity that came available, I applied and fortunately got a job here.

What I have discovered since being here is that children relish being outside, making the most of Rowdeford's unique and special landscape. They are always well prepped and guided in these many spaces meaning they are confident to explore safely. They are provided with outside opportunities on a daily basis that develop their confidence and support them to take

risks which enrich their personal development and prepare our students for life after Rowdeford.

Many of our students have challenging behaviour, some of which can make them feel like escaping their environment. Our setting allows these children to safely escape their environment and meet their sensory need by accessing the many sensory opportunities such as our woods, garden, animals, trim trail and climbing frames. Without these wide open and sensory environments these students may not be able to cope in a classroom as well as they currently do. I strongly believe that this amazing space could enhance the lives of many more young people in years to come.

Within my curriculum area expertise of Life skills, there are many opportunities within the curriculum that explicitly mean engaging with our community. Students are encouraged and supported to use public transport to access Devizes, Chippenham and Bath. They learn the skills in class about being safe and appropriate behaviour for being out and about then put it in to practise at least 3 times in KS4. They access local shops, local sports centres, garden centres, supermarkets, shops and parks.

I personally feel that certain adaptations would be needed for a one school plan;

- we would need another access point for school so that the many taxis needed to bring students to school can access school in 2 different ways,
- address speed limits and width of pavement outside of the school to further encourage local engagement both children in to community and community in to Rowdeford
- engage all 3 schools in joint planning for future to share all expertise and not lose plethora of knowledge and staff retention,

I believe that there are some very exciting opportunities and enterprises that can be developed with the future cohort that a one school plan offers:

1. Offer a laundry service to local pubs and restaurants
2. Advertise our boarding facility to foreign students/ summer schemes / the residential element of the National Citizenship service Rowdeford students change beds etc.
3. Use fruit/ veg/ flowers/ produce to regularly sell at Devizes Thursday market with students selling
4. Garden cafe- built in a sustainable and eco-friendly way in orchard, maybe built with Rowdeford wood
5. Park run- students could be involved with some admin around this
6. Fully inclusive Woodland nursery- toddler group that access woods with helpers that are Rowdeford students

Yours Faithfully

Zoe Back

Rowdeford Teacher, Life Skills Co-ordinator



### 6.1.23 Staff member, Rowdeford School (28.02.19)

Dear Councillor/Cabinet Member

**Growing Rowdeford School, not closing Rowdeford School, will mean that young people with special educational needs within Wiltshire receive exceptional provision and are given the education that will enable them to take their rightful place in and for society.**

Rowdeford's Values Based Ethos, which is part of the International Values Based Education movement, is something that takes many years to develop and embed. (Please see [www.valuesbasededucation.com](http://www.valuesbasededucation.com)). Rowdeford School is an exemplar school that other schools are advised to visit to observe Values Based Education in action. At Rowdeford students learn even more than academic and life skills, they learn to flourish as the human beings the society of the future so desperately needs. Young people with special educational needs and disabilities face many challenges, not least to take their rightful place in society to make it inclusive and better because of their involvement. Rowdeford students take with them 6 core values that they learn to embody during their time at Rowdeford. These are cooperation, responsibility, integrity, resilience, respect and kindness. The curriculum, role modelling, ethos and community links that make this possible have been developed over many years. Growing Rowdeford will mean more students will benefit from this incredible experience. Closing Rowdeford will lose so much of what has been gained.

Rowdeford has the most phenomenal site: a walled garden where students grow food and flowers, a large woodland, animal areas, a willow walk, an orchard where students gather fruit, expansive fields, views of world class countryside... and much more. The way that students benefit from this is even more than the sum of its parts. Students develop mental wellbeing by being immersed in natural beauty and experiencing their environment mindfully. Students develop their academic, social and life skills through carefully planned activities in the outdoors that enables much richer learning than a classroom environment alone can achieve. Learning happens when something changes in the long term memory; taking part in deep, memorable and inspiring activities in the outdoors makes this possible even for students who find learning very difficult. This provision takes more than just a site, it takes the expertise, dedication and experience that Rowdeford has. To close Rowdeford would lose so much of this. To enable Rowdeford to grow will mean that many young people with diverse and complex special educational needs and disabilities will benefit from this exceptional and unique combination of the magic of a site and the magic of a team who has made the site truly work for and with people with special educational needs. It will be more than a tragedy if this was lost now; the implications would ripple far into the future.

That Rowdeford has such an amazing site is a good fortune, that it is so well placed to serve most parts of the county is remarkable. It is easily reachable for students, families and outside agencies. Being outside of a town means it avoids the congestion problem of so many sites and yet it is in easy reach of Devizes, Calne, Trowbridge and Chippenham. If the one school solution is the desired option, then a site that is both reachable and exceptional must be the place to be. Rowdeford also has the space to grow the 21st century provision young people with special educational needs and disabilities need and deserve.

Rowdeford School already has a far reaching training and consultancy service that this year alone has trained hundreds of delegates. This service is highly regarded and ensures that the essential messages and strategies for educating people with special educational needs reaches students beyond its school gates, helping to provide excellence throughout the county and beyond. Rowdeford School also educates and supports vulnerable students from other schools who attend its Plus Programme. Its sphere of influence is a powerful force for good. Closure risks losing this extraordinary influence that makes a tangible difference to countless young people with special educational needs.

The decision about whether to close Rowdeford School or enable it to grow has enormous ramifications into the future, far beyond the duration of those of us caught up in contributing to this decision. It is a legacy for future generations of young people and their families troubled and blessed by the realities of special educational needs. It is our collective duty to ensure the magic of Rowdeford School's site, ethos and expertise, that has taken generations to develop, remains. Growing Rowdeford School will mean that young people with special educational needs within Wiltshire receive exceptional provision and are given the education that will enable them to take their rightful place in and for society.

Rowdeford School must be part of future SEND provision and has the vision and drive to grow and meet the needs of more young people.

Yours faithfully,

[6.1.24 Teresa Ollerhead, Admin Officer, Rowdeford School \(28.02.19\)](#)

Good morning,

Following on from the consultation meeting held at Rowdeford; I felt compelled to write again.

One question raised as a concern for parents of children with very extreme medical conditions and how we would manage in an emergency as they feel we are somewhat remote, we have called for an ambulance on a few occasions and they have arrived within minutes. A child with a severe medical condition would most likely need to be transferred to a specialist hospital - we are just as close here at Rowdeford to all the main hospitals but have the added advantage of a helicopter being able to land right on our site because of the open spaces we already have, meaning a much quicker response from the emergency services.

In response to a question raised on how we feel we could work with the 2 other special schools we are currently sharing knowledge of our practices with the other schools.

Only last week 2 members of the admin team from one of the other special schools came to see how we do the annual review process with a view to be able to streamline-their own process. We have been invited to go to their school to see how best we can share knowledge. Being one school here at Rowdeford would mean we can build on this and learn from each other to make school a success.

Please consider all the wonderful unique facilities we have and keep a school on the Rowdeford site for the benefit of students, staff and the local community.

Best wishes  
Teresa Ollerhead  
Admin officer

#### 6.1.25 Liz Clarkson, HR & Finance Admin Officer, Rowdeford School (01.03.19)

Good afternoon,

Further to the Consultation meeting at Rowdeford School on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> I would like to add, I have on more than one occasion called an ambulance for students at Rowdeford School. We have never been in a position where the ambulance has been delayed due to our location. I would also like to add that in a very serious emergency due to the nature of the site the air ambulance would have plenty of space to land successfully.

Kind regards  
Liz Clarkson  
HR & Finance Admin Officer

#### 6.1.26 Rosie Berry, Former Governor, Rowdeford School (01.03.19)

I write to you today as a former Governor of Rowdeford School (20 years, of which 10 as Chairman), a Trustee of Rowdeford Charity Trust (5 years) and a member of the Rowdeford Garden Fair Committee (ongoing).

As you already know, I was delighted to learn at the end of last November that the LA has recognised the need to keep a school on the Rowdeford site and that Wiltshire Council will be investing £20m to provide for the future of SEND in the north of the county.

The outdoor provision already available at Rowdeford is second to none and is so very important to special needs pupils. I would mention here that the annual Garden Fair will continue to be part of the Wiltshire social calendar through to 2023, raising in excess of £10,000 each year – a further £50,000 towards outdoor learning!

The **magic of Rowdeford** must be retained throughout any planned developments. The ethos of Rowdeford School, its values based curriculum and the outdoor learning it promotes must be preserved. I am strongly opposed to the need for this school to close in 2023; it appears to me to be contradictory to shut Rowdeford School, only to open another on the same site, when the current school has such a fantastic reputation.

Rowdeford School is already set to grow with a larger than expected cohort as from September 2019 and this natural growth can be extended to accommodate the development planned. This will help preserve the **magic** and ethos of the school and ensure that it is retained for the benefit of all complex needs students in the future.

Finally, the hard working, dedicated and highly qualified specialist staff are an essential part of the whole process and they need to be retained at all costs in order to preserve their expertise and excellent practice for the future.

I am closing in repeating my hope that the ethos of Rowdeford School, its values based curriculum and 'Outstanding' practice, and the outdoor learning it promotes are retained through the **growth of the present school** and not the closure and potential loss of its special magic.

Yours sincerely,

**Rosie Berry**

#### [6.1.27 Staff member, Rowdeford School \(27.02.19\)](#)

Dear Sir/Madam

Please consider for the consultation:

I am a (job role) at Rowdeford School. I joined the staff team in September 2017 in a temporary role and now hold a permanent position as I felt so inspired and passionate about what was being achieved at Rowdeford that I wanted to continue to be a part of what was being achieved. I would like you to consider the positive impact that the staff have on the young people they educate, as they prepare them for life beyond their schooling, and enable them to thrive.

Having worked in special education previously, I was aware of how education settings differ and left my previous school feeling disillusioned by what could be achieved in special education. I adore working at Rowdeford, working with a committed staff team who have the children at the heart of all they do. It is testament to the commitment of these staff that so many of the employees have worked at the school for such long periods of time, many serving for 10 years and beyond. The ethos within the school makes for a wonderful learning environment where children feel safe to be who they are.

In my role as (job role) I have enjoyed having the facility of a beautiful walled garden to encourage children to grow their own fruit and vegetables, pick them, cook and eat them, this simply wasn't possible in my last school which had no outside space for such provision.

I adore the final stage of my commute to work, when I travel through the village of Rowde, free of traffic congestion, and drive up the spectacular drive, bordered with beautiful flowers and inspiration - this is the same view the children see in their taxi's on their commutes.

I feel passionately that a school like Rowdeford can be inspirational and remain at the forefront of specialist education, leading where others follow.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards

#### [6.1.28 Staff member, Rowdeford School \(27.02.19\)](#)

I begin this email with what may seem like a bias opinion only because I have first-hand experience of how well Rowdeford school is in caring for the children with special needs,

These children are cared for and loved by Teachers, TAs, MDSAS, kitchen staff, and Site Team even office staff and for many it's the only support and offer of care that they get due to an unstructured home life,

This school is NEEDED and the children NEED this school.

I ask you to put yourself in their shoes for one day, where would you like to be at the end of the day to feel your cared for and have a safe place where people don't Give up on you...

Please give these children the help and support and show you care by not taking away that help and support that helps them be part of this world that society says they should fit into.

#### 6.1.29 Teri Chard, Deputy Head Teacher, Rowdeford School (28.02.19)

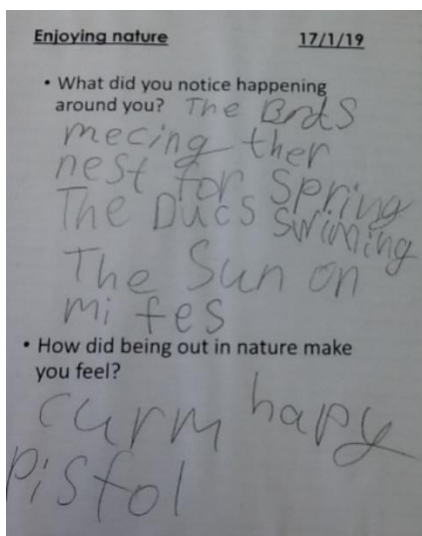
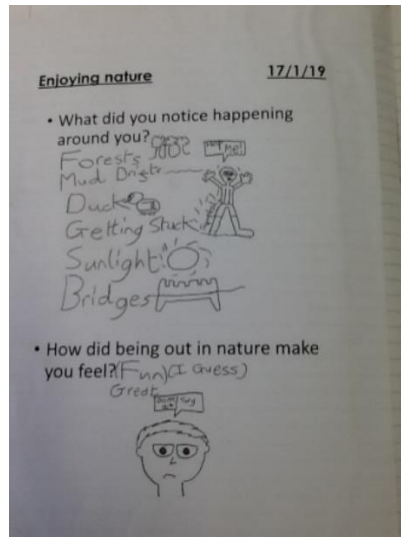
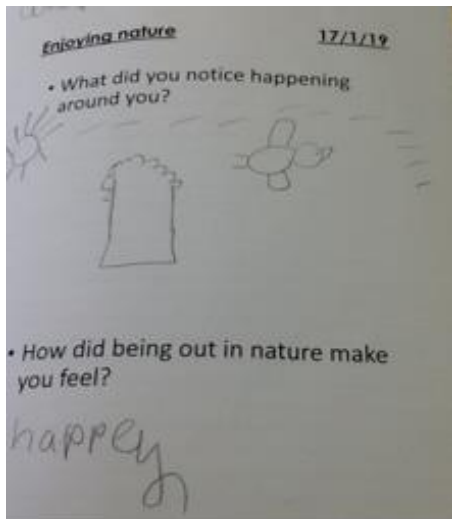
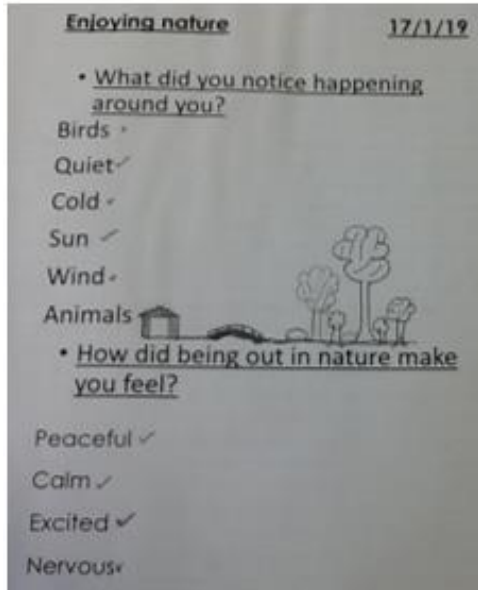
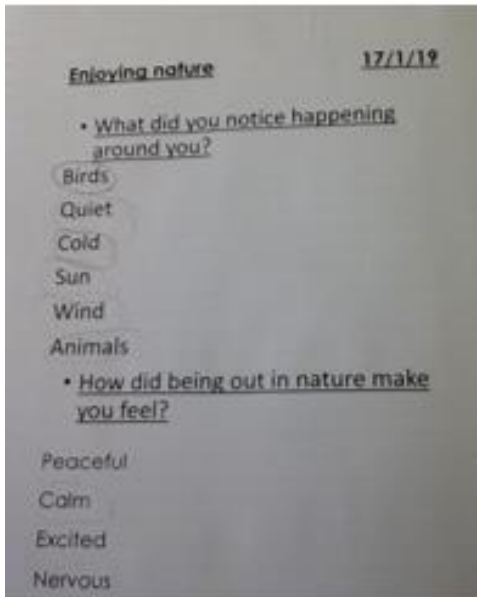
I would like to submit some further evidence. I have attached pictures of work from a group of Yr 8 students after one of their Learning Outside the Classroom lesson.

These are students with varying conditions including; autism, selective mutism, Duchennes MD, ADHD, including a wheelchair user. Some of these students are in Local authority care and most have suffered previous childhood trauma.

This particular lesson was on enjoying nature and being outside. They were taken on a ramble and then asked to just stop, feel the sun on the face and live for the here and now. A Mindfulness technique recognised to improve mental health and reduce damage caused by the stress hormone; cortisol.

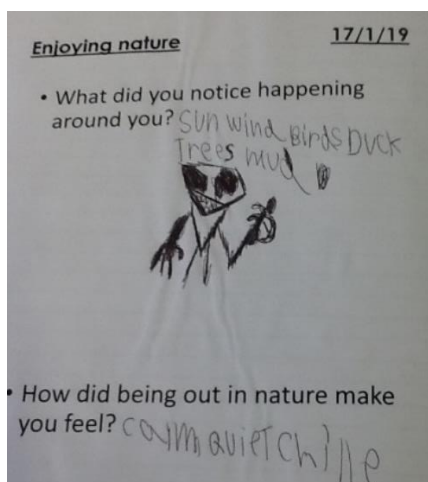
I believe that the Rowdeford site is what makes the experiences our children have unique. By basing the new school at Rowdeford, and using Rowdeford staff who have experience at using nature as a therapeutic tool, the new school really would be a HUB for excellence and an inspiring model that could be recognised on a Nationally stage.

T.L Chard  
Deputy Headteacher

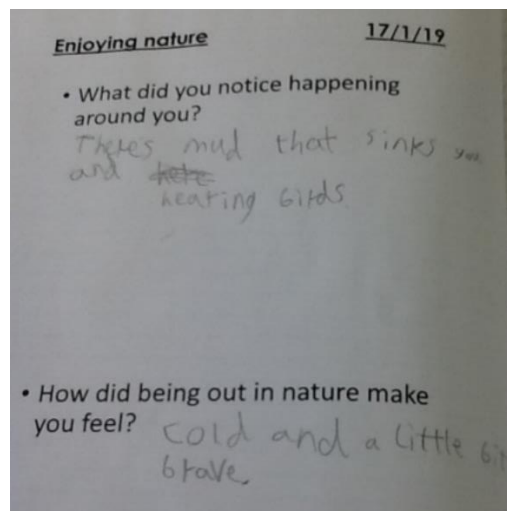


The birds making their nest for the spring.  
The ducks swimming.  
The sun on my face

Calm, happy, Peaceful



Sun, wind, birds, ducks, trees, mud
Calm, quiet, chilled



There's mud that sinks you and nesting birds
Cold and a little bit brave

6.1.30 Teri Chard, Deputy Head Teacher, Rowdeford School (27.02.19)

Dear Counsellors,

I have already emailed my full response to the consultation, but following the meeting at Rowdeford School last night, I would like to add the following.

I am hugely concerned about the possibility of the consultation process being extended. I believe that there is a significant impact for all those stakeholders involved; students, parents and staff. I have witness the emotional toll that not having a final decision has had on the students at our school. Although anxious students and parents are being supported by staff, those same staff are also in fear of losing their jobs. This has had a notably effect on the mental health of both the staff and student body.

I am concerned that the Legal challenge posted by the other two schools will only prolong this situation which is not too the benefit of anyone, especially not the current children at the three schools concern or the future parents and children that are being left without a secure future.

I implore the Council to ensure that the consultation finishes in a timely manner. Allowing us to return our focus onto what really matters; getting the best SEND provision for all Wiltshire children and their families.

Terri Chard  
Deputy Headteacher  
Rowdeford School

6.1.31 Jo Darlington, TA to the Plus Programme (28.02.19)

Dear Consultation Panel



Further to the meeting on Tuesday, which was chaired by Alan Stubbersfield, I write to summarize the points that I raised as a Plus Programme TA and a qualified Chartered Surveyor. I have also attached the document that I sent in my email on the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2019, which has some additional information that was not raised at the meeting.

I would be very grateful if you could acknowledge the following points, which will have been recorded at the meeting:

- Rowdeford has many existing strong community links; the Plus Programme alone has students who visit on a daily basis from many local secondary schools, work with local wildlife groups/the Canal Trust; use the local area for walks/farm visits /wildlife surveys; local businesses for refreshments and cooking ingredients. This is just a snapshot of one ancillary part of Rowdeford School – the main school has even stronger links with the local community (including FORS), local businesses, places of worship, museums, theaters, art establishments, voluntary organizations to name just a few. The school is constantly forging new links too, with events such as the existing Garden Fair and future events such as the Park Run.
- The importance of learning outside the classroom (LoTC) for all SEND children cannot be marginalized – you can bring the necessary build environment to Rowdeford, but you cannot replace the rural facilities and LoTC opportunities this school has.
- Future opportunities at Rowdeford are exponential. A larger school with the proposed funding and built facilities will allow diversification into many other areas, including opportunities such the garden center and work alongside WALT raised at the meeting. Expansion to include enterprises such as these would generate income and vocational training for the students.
- The consultation process must consider the longer term; Rowdeford School offers the best sustainable solution.
- Staff will travel to Rowdeford, which is in the most central position. Furthermore a coordinated travel plan to one school, based around the existing excellent school at Rowdeford, could be extended to offer staff travel opportunities; especially those looking after the more dependent students. A rural setting and animals allow students to reduce their anxiety; such a setting consequently increases the wellbeing of staff, not only by reducing student anxiety but also by allowing the staff opportunities for mindfulness in a wonderful environment.

These points and the ones attached are clear evidence in favour of one school based around the existing Rowdeford School Site.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for any further clarification or queries.

Kind regards

Jo Darlington, TA to the Plus Programme



## 6.2 Emails received from Parents/Carers and General Public

### 6.2.1 (13.01.19)

Dear Wiltshire Council,

My son attends Larkrise in Trowbridge. I agree the school is not big enough however your vision is NOT the vision of the staff, parents and other professionals. To move the children from the area would be detrimental to their development, here in their home town they're learning those life skills.

What use is learning how to catch a bus out in the Devizes area? And then have no idea how to apply that skill in the home town you live in?

This has not been thought out, it is not in the best interest of the children, it's about Councillor Laura Mayes and her team of "Yes" people doing exactly what they want with absolutely no regard for the people she is supposed to be serving.

Would you ship all the local primary school children out into the sticks? No! So why pick on the most vulnerable.

I'm really concerned about the post 16 education, there is no definable answer here, what exactly is proposed? At Larkrise my son could stay there until he was 19, they could prepare him for adulthood in the community he actually lives in.

What about the links with Larkise Farm?

The local sports centre? My son needs to know how to access the facilities in the town he lives in.

You are institutionalising our children, this is not the Victorian Times! Wiltshire Council were aware the majority voted against a one school option, why have you gone against the wishes of the people who voted?

It seems to be you are breaking your own inclusion policy, because of money.

Wiltshire Council's motto.....

Where Nobody matters.

Regards

### 6.2.2 (14.01.19)

I do not know if this is the correct forum or approach but having reading the DfE guidance for proposers and decision makers on "Opening and closing of maintained schools" dated November 2018 I am some what confused.

Please can it be clarified and confirmed

If, when and how

the section 16(1) of the EIA 2006 statutory consultation on closures of community special schools as outline in appendix A (page 27) took place?

While I attended a meeting discussing options for Wiltshire SEND provision, as a parent I cannot recollect any reference to this being specific or statutory consultation on the closure of St. Nicholas school which is listed with Ofsted as a Community Special School.

I actually came away from the meeting I attended feeling the parental concerns and unease of removing provisions from Chippenham had been understood and acknowledged. And while I felt the closure of St Nicholas was possible, if this were to occur the relocation would most likely be to a larger site in Chippenham.

My assumption following that meet had been for funding reason 2 of the 3 existing locations would be retained while the third would relocate within its immediate vicinity or grow to address the real need for additional capacity in county.

Which in no way represents the proposed reality.

Regards.

### 6.2.3 (16.01.19)

I've read the proposals and it is clearly an absolutely ridiculous, thoughtless plan that has no benefits for the children or their families.

These are already vulnerable children and they need to be close to their families, ideally educated in/close to the towns where they live. Building one large school and making everyone travel is an abominable idea. The money for the new build and subsequent travel should be saved and invested into the existing schools.

If the council truly have the best interests of the children at the heart of the plans for their future education then they need to listen to the parents, the majority of whom are desperate not to move their children's school life away from where they live.

I would be terribly and desperately upset as a child and as a parent to have to travel every day, potentially, long distances. Our healthy children with normal learning needs are exhausted by the hours of a regular school day and they generally get the privilege of having a school very close to their home. How exactly does having additional needs make the commute easier? Clearly it makes it more difficult. You are in effect ostracising these children and their families, punishing them for needing a different type of education. If we throw in the 'discrimination' word, does this make you listen?

Consider, if it were you, would you really want to be forced into a job for 14 years with a lengthy journey to work? I certainly would not.

Is the aim to drive these children out of school and be home educated to save money? Then that's exactly how it appears. It's a cruel, thoughtless plan that benefits only your budgets.

Please pay heed. If you don't have school age children, you really ought not to be deciding on their fate. Listen to the parents. Please.

#### 6.2.4 (17.01.19)

Dear Sir/Madame

It feels like the approach of combining the pre-consultation on the new school with the statutory notice of closure of the existing is detrimental to the quality of response to both. And particularly means the closure proposal includes several displacement options but does not provide a committed proposal for pupils including my daughter attending one of the closing schools. Is it not expected that we should be able to consider and comment on the amalgamation proposal as a whole at the same time.

Given the cabinet vote had no mandate to consult on school closure and stated that the closure notices would be subsequent to consultation on the new school, this was my expectation and understanding of the mandate given. The following is submitted with incomplete facts and information. I must protest that I am being required to comment at this time on the quality of the closure proposals with incomplete facts, in the assumption that this will not be rectified I will comment based on a seeming out of process and inadequate proposal.

Before commenting on the closures and opening of the schools I believe some clarity need to be sought as one huge concern I have is the obscuring and misalignment of specific groups views.

Transport needs to be compared to a plan that retains all 3 North Wiltshire school with additional capacity at Rowdeford to allow North Wiltshire children to be school in North Wiltshire with South Wiltshire children schooled in South Wiltshire.

This is a big plan with a huge scope. Unlike South Wiltshire with 1 principle settlement supporting Wiltshire's needs, North Wiltshire has two principal settlements which lack at least 1 key amenity, a major hospital., this very fact is at the heart of a number but by no means all of the objections and concerns already raised. Particularly for parents of PMLD students.

Before considering the new consolidated school a significant number of distinctly different groups of interested parties need to be identified. As a first pass for my use I have the following (and this is not exhaustive as some parents or prospective parents may fit into more than one grouping).

The groups of pupils/parents requiring primary and secondary SEND provisions at the existing 3 schools

Trowbridge principle settlement parents and prospective parents

Chippenham principle settlement parents and prospective parents

Trowbridge principle settlement catchment parents and prospective parents

Chippenham principle settlement catchment parents and prospective parents  
Devizes area catchment and locations with reduce point to point travel after the new school opens parents and prospective parents  
Swindon/Bath principle settlement catchment parents and prospective parents,  
example Cricklade

Larkrise primary children parents  
St Nics primary children parents  
Out of county primary children parents

Larkrise secondary children parents  
St Nics secondary children parents  
Rowdeford secondary children parents  
Out of county children parents  
each grouping needing to be identified and their distinct issues, preferences, even rights and expectation in the outcomes established.

For parental engagement it seems fair that trip to school which is further or requires more legs/costs than accessing the 2 principle settlement additional mileage or costs incurred reaching the Rowdeford location should be reimbursed for every parent for the whole life of the school.

Within a grouping there will be varying degrees of support or objections to the proposal, based on the individual parents, or parties understanding of the risks, costs, issues, benefits, and rewards the school may provide, either personally or to the type or types of children attending the school. There may even be conflicts between personal benefit or lose and the best interests of society.

I do ask how the new school will be delivered as and maintained as a Centre of Excellence without increased per pupil funding relative to today.

I believe the most vocal objections come from 2 groups

Trowbridge principle settlement catchment parents  
Chippenham principle settlement catchment parents  
And the strongest parent support for the proposal will be from  
Devizes area catchment and locations with reduce point to point travel.

As has been said there is no black and white here many views have merit. The establishment of a well design school at Rowdeford to supplement the current local and county provision is not a controversial issue. The closure and relocation of Trowbridge and Chippenham school provision to Rowdeford is.

As is the associated creation of a warehouse school.  
350 pupils  
500+ car parking space for staff and parents for whole school events, with 100-200 Blue badge spaces.  
30-50 bus park

2 \* 600-700 seater halls combining to 1200 seats for whole school events  
50 classrooms based on 6-8 pupils a class  
200-300 members of staff based on teacher, TA and others

This is not a small village school, this is a large business, which will be intimidating to parents and pupils alike. We'll never be able to know the staff and it could often feel like the school is not supporting but usurping us.

The problem is the plan is too big  
a single primary school and secondary school provision to cover 600 sq miles, providing no viable in county choice for a significant subset of children.  
Placed in the wrong location to align to inclusion and sustainability expectation once opened.

Given each school closure proposal should have included  
"Details of length and journeys to alternative provision.

The proposed arrangements for travel of displaced pupils to other schools including how the proposed arrangements will mitigate against increased car use."

Which is almost if not entirely omitted, given the transport mix between taxis and bus now and going forward could change and could even include significant increases for current Rowdeford students

And in general

"Proposers and decision-makers should satisfy themselves that accessibility planning has been properly taken into account and that the proposal will not adversely impact on disadvantaged groups."

"They should bear in mind that a proposal should not unreasonably extend journey times or increase transport costs, or result in too many children being prevented from travelling sustainably due to unsuitable walking or cycling routes."

"A proposal should also be considered on the basis of how it will support and contribute to the LA's duty to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport to school."

Retaining principal settlement schools can align or doesn't move away from these targets, in controlling travel costs and journey times for pupils and parents, there is no obvious way accessibility for disadvantaged groups can be provided and maintained in or for a rural location, without ongoing perpetual guarantees enshrined in the charter and fabric of the school, that do not demean the recipients.

By the council only submission this is going to have significant cost and time implications to 20% of parents who will no longer live in the town the school is base in, this assumes the council isn't stating Rowdeford is in Devizes. These 20% of parents could be forced to run second cars or frequently use taxis which may not have been previously the case.

To a further significant number of Larkrise and St. Nics parents the new location will introduce additional time and costs in visiting, supporting the school and their child.

Along these lines to assist in scaling the issue it would be helpful to have anonymous data for the absence as absolute and percentages for children on roll from the 3 schools tabulated by school for

1. Medical/illness absence
2. Appointments
3. Children delivered or collected during the school day
4. Parental visit to school for

Meeting with school staff

Meeting with health professionals

PCP and other LA administration type meetings

Other meetings.

The belief is for Larkrise and St Nicholas parents there are significant numbers of meetings particularly for the PMLD children Rowdeford doesn't current support, therefore I struggling to see how on any level the requirement to mitigate against car usage for closure of Trowbridge and Chippenham provision can be achieved particularly assuming travel arrangements for current Rowdeford children are discounted and that the new primary and secondary school capacity at Rowdeford for Devizes and North East Wiltshire are not used to attempt to offset the harm done to the North and West of the county.

#### 6.2.5 (18.01.19)

I already had much of this written prior to the issuing of the closure proposal for closure consultation.

While this is long and may in places be slightly repetitive it is developed over a period of weeks since realising WCC was despite parental feedback against and expectations proposing a single school for North Wilts by a greater margin that is requiring UK central government to attempt to deliver Brexit.

I am hoping it can be used to improve the quality and outcome of the consultation to ensure WCC are providing a plan fit for the future. And that the consultation ensures the plan is safe for the child, the parents and tax payers. Therefore the outcome need to be

A proposal which is fit for purpose

A proposal which will deliver on its intended benefits

A proposal which aligns to all government legislation

A proposal which endeavour to aligned to all government and professional best practices. Including but not limited to aspects like travel times, reduction in car usage, impact on all types of parents, school and class sizes, integration, community inclusion, faculties and resources.

A proposal that aligns and can deliver on current pupils true EHCP requirement

A proposal that is factual accurate to the real world.

A proposal that will resource and finance the school to enable it to become and maintain itself as a national centre of Excellence into the future as is in WCC aspirations for the plan

A proposal that encompasses the need of future generations EHCP

A proposal that is robust to challenged and associated costs available through legal and arbitration processes

A proposal that addresses all conceived transition issues around staffing, resourcing, upheaval and integration from the date of agreement, acceptance or even before through the next 6-8 years until the school is an established stable going concern.

A proposal that provides certainty to parent already with children at the 3 in scope school, including these children will be provided good quality education from a stable staff base, without increased staff churning and similar retention ratios from each school going into the new provision.

A proposal that will not be detrimental to existing pupils, new pupils with EHCP entering education in the next 4 -5 years before this additional capacity becomes available.

A proposal that demonstrates how it will support SEND within mainstream schools while not disrupting or harming pupils on roll at the warehouse school.

A proposal that guarantees current and new parents and pupils that the intrinsic expectation of attending existing schools will be maintained on migration to the new provision.

A proposal that doesn't fail any individual or group of pupils over the next 4-7 years.

A proposal where assumption and expectation in parental response have been model, and therefore take up and cost risks modelling and aligns to expectation.

A proposal that ensures that Rowdeford will not haemorrhage student numbers due to pupil churn due to parental concerns the new school will be too big, lack the current special qualities and therefore no longer worth the journey times to attend, and put pressure on WCC to place these children in local mainstream or out of county or independent secondary provisions.

A proposal which is not expose WCC to judicial review or legal actions.

A proposal which addresses concerns and issues with attendance and presence

A proposal which addresses adequately health considerations to mitigate against all harm, and maintain access and time at and in education relative to a 3 school approach.

A proposal which only includes commitments does not contain un-costed aspirations, expectations or promises.

A proposal which defines increase at the pupil level relative to current and avoids making grand sounding deliverables which are lower or substantially the same as today.

A proposal which joins up all aspects of Education, Health and Care needs of pupils.

To address the risks and responses of the parents through the legal processes available to them the consultation and subsequent proposal need to be

Seen to be open, adequate, transparent and fair seeking and obtain the views of all current and prospective parents, and aligning responses with the child's and parental needs.

Considering, addressing and aligning the proposal to the true needs and requirements based on evidence not expectations.

Issue to current or prospective parents of St Nics, Larkrise or Rowdeford

SLR - School Size

SLR - Class size concern

SLR - lost of parental Choice - particularly if there is a breakdown in trust between school and parent.

SLR - Post 16

SLR - Capacity to Learn - what if the school is wrong for any individuals student

SL - Travel

SL - Health

SL - Local Community

R - Building site noise disruption,

R - Change in character and culture

If there is not clear distinction between the parental and prospective parent views on the closure and change for each school then given the huge difference in impact and outcome for the different sites it would appear impossible for a decision maker to realistically attribute the wants, needs and aspirations of the different parents and could lead to an unsafe decision. Which could ultimately require WCC to revoke school closures and/or accept costs orders of magnitude larger than budgeted or anticipated.

For example has and will the physiological affect of moving children to the new site and out of "their town" been consider, will potential harm including grief and loss be reviewed by education physiologists and physiologists before closures are implemented.

As I read it even in the one school option provision within Trowbridge and Chippenham were recommended by the task force.

And to some degree it seems the parental unrest surfacing is the result of flaws highlighted in the task force report regarding pursuing the 1 school option.

Transport routing as well as I assume parental expectation are national guidelines will be followed and these could be further refined and enforced within EHCP due to medical, continence and wheelchair needs restricting speeds or routes and door to door durations, this in addition to the medical training and Certification requirements in carrying medically vulnerable children. This could require parental access to tracking technologies to gain trust restrictions are been adhered to.

Given the deficits in the current transport provision in terms of adheres to maximum times on transport what will be done now and in the future to ensure maximum guidelines are not being breached.

It is worth note that St. Nicholas school is less than 7 minutes off the Motorway and therefore teaching staff current appears to live along the M4 corridor. Whether these same members of staff would be happy to negotiate through Chippenham out to a Rowdeford is a matter of speculation.



Retaining any staff from Larkrise and St. Nicholas is a matter of speculation due to the additional time and costs. Particularly without reliable cheap regular public transport to the school.

Given throwing public money can't be the approach, how will parent and staff access to the site be provided and how will the new Rowdeford School recruit and retain the toted top quality staff.

I actually went to a school outside a village 7 miles from the nearest town, and while it was a community in and of itself, it was isolated from other communities. I could say educationally I benefited socially I suffered. The same appears likely to apply here, and depending on the individual needs it could be they could be well or badly met by the proposed school and location.

If this transpires to be a bad plan, and there are uncontrollable costs, or harm to educational or health who will be liable to the public and the courts and who will be picking up the bills. Particularly what happens if this single school prove unsafe and is closed by government.

How will the proposal address choices, how will it ensure it aligns to all applicable EHCP pupils in North Wilts.

Given the parental outrage of the plan as demonstrated in the statements, questions and demonstrations before the cabinet vote, how will the proposal demonstrate to these parents along with impartial judges or observers that it is truly well formed and fit for purpose, has consulted widely and used the consultation to define/refine the proposals to a point that they are safe for the current children, will support future generations, not going to cause unrest, disruption or distress, generate unintended consequence in term of children being home educated or requiring out of county or independent boarding or day education.

How will it demonstrate adherence to every aspect of government regulation and guidance to ensure there is no grounds for parents or others to mount legal challenges. Given I personally do not believe my primary school aged child transport has adhered to today best practice guidelines, how will any promises be enshrined and kept, and at who's expense.

Community use of the Chippenham hydro pool and Larkrise equivalent appear to require addressing in the proposal, therefore how will usage of the existing or equivalent Chippenham and Trowbridge based resources be preserved.

Have Wiltshire confirmed the legal situation with both particularly given the public donations used to build the St Nicholas pool within the last 10 years.

Whether there are any legal duties, it does seem there may be morally duties to maintain similar or enhance access to the public to a HydroPool in Chippenham and/or return money's donated.

To restated parents could vote with their feet and haemorrhage money out of this oversized school and out of county. or pursue home educating. Both routes would be indicative of a failure of the authority to listen and deliver appropriate provision

As I have read it All decisions on proposals to open or close a maintained school must be made with regard to the factors outlined in this guidance and follow the statutory process.

- Consultations should be carried out in term time to allow the maximum numbers of people to see and respond to statutory proposals.
- The decision-maker will need to be satisfied that any consultation carried out was appropriate, fair and open, and that the proposer has given full consideration to all the responses received.
- The decision-maker must consider the views of those affected by a proposal or who have an interest in it, including cross-LA border interests. The decision-maker should not simply take account of the number of people expressing a particular view. Instead, they should give the greatest weight to responses from those stakeholders likely to be most directly affected by a proposal – especially parents of children at the affected school(s).
- In determining proposals decision-makers must ensure that the guidance on schools causing concern (intervening in falling, underperforming and coasting schools) has been considered where necessary.

Therefore prospective parents and those who will still have a child at the respective school when the schools close need to be identified and greater weight given to their views. Views of other current parents still holding significant value particularly if their views are general or relating to the impacts before the new school is established or during transition.

Regards

#### 6.2.6 (20.01.19)

I find it unbelievable that you expect children with severe complex requirements to spend so long travelling to and from school. Have you ever spent time with these children? Have you even witnessed the journey they take now, let alone adding more time to this trip? Until you do, you have no right to be making these decisions on behalf of these children.

#### 6.2.7 (27.01.19)

To who this may concern

As far as I'm concerned for people that's taking everything into account. I personally don't think you have. For I have 2 children that your planning to take away from a brilliant school. To then place into a school at a dangerous road. No matter the speed limits. How are they meant to access anything such as shops. I think really it's going to the olden days where autism people want to hide them away and that's what is clearly happening. My 2 and all these wonderful children deserve much better. If money is to upto date this new building I don't know why it can't be used to upgrade these wonderful schools. Which as far as I'm concerned they don't need upgrading St Nicholas school has great size groups and now thats going to change where there will be far more children. Many will get stressed and possibly ill because of it. I think the priority is way wrong. But then like I said it's going back to the olden days where

schools of special needs are hidden away from rest of the world. If you want to upgrade st Nicholas school stop the mum and baby swimming at their hydrotherapy pool as I'm finding that unfair for these children. So I importantly dont think you have put these children themselves into account.

(a very unhappy mum)

#### 6.2.8 (04.02.19)

To whom it may concern

I can not comment on this current issue as it quite simply does not affect me (I do not live in the area mentioned, I live in Salisbury).

However, if you want to ask me a question about Salisbury schools provisions for children with special needs, then I will gladly tell you that more resources and funds are urgently required. Almost every consultation I have with my sons school begins with mention of why they can't do something instead of why they can do something. I am made to feel guilty about taking up precious time and resources for the education of my son.

#### 6.2.9 (04.02.19)

Good Evening,

I have completed the survey but would like to add a couple of extra thoughts.

Once a child is deemed to be SEND then that doesn't always help with their self image or encourage them to feel good about themselves. I would prefer the money to be spent on providing support for all schools especially in providing training and support for teachers in mainstream schools to support the children. My daughter has attachment disorder and benefits for being around fellow students in a mainstream school. When she is an adult she will need to learn to thrive in society and not be seen as 'special'. I understand that this can sometimes mean disruption for other students and would be better to provide ways of minimising that with perhaps some focused classes in the main stream schools rather than separate the children out. It is also good for children without SEND to be with others who may not find life so easy. I believe the inclusion goes both ways and feel strongly about it.

Kind regards

#### 6.2.10 (04.02.19)

Hi after reading your email I think its a wonderful plan but with one draw back and that is many children and older teenagers have NOT been statemented just been kept back a year and have been struggling ever since what will happen to those , One of my sons has repeatedly been refused a statement by Wiltshire Education he has been let down he is in a Hampshire special needs College with his older brother who has a statement and Hampshire gave Phillip this Statement not your self both of my sons experienced bulling in mainstream and this has caused so many problems for them both , I just hope other Wiltshire children and teenagers are given the help they need with in the plans you have drawn up , these are the thoughts of so many carers and parents I have spoken to in the last day or to , my sons are happy where they are and will be staying at the college in Hampshire for the next 2years has all the help they need is given with delay and they both are helped and encouraged . Thank you for contacting me about these plans I hope you find my comments helpful, kind regards

#### 6.2.11 (07.02.19)

Dear Councillors,

I have completed the online survey and I have objected to the proposal in its current form, and I wanted to qualify that objection, as the online survey did not really allow for such.

My own daughter, (name of child), attended the Chippenham school some years ago. So I do have personal knowledge of the journey that families go through when they are faced with a child who requires support of this nature.

My main concern is that whilst the location of the new school meets the Council's criteria in terms of space, location etc., it will have the unintended consequence of removing and separating the pupils from the general routine of daily life in Chippenham. This regular and routine exposure and interaction with the community, is an intangible but essential benefit for everyone, and is in my view, responsible for the greater understanding and acceptance of special needs children, which is hugely beneficial to society as a whole, and especially to these children as they transition through life to become adults. Simply: they are seen, heard and accepted. It would be a great tragedy if these proposed Centres of Excellence, were to become places to visit, and not places in society.

Yours faithfully,

#### 6.2.12 (08.02.19)

I am a parent of an 8yr old girl who has attended Larkrise School since she started school at the age of 4. The reason I moved to Wiltshire was because a lack of choice available elsewhere in the country meant I had no choice in my child's education and choice of school unless I wanted to condemn her to school day spent travelling 20 miles one way to school and the same journey back.

It seems this was a bad decision on my misguided part. The school I chose for (name of child) my daughter is now to be closed. It seems my move to the Wiltshire area has proved to be my downfall. The home we have just spent our entire life savings on making into a safe, secure environment for (name of child) is no longer viable with her school in Trowbridge (we live in Warminster by the way) due for closure. Now we are told she must go to a place called Rowde? Near Devizes? So (name of child)'s journey time has increased from an 8-mile journey to an 18 mile journey. Double it and that's 36 miles every day back and forward to school.

The very thing I never wanted my daughter to have to endure I'm told will happen because it's in everyone's best interest. The best interest of (name of child)? No definitely not. The best interest for her family? No absolutely not! Im one of the strange breed of people who doesn't drive therefore will never be able to travel to the Super school as there is no discernible public transport for me to use, unlike Trowbridge where I can take a train and short walk and be at Larkrise school for meetings and reviews when needed. The best interest of (name of child)'s education and welfare? No not at all, taking her out of the school that she has known all of her life so far. The teachers staff and surroundings that are all part of her day will be gone. Already she has to wake at 6.45am so we have enough time to prepare for school, breakfast, dressing, toileting. At What unearthly hour would she need to wake up to prepare to be transported to Rowde? And then there's the extra hours every single day of my

child's life that she will spend on transport instead of with me or getting the required sleep that children with special needs desperately require. Yes that's correct (name of child) has special needs, she is non verbal and severely autistic! Do any of you so called experts live the life of a child or carer like (name of child) and I do?

I don't support your plan of a super school of excellence! You talk of standards and achievement. You talk of a centre of excellence as if our children are commodities you can use like pawns in your game of Council politics and money saving. This will be the biggest mistake Wiltshire Council will make and I'm sure I'm not alone in saying I will not accept that you are making the right decision. What about our rights as parents to choose where our children go to school? Expand Larkrise expand St Nicholas. Build a new special school, give parents of special needs children more choices not no choice but to be forced and bullied into your view of a centre of excellence at a Super school. Super size Super expensive and Super over budget. Change your tired old slogan and tell the truth about what it will really mean for children like (name of child). (Name of child) has no voice and she can't tell you what it's like to spend hours on transport when you are tired and the bus is so noisy and overcrowded that she comes home in tears. Yet this is what you want to inflict on her. She will definitely have a much longer journey time which will undoubtedly mean a bigger bus with more pick ups and more delays. She will be sent away to Rowde, a place none of us have ever wanted to visit, a place unknown and farther away from her home. Remember there are 13 children living in Warminster attending Larkrise as I write this statement.

I do not support this decision, I do not want to see Larkrise school closed. I do not want my rights to choose taken away from me. Listen to what is being said. I also want a reply to this statement.

Your Sincerely

6.2.13 (09.02.19)

Dear Sir or Madam,

My son is in year 4 in a mainstream primary school. He is EHCP supported with a 1 to 1 TA. He is developmentally delayed and will need a specialist provision for his secondary placement.

His Autism and ADHD diagnosis makes him very easily distracted and his limited mobility means it takes a long time for him to move round his current school.

That along with the current relaxed atmosphere and wider focus of the school has left us considering the current Rowdeford school as the ideal placement for him.

I am extremely concerned about the size of the new school development at Rowdeford, I do not believe my son will be able to safely and efficiently manage himself around a campus of that scale and the distance and distractions will stop him from engaging with the learning experience that a school should offer.

What placements are Wiltshire Council considering for children who need a small focused learning environment in order to thrive?

We obviously need to consider our options in the next few years, but feel we may be forced to homeschool, as the current plan does not appear to give a choice of learning environment that is suitable for our son.

I would be extremely grateful if the consultation could consider children that need that small scale relaxed school atmosphere and the damage the council are doing to our childrens health, development and education by removing the current Rowdeford setting and other small scale sites (e.g. St Nick's) from the choices available, in order manage budget.

Are the council satisfied with the number of children's futures that are being risked to balance the books.

Yours Sincerely

6.2.14 (10.02.19)

Dear Lady Scott

### **FINAL CONSULTATION ON SPECIAL SCHOOL PROVISION IN WILTSHIRE**

The purpose of this letter is to request your support for Rowdeford School in the current formal consultation on special school provision in North Wiltshire.

The initial Local Authority consultation resulted in a proposal last November that all three existing schools in North Wiltshire would close to make way for one new school on the Rowdeford site. This would be for approximately 350 students aged 3 to 16. Current buildings would be used, as appropriate, with 'new build' on fields at the back of the site. The proposal for special schools in Wiltshire would invest £20m in a new centre of excellence for pupils with special needs and disabilities. This would be developed at Rowdeford School near Devizes to match the excellent facilities provided for the South of Wiltshire at Exeter House, Salisbury. The final consultation is now in progress and ends on 1 March 2019. It could reverse the initial decision.

The Rowdeford School site is an exceptional resource, evidenced by almost 11,000 responses to the School's petition during the initial consultation phase and overwhelming support received throughout the pre-consultation period. The School provides outstanding facilities and is blessed with ample and varied space which will enable it to grow and accommodate the necessary increase in numbers both now and in the future. It is uniquely placed in a rural environment whilst retaining very close links to local communities. In addition, Rowdeford School incorporates an incomparable outdoor environment that includes substantial woodland, fields, orchards, gardens, a farm animal area and a very recently built Outdoor Learning study centre.

I respectfully request your support for the Rowdeford School solution to the provision of special needs education in North Wiltshire. Could you please lend your support to this amazing special needs school.

Yours sincerely

6.2.15 (11.02.19)

Dear Wiltshire Council

I am writing to you as a Trowbridge resident, a parent of a Larkrise student and a lecturer in Post-16 education.

Having read through your proposal for closing local special schools and relocating them to a large site at Rowdeford I am stating my strong opposition to this plan.

Community links and integration are crucial to our children. These need to be useful, relevant, meaningful and, most importantly of all, as natural as possible in their local environments. Your comment about community links being provided by the occasional visit to the cafe by local residents is, quite frankly, embarrassing and shows a staggering lack of understanding of what inclusion really means.

However, my two main areas of contention are parental choice and Post-16 provision.

Notwithstanding catchment areas every mainstream child will have a choice of at least 2 schools, my own son had a choice of 3. Your plan would remove all choice from families. There could be any number of reasons why a parent would not wish to send their child to this school and you, as their local authority would be offering them no alternative whatsoever. This is blatant discrimination against children with disabilities and their families.

As for Post-16 provision. You have no concrete plans at all of what you will offer these students. At the meeting on Thursday evening at Larkrise school, when asked about post-16 provision, Judith Westcott said that you were 'in discussion with various charities and private providers'. In other words, you haven't got a clue what is going to happen to these children once they reach 16. How, as parents are we supposed to engage in a consultation process when even you don't know what is going to happen?

This matter is also highly discriminatory. Every mainstream student is entitled to either stay on at school or attend a college in their locality. Why are our children being denied the same? If anything, our children need to be in education longer to assist their transition to adulthood in a place, and with people they know and trust.

Your plan, such as it is, seems to be to drop these young people back into their communities when they are 16 having been denied the opportunity of building links and relationships over time and get some charities to pick up the pieces. Our children should not be subject to charitable intervention at this crucial time in their lives, they should have the same opportunities as their mainstream siblings and peers and be supported properly through the education system.



This plan is backward looking, insular and short-sighted. Many parents have wonderful ideas about how provision could be improved and expanded and, with meaningful collaboration you could construct a proposal that is inclusive and ambitious.

Yours sincerely

6.2.16 (12.02.19)

Dear Mr Gibbons

Re: Proposal for Special Schools in North Wiltshire

Whilst I acknowledge the need for additional SEN places for pupils in Wiltshire I am writing to you to register my complete opposition to the proposal to close Larkrise and St Nicholas schools and to replace them with a new 'super school'. My reasons are as follows:

- Any potential savings due to 'economies of scale' will be outweighed by additional transport costs which would include replacing and expanding the ailing fleet of transport buses currently in use as well as additional passenger transport staff costs. How can this be a given as a reason for closure of two successful schools? Especially when parents at a meeting last summer with the Interim Director of Education were advised by Alan Stubbersfield that 'money was not the issue'. The moral implications of forcing children to travel not just out of their own community but to a site which has no real community hub should not be overlooked. Remember that the pupils of both schools make regular trips in their local communities which are vital to their future development and that members of those communities come in to school as well.
- The proposal document also states that land in Trowbridge that was considered as a possible site for an expanded Larkrise would not be suitable? Please could you advise as to why then Wiltshire Council is considering and has encouraged plans by a developer to build a new mainstream Primary school in Elm Grove Trowbridge, within a very short distance of at least three thriving mainstream schools?
- The decision to base the proposed new school in a very rural location discriminates against children with severe and complex learning difficulties. Wiltshire Council's own planning statement for the planning application for new classrooms at Larkrise from October 2017 stated that if the plans for the new classrooms were not taken forward: "there are a number of possible unpalatable and high cost outcomes: **That the LA is not able to meet its legal commitment within the Children and Families Act 2014 to provide for the assessed needs of these children with SEND in the local area. This will lead to unacceptably longer journeys for the children which will put significant pressure on an already overstretched transport budget, but more importantly result in very young children having long tiring days which will impact on their wellbeing and learning capacity.**" The proposed new school plan would do exactly that!



- The lack of any provision for post 16 education is also concerning. Some pupils could be faced with transitioning to the new school for perhaps a year before having to face yet more change in a post 16 setting. This would be very traumatic for many of the children.
- The daily lives of the children this will affect are difficult already, how can Wiltshire Council really believe that forcing children to make longer journeys to an unfamiliar and overwhelmingly large place can be of any possible benefit to our young people? If a parent needs to collect an unwell child, attend a medical clinic in school or perhaps drop off their child off at school as the Passenger Transport bus has had a mechanical breakdown, then journey times are currently relatively short. This will not be the case at the Rowdeford site. Please remember that the parents of the children at Larkrise and St Nicholas Schools have jobs, other children and other responsibilities. There cannot be one member of staff, parent or other stakeholder who would say that this proposal is a good idea.

In conclusion: Please reconsider this solution to the need for additional special education provision in Wiltshire. We need to keep the provision local, we need to preserve our childrens' place in our local community for the benefit of all, and as many other parents have already stated - our children cannot speak for themselves and so we have to shout for them. Please listen to the parents and dedicated professionals who know and understand the young people that this will effect. My own son will have transitioned to post 16 education before the new provision is set to open but if this had happened to him when he was younger it would have had a catastrophic effect on his learning and wellbeing. Remember these decisions will effect children, their wider families and the specialist teaching and support staff at Larkrise and St Nicholas. Have the courage to do the right thing and seek a local vision for special education in Wiltshire.

Yours sincerely  
Parent of a Larkrise pupil

#### 6.2.17 (13.02.19)

To whom it may concern:

I am appalled at the stupidity of the proposal to centralise the special schools and the deprivation of hydrotherapy in the community.

Special schools need to be small as:

- 1 The students need to travel as little as possible as most have medical conditions which make it difficult for them to travel in a vehicle. The shorter the journey the better they can make use of the school day and the easier the staff find them to educate.
- 2 The students usually find people are a cause of stress and one reason why they cannot be included in mainstream education, where there are many people. St Nick's is as big as they can cope with, and too big for the comfort of some.

- 3 St Nick's is placed where students can access a bungalow where those that are able can learn to start learning independent living skills. This important development opportunity will be lost.
- 4 St Nick's is in a suburban community where the students regularly come into contact with the public, a very useful life skill for them.
- 5 St Nick's is placed near Morrison's supermarket where the students can be taken to acclimatise them to larger numbers of people and shopping, an important life skill.
- 6 Most Special Needs people benefit hugely from using a hydrotherapy, both the able bodied with mental challenges and the physically disabled. Many cannot function on a day to day basis without such provision and in a larger facility they will no doubt have less access to this necessary facility.

So closing the 4 small schools is going to cost the Council Tax paying community huge ongoing bills for home education and day care which no doubt comes out of someone else's budget and so does not signify to those in favour of this idiotic proposal.

The Starfish Pool:

The Community needs St Nick's School to remain open as the community raised £770,000 for the hydrotherapy pool. It is their pool which, misguidedly we now see, was given into the care of the Council. The saving to the Council and the NHS that the pool generates is incalculable. I use the pool twice a week to keep me mobile and living independently. If I did not have use of this facility I would be by now having to be supported by the Council and NHS as a disabled person, soon to be wheelchair bound. I have met scores of people who have a similar stories to tell.

It is essential for rehabilitation after: Strokes, heart attacks, arthritis, trauma to bones and soft tissue, stress related conditions, depression, as well as adults with life-long disabilities. The suffering of the individuals who will be deprived of this pool is obviously of no interest to the people in favour of this proposal, and again the cost of increasing the number of people who become dependant on financial support must be coming out of another budget than that controlled by those who support this motion.

In conclusion, this scheme is not fit for purpose. From 2023 there will be a raft of costs arising from its unsuitability which Wiltshire Tax Payers cannot afford. The suffering of individuals both children and adults will be far more than the myopic people in charge of this proposal have realised.

#### **What should happen:**

Larkrise needs to be replaced, I understand a nearby piece of land has been identified so that there will be a smooth transition to the new building. The previous school would be sold off to mitigate some of the build costs.

A new small school (maybe more?) needs to be built to cope with the students who currently have to be bused out of county.

All the schools need a hydrotherapy pool.

The remainder of the £20 million can be put to good use, refurbishing the other schools, perhaps?

Yours faithfully

6.2.18 (13.02.19)

Hi there

Speaking from personal experience. I know a new school is needed. Larkrise is too small now to accommodate the up and coming children with special needs. Also its facilities are outdated.

I am not keen on the school being built in Rowde. This present site is quite isolated. The children at Larkrise can easily access the town of Trowbridge. Walk to the park. Walk to the local Tesco Express and feel part of the community. Also it's a fair way to travel for children with complex special needs and serious health issues.

I don't suppose anyone at County Hall making these decisions has personal experience of a child with special needs? You need to think the bigger picture. The impact this will have not just on the child but on the whole family. Especially if there are other children in the household going to mainstream school.

There must be a site more local to build a super duper new SEN school. There seems to be plenty of land for houses in Trowbridge so why not a school?

Please do your best for our children.  
Regards

6.2.19 (15.02.19)

I am emailing about my concern about the super school. I had attended the consultation in July at Rowdeford. The information from those consultations is baffling and concerning.

My concerns are, that at no point was it agreed by anyone in the room a super school would work or was wanted, and also the closure of local schools i.e. Larkrise and St Nicholas. I do understand that they are running out of space.

Surely, to close schools and transport children out of area, or longer on transport, larger school classes, children with more complex difficulties and behaviours all together, uncertainty for children/parents as information is very sparse. I have also heard that at Rowdeford, from September there will be Porta Cabin type buildings for the new school academic year intake of reception children? Again as a parent we have not been consulted or informed.

I feel as a parent, Rowdeford cannot express their concern due to fear of the closure of the school.

My SON is due to leave 2020 and it would seem there is very little provision post 16 either. Considering education/training age is now 18 I do not understand why Rowdeford do not have this provision. After all the raised age for education is not a new thing.

#### 6.2.20 (18.02.19)

I think that we need several special needs schools in each of the areas but they need to be better resourced. If we were needing to build a new primary school in an area it would be out of the question to build it miles away from the community for mainstream children, but for our most vulnerable this is acceptable. Each of our special schools offers something different. I have children at Rowdeford and St Nicks.

Rowdeford has a very good reputation and is a fabulous school which is well led and has proved to be an excellent educational provision for two children I have attending there.

St Nicks is bursting at the seams and needs a new site which will allow them to grow and have outside space like, Rowdeford but it needs to be in Chippenham. The young person we have there has struggled when class size increased, and the make up of the class had children who shouldn't have been in this education provision. This had a great impact on the education attainment and psychological effect on our child. This year has been much better and she is once again happy in school.

If the huge school accommodating all the schools is built at Rowdeford the amount of transport buses using the site will be enormous and that is just for the children arriving/leaving. It isn't just a line of young people to get on the bus. Each child needs help, support and guidance or wheeled onto the bus. This takes an enormous amount of time. The parking for the staff alone will be huge. How will parents be able to access the school if they don't have transport? How will they be able to collect a child who is ill? The children will be overwhelmed by the amount of people to use, teach and support. The children won't be known by everyone as they are now.

My opinion is that we need 3 schools in the areas they already serve but able to take larger numbers and better resourced.

#### 6.2.21 (21.02.19)

Wiltshire Council's proposals for the closure of 2 Special needs schools and the building of a larger facility at Rowdeford is not only badly thought out, it has been done with a callous lack of consultation. The public and in particular the feelings of the parents have been snubbed.

When the paper about the proposals arrived at Warminster Area Board, a town which has 13 young people being transported to these schools, the Chair ruled that the Board would not make any representation to Wiltshire council about the proposals. They were asked to take the feelings from the meeting to Wiltshire Council. The Chair's ruling was on the basis that he did not feel that it was appropriate. That simple statement makes a mockery of Area Boards as an organ to facilitate better Council democracy.

All children have a right to maximise their own potential and to do that with a minimum of discomfort, at schools providing the education and companionship they need. The schools should be as close as possible to where they live as travel can be challenging for children with special needs, and worrying for their parents. The scheme is boasted as providing a "centre of excellence" and is claimed not to be a cost cutting exercise. It is clearly not a centre for excellence as most of the children will have to travel further than they do at present. It also offends our intelligence to suggest that the scheme is not intended as a cost cutting exercise. We are well aware that the government has instructed all councils that they must cut expenditure on this vital and necessary area of education.

Please convey to Councillors that the resentment caused by them taking such an important decision, without proper consultation, will be considerable. We can only hope that they will have the sense and decency to call for a delay in this scheme to enable proper consultations to be held. I hope they will encourage the local Area Boards to discuss the proposals in detail with local people and in particular parents. It will be extremely unfair if parents are forced to fund the expense of a Judicial Review, and it will not be forgotten. There is a strong case that the law has not been followed with due diligence and it is very likely that the parents would win a legal battle. Please do not force them through that ordeal.

Yours Faithfully

[6.2.22 \(23.02.19\)](#)

I absolutely do not support your proposal. You are liars saying we know about the Council plans to close Larkrise school for the past 3 years! 3 months is more accurate! Disgraceful, you are destroying our children's school lives by rail roading ahead with your cost cutting exercise at the expense of our children. What about their rights and the right not to spend hours every day stuck on school transport! For my child the journey on transport and the length of the journey is paramount as to how she is feeling when she arrives home and travels to school. We live in Warminster and will not be forced into sending her to the middle of nowhere to the school you tell us is our only choice! Disgusting that you think it's acceptable, that we have no choice where our child is educated simply because she has Special needs! We will not be part of this, listen to what parents are telling you! It is unthinkable that Wiltshire Council is using our children as an excuse to close schools and save money then go wildly over budget (yes that's right) building their so called expert view of what our children want for their future schooling in a place they have no connection with (unless you are one of the chosen ones who happen to live close to Rowde).

I do not support you and can I tell you ever since this information was leaked out (again despicable behaviour) our lives have been hanging in limbo wondering how we can possibly

cope with our daughter being shipped daily from Warminster to Rowde and home again knowing we have failed in our role as parents allowing this to happen?

#### 6.2.23 (23.02.19)

To whom it may concern

I would like the council to consider the following points regarding the special schools consultation:

- In December 2017 there were consultation events which made no mention of closing schools and merely asked what good provision looked like.
- The pre statutory consultation from May 2018 did not make it clear that closing schools was an option; in fact one of the documents produced by the council states that 'this is not about closing schools'
- The proposal to build one school at Rowde, despite 71% of parents consulted being opposed to school closures, was formed and was leaked to the local news on 9 November 2018.
- The reasons for closure as given in ' PROPOSAL FOR SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN NORTH WILTSHIRE PURSUANT TO A STATUTORY NOTICE PUBLISHED ON THE 9<sup>TH</sup> OF JANUARY 2019' are primarily financial, numbers of pupils and transport congestion. There is also the idea that a 'Centre of Excellence' would be able to provide 'high quality support and advice to mainstream schools.' This already happens at Larkrise. You do not need a Centre of Excellence for this to happen.
- It is not morally acceptable to place 350 children in a building away from their communities where they, (and the local communities), would have their learning significantly enhanced. In addition, they would be accepted and become part of their communities; this will be taken away if they were to be bused out to what can only be seen as an institution. Local communities would be devoid of children with special needs in its daily functions.
- It may cost more to create 2 new schools but the council has an obligation to provide what is morally right
- The ' PROPOSAL FOR SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN NORTH WILTSHIRE PURSUANT TO A STATUTORY NOTICE PUBLISHED ON THE 9<sup>TH</sup> OF JANUARY 2019' also states under 'Ethos and Religious Character' that *'Its ethos would be the provision of high quality learning which will give pupils the best start for adulthood and being active citizens in their communities.'* The children will not be 'active citizens in their communities' because they would be taken out of those communities. It would not be appropriate for the children to be bused into school and for the only way to access their communities would be to get on a bus again. Many of the children currently walk or are pushed in wheelchairs or specialist buggies out into their communities to enhance their learning and this is of special value to both them and the local communities. It is also very easy for people from all areas of the local community to pop into school to further enhance learning. This would not be feasible at a school in Rowde.
- It would appear that the council are pre-empting the proposal as they are reportedly going to place children with a September 2019 admission, in mobiles at the Rowdeford

site. This in itself will be discriminatory unless the council have identified individual needs and addressed any issues regarding hoisting, personal care and medical needs. Are parents aware of this?

- The ' PROPOSAL FOR SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN NORTH WILTSHIRE PURSUANT TO A STATUTORY NOTICE PUBLISHED ON THE 9<sup>TH</sup> OF JANUARY 2019' also states that the new school would cater for pupils aged 3 – 16 and that 'post-16 education will be available at Wiltshire College' and other private sector providers'. There will need to be considerable spending in this area to fulfil this statement as currently not all pupils with profound and complex needs are catered for.
- In the on-line video conversation I saw between Councillor Laura Mayes and Stuart Hall from the WPCC, the conversation regarding post 16 provision was revealing and disturbing. Laura Mayes says that they will be able to *'really tailor something that is right for that child as they're getting to the age when they should be back in their communities'*. So, there is the acceptance that they would be taking the child out of their community and putting them in the 'centre of excellence' from 3 – 16. We currently work on the children being part of their communities regardless of their age. The idea that at 16, the children will just integrate seamlessly back into their communities is shockingly alarming and shows a lack of understanding of the needs of children with special needs. The council's proposal will mean the children are excluded from their communities and the community will be excluded from them. Until they are 16! That is not acceptable.
- The report from Wiltshire Council Cabinet 27 November 2018 states that *'New Post 16 special school provision would allow a focus on Preparing for Adulthood outcomes (employment, independent living, health and community) for young people with SEND. At 16, learners would move to transition hubs close to their own local communities. There would be key hubs in Chippenham and Trowbridge.....This would mean less travel for young people and the chance to start building their adult life locally from the age of 16'*. I think this probably says a lot about the contradictions of the councils thinking. The new school should not be located out of the children's local community from the start.
- Laura Mayes stated that *'parents have shaped where we've got to so far'*. This is quite difficult to believe as I feel that if the council had really taken on board what the parents were saying, the only proposal put forward would not be for one large school, or 'centre of excellence' as the council refer to it. It would be for new school in their local community.
- Laura Mayes says *'what we realised was when we wanted to just have one centre of excellence in each area that it was very important that both sites were very accessible to people from all round the area and Rowde, being close to Devizes, is in a very central location, making it easy for people coming from both the north and the west'*. This is simply not true. Parents and carers would not be able to take their child to school or pick the child up at the end of the day, attend meetings, appointments or events unless they had transport. Access by public transport is a major issue yet the council has made no mention of this. It is shockingly discriminating. Public transport buses to Rowde drop off at the Cross Keys or at Caen Hill, both requiring a considerable walk to get to the Rowdeford site. This is not acceptable.

- There will be staff, who currently work at Larkrise, who will not be able to get to and from work because they currently walk and have no transport. When this question was posed at the consultation on 7<sup>th</sup> Feb 2019, Alan Stubbersfield said that Wiltshire council will support staff. This is a very vague statement and I feel that identified problems are being brushed under the carpet.
- Laura Mayes talked about the provision at Three Ways school in Bath. The facilities may be outstanding but there can be no real comparison with the council's proposed vision as Three Ways is in a city, within a community – the children can come out of the school and walk to a shop etc. They have not been taken out of their community.
- Laura Mayes also talked about early years providers in specialist centres... *'what the centre of excellence will be able to do is to work with these organisations to give these children the support that they need to ensure that they've got the best start before they even get to a special school'*. I (& colleagues) have always done this! I visit the local specialist centre, I organise times for the parents / carers to visit my class and indeed I make the transition as seamless as possible. It feels as if the council has not done enough thorough research regarding all the amazing work the special schools already do. Things like this are happening now; it is the norm.
- In the report from 'Wiltshire Council Cabinet 27 November 2018' it states that *'Rowde is an active community close to Devizes with good bus routes and access to good community facilities. The new school will be able to build on and add to this community potentially with its own café, gardens and community events'*. To me this feels like more isolation. It feels like the 'centre of excellence' would be more of an institution of years gone by, isolated from the community. Rowde is a small village and while Devizes is relatively close, it is not within walking distance and it is not the children's community. It wouldn't be part of the bigger picture of life because of its location. In addition, the community and their parents will be isolated from the children. The proposed new school would not be remotely easy to access using public transport. In addition, if a parent had to travel with their child in a wheelchair/specialist buggy it would be nigh impossible. Parents would be excluded from the 'community' of the school due to its location. This cannot be morally right. It feels like discrimination.
- In the councils, 'A Vision for Special Education in Wiltshire', they state
  - o *'this is not about saving money'*
  - o *'it will promise a better education, better life chances, and better outcomes'*.

*This has to be questioned. How can exclusion from their local community and the community they are likely to spend their adult life in be 'better outcomes'. What does the council mean.*
- The vision also 'assures' a variety of things which I find quite bewildering – such as *'strong community links – with cafes, community gardens and public playing fields'*. The Vision also assures *'hydro pools, sensory rooms, physio, speech and language therapy..'* Does the council know this? It feels as if they are not being very honest with their assurances and that many of them are unrealistic and have no real basis on facts. Do they actually realise that Larkrise has a hydro pool, a sensory studio, the services of a physiotherapist, an occupational therapist, a therapy assistant, a speech and



language therapist, a learning disability nurse, a dietician, specialist nurses, etc. This is the norm. One doesn't need a centre of excellence to provide this.

- In the 'PROPOSAL FOR SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN NORTH WILTSHIRE PURSUANT TO A STATUTORY NOTICE PUBLISHED ON THE 9<sup>TH</sup> OF JANUARY 2019', the council states that the school at Rowde has '*quick access from local ambulance stations and onwards to major hospitals if needed. It will also offer Virgin Care (our current community health provider) consulting, office and therapy rooms. This will mean that there can be full time nursing provision as well as other therapeutic support, reducing the need for hospitalisation and parents to travel to the school to support medical concerns.*' These statements are very concerning.
  - The ambulance station is about 6 minutes from Rowdeford school; currently the ambulance stations are 2 minutes from Larkrise and St Nicholas schools.
  - Has the council had consultations with Virgin Care regarding full time nursing provision at the proposed new school? Who would pay for this? Who would line manage this?
  - Nursing provision would not automatically reduce the need for hospitalisation or parent/s to be present. For example if a child had a seizure requiring rescue medication, that child would need to go home afterwards (depending on care plan, which might state hospital), i.e. they would need to be picked up from school.
  - Without transport this would be extremely difficult or nigh impossible for some parents/carers. They would not be able to travel home on a school bus. Getting to and from the school using public transport would not be feasible for parents & carers without transport.
  - If the para medics need to be called they prefer the parent to be with the child and to travel to hospital with them. This will be extremely difficult if the school is at Rowdeford and the parent has no transport.
  - Children at Larkrise school are supported by Virgin Care who provide physiotherapy, SaLT & OT support. Some children also come under the Continuing Care Team and have a dedicated nurse.
- Has the council researched journey times for all children who would attend the proposed new school at Rowde? In the 'PROPOSAL FOR SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN NORTH WILTSHIRE PURSUANT TO A STATUTORY NOTICE PUBLISHED ON THE 9<sup>TH</sup> OF JANUARY 2019' the council mentions the DFE guidance for '*reasonable journeys*' and note that while they will '*try to ensure that every child has a journey within these limits.....this may not be possible for every child.*' In the same document the council '*hope*' that they '*will reduce the amount of time in congested town traffic at peak time*' and '*be able to reduce the number of pick-ups*'. What does 'reduce the number of pick-ups' mean exactly. Does this mean that the council propose central pick up points? This would not be reasonable and would be practically impossible for most. The report also says that '*We will be creating transport plans for every child/young person with particular regard for the support they may need for medical, behaviour and /or sensory needs.*' This is a very loaded statement as many of our pupils will need a transport plan, with some requiring a trained 1:1 PA. Has the council considered ALL of the implications of such an undertaking?

- Has the council researched the status in our society of children, young people and adults with special educational needs? -
  - o There is much evidence to support the view that they are among the most marginalised, socially excluded, segregated and disenfranchised in our communities
  - o They lack friends, are impoverished, are highly or totally dependent on families and as they age, need to be provided for in specialist residential homes

There are two approaches to this problem:

1. Increase support for **inclusive practice** and educate children locally ensuring they are known in the community. (and collaboration with main stream schools as appropriate and some pupils attending a Resource Base). By ensuring children and young people are seen and known in their local communities means that people will look out for them and know how to interact with them.
2. Remove children and young people to a rural setting. Away from their communities.

I sincerely hope that the council will reconsider their proposal in light of the strength of the opposition against it. Yes, new schools are needed but they should be in the children's local communities not isolated in a rural setting that would segregate not only the children and their families and friends but also their communities. This is not morally acceptable and is discriminatory to say the least.

Yours sincerely

6.2.24 (25.02.19)

This proposal lacks compassion for the unfortunate children and their parents.

This proposal, called a 'vision' is accompanied with inappropriate hyperbole.

I suspect that the underlying motive for the closure of some special needs centres is to be able to sell off the sites. I suspect that this proposal to close some schools and centralise on one location may involve disproportionate transport costs.

I ask for more sympathy and thought to go into your considerations.

Sincerely,

6.2.25 (25.02.19)

The following email exchange seems to imply not every student has had a risk assessment. Which is at odds with the statement below made in the Q&As.

**What about transportation to the new school?**

We aim to have one coordinated system for transport to make pupils' journeys as smooth as possible. **Every child who goes on transport has a risk assessment** and this will continue to be the case.

**From:** "Hunter, Heidi" <[Heidi.Hunter@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:Heidi.Hunter@wiltshire.gov.uk)>  
**Date:** 10 January 2019 at 15:25:58 GMT  
**To:**  
**Cc:** "Lee, Victoria" <[Victoria.Lee@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:Victoria.Lee@wiltshire.gov.uk)>  
**Subject: RE: Emergency Medication on transport**  
Thank you for your email

I have been in conversation with Victoria regarding your request of additional medical support for your daughter.

Victoria has said that she can arrange for the current Passenger Assistant to be asked if she would like to accept the additional responsibility and to attend the training needed to continue to support (name of child). This is not a mandatory requirement for our Passenger Assistants to undertake this training so we may have to enquire with others if she is not completely happy to proceed.

Regarding your request for (name of child) to remain on transport whilst these new arrangements are made. Victoria has gained agreement from the Head of Service for Passenger Transport that he is happy for (name of child) to continue on the transport with the expectation that in case of an emergency the Passenger Assistant will dial 999. We will need by return of email your agreement that you are happy with that arrangement.

When we have received the updated care plan/flow chart, we will then compile a suitable Risk Assessment to reflect her additional needs on the vehicle. **Only students with a higher level of need have a Risk Assessment completed before going onto the transport.** When (name of child) joined transport this was not the case, that she met those requirements, so has **previously not had an individual Risk Assessment.** I will of course send you a copy of the Risk Assessment when it has been completed.

I look forward to hearing from you and have copied in Victoria so that she is aware of your response too.

Kind Regards  
Heidi Hunter  
SEND Transport Co-ordinator  
Children's Service, Wiltshire Council

-----Original Message-----

**From:**  
**Sent:** 08 January 2019 18:08  
**To:** Hunter, Heidi <[Heidi.Hunter@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:Heidi.Hunter@wiltshire.gov.uk)>  
**Cc:** Lee, Victoria <[Victoria.Lee@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:Victoria.Lee@wiltshire.gov.uk)>; [clarecarter05@aol.com](mailto:clarecarter05@aol.com)  
**Subject:** Re: Emergency Medication on transport

Heidi

There are times as a family we have no choice. We do tend to drop her in and pick up

on bad days but this gives her a shorter day as has to be done around her sisters school day. Therefore impacting on her education.

Currently on days she is well enough she goes by transport but it is always a risk being epileptic. Especially when friends who are at the same school, including new starters, have the emergency cover with them, it seems unfair.

And therefore she is and will continue to use transport, unless or until this is denied her.

We have a current flow chart which was modified at the end of last year but this is now being updated again and we can supply this once it has been completed.

When was a risk assessment for transport last undertaken? Could we have a copy?

Regards.

On 8 Jan 2019, at 15:21, Hunter, Heidi <[Heidi.Hunter@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:Heidi.Hunter@wiltshire.gov.uk)> wrote:

Thank you for your email and sorry to hear that (name of child)'s seizure activity has become more problematic.

For a PA to be trained to potentially administer emergency medication you will need to provide us with a care plan/flow chart that has been reviewed since (name of child) has had a change in her medical needs on the vehicle. When we have received this, the PA coordinator team will explore the options for a PA and what training is needed. I am assuming that for the time being (name of child) will not be travelling on transport whilst new arrangements are being made to ensure her safe journey to and from school.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries.

Kind Regards

Heidi Hunter

SEND Transport Co-ordinator

Children's Service, Wiltshire Council

-----Original Message-----

From:]

Sent: 08 January 2019 13:40

To: Lee, Victoria <[Victoria.Lee@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:Victoria.Lee@wiltshire.gov.uk)>; Hunter, Heidi <[Heidi.Hunter@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:Heidi.Hunter@wiltshire.gov.uk)>

Cc: [clarecarter05@aol.com](mailto:clarecarter05@aol.com)

Subject: Emergency Medication on transport

Victoria/Heidi

Ros Way gave us you email addresses.

We would like to confirm how our daughter (name of child) can have her emergency meds travel with her to and from school with a PA who is trained and authorised to administer them.

Separately given what is being discussed regarding school closures and site relocation I would like to have a copy of the risk assessment held on her for transport, and confirm

transportation restrictions, requirement and how these addresses her medical, education and well being risks.

Our daughter is an epileptic and at the end of last term and over Christmas has had higher seizure activity than normal. Given the length of time in transport and associated risks and fatigue this causes the general consensus was she needed to avoid using transport for the last couple of weeks of term.

And even in this mode to help her cope she had curtailed education and school days. Which if she had been on transport for around an hour coming home from school would have led to more time out of education missing days and a significant increase in her risk to health from seizures.

The risks being compounded by the fact her emergency meds do not currently travel with her. Hence our request.

Regards

#### 6.2.26 (25.02.19)

The notes from the Consultation in Corsham I attended seem to be somewhat incomplete.

I know My wife and I had a discussion at the Health desk which include from the WCC representative stating that professional were spending 60-90% of their day travelling and was making the assertion that the proposal would improve their availability although this hasn't been stated to my knowledge elsewhere and no information was provided as to the reason for these figures or the expected improve.

Also notes on the whole room discussion appears to be absent which I know included the raising of a number of frustrations including how commenting during the closure representation phase was being impaired by the lack of clarity on the new school proposal/specification.

Regards

#### 6.2.27 (25.02.19)

Dear Councillor

The attached letter composed and written by our 8 year daughter regarding her older sister is in her own words and gets to the heart of the issues with the North Wiltshire SEND consolidation plan better than we could. We ask that you please read it.

While the process leading to and the statutory proposal published 9th January is subject to legal scrutiny. It still feels important that issues with the plan are understood and addressed, given the level of discontent from within key stakeholder groups (which we are) and the wider community given the support the legal action has achieved.

We ask therefore that before any cabinet votes on the SEN school consolidation plan and school closures the council has independent publicly available impartial legal guidance on the compatibility of any proposal with the councils obligations, to the affected families, their disabled children and the environment.

A plan that looks financially sound may turn out to be anything but if it fails legal duties to stakeholders. In this case including many of the most vulnerable children in Wiltshire and their families.

Thank you



Dear councillor,

My sister [redacted] goes to St Nicholas School  
in Chippenham. I don't approve of her going to  
Rowde because

1. I won't see her that much
2. she needs to be local
3. most people need to see children in wheelchairs  
as people STILL stare at her. It's not good!
4. she needs to be safe as she is from her

hospital.

please listen to us

From

[redacted]  
aged 8 years.

6.2.28 (26.02.19)

Dear Councillor,

Tomorrow I will be presenting the full council with a petition to Save St Nicholas Special School in Chippenham, currently signed by more than 7,500 Wiltshire residents.

I wrote and organised this petition in response to the outcome of the summer consultation, published 12 November, and ahead of the Cabinet Meeting on 27 November 2018 in which they voted on the future of special education in Wiltshire. Our school and community were shocked, frustrated and saddened to hear for the first time that Wiltshire Council planned to close our school, and we wanted to ensure our voices were heard, louder than the 71% of stakeholders who voted for the three school option in the summer's consultation and were ignored.

For many parents, including myself, the problem of the amalgamated school in Rowde comes down to our children being segregated from their community. For others, it's the risk to their child's health being so far from the nearest A&E department, while some are concerned that the longer journey to school will be yet another barrier to learning for children who already find

it difficult to access education. Finally, others don't think their child will cope with such a large school setting.

Research shows time and again that INCLUSION is the strongest factor in improving outcomes for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). While we don't have a truly inclusive education system, keeping schools in main communities comes close. For instance, I was looking forward to the day when I could drop my daughter off at Hardenhuish Secondary school, which is right next door to her brother's school, St Nicholas, in Chippenham. What's more, Hardenhuish hosts sports days and other events for St Nicholas students. My son would be able to interact and enjoy activities with his sister as well as with his mainstream peers who he knows from outside school. Being able to learn life skills within his community, one that is part of his daily routine, rather than some strange village he only visits during the school day, will play a big part in his ability to gain some semblance of independence. As hard as this is to say, it is unlikely he will ever leave home, and someday the state will have to support him when his dad and I are gone.

Now, some might say that the current schools aren't in local communities, but of the 65 students currently enrolled at St Nicholas, 55 of them live closer to St Nicholas than to Rowdeford, and 22 live within Chippenham itself (according to school data). My family and I live in Calne, but consider Chippenham to be part of our community as it's where we spend most of our leisure time, so it is where our son feels comfortable in familiar surroundings.

Tomorrow, I implore you to consider the strength of feeling surrounding this controversial plan to build one mega school in a rural location. You may have seen our campaign to Keep Special Schools Local in the local papers, on TV and across social media. We have gained an incredible amount of support and momentum, including raising more than £11,000 towards our legal costs within 10 days.

We very much want to work with the council as this isn't just about the future of our children but of future generations. We recognise the financial constraints the Local Authority faces, while still having to meet its statutory duties. What's more, a £20 million investment is a lot of money and together, Wiltshire Council and stakeholders must ensure it is spent as wisely as possible.

Perhaps a compromise can be reached by making appropriate amendments to the current proposal, such as:

- **Installing an ambulance station on the one-school site to help mitigate health risks for children with serious health and life-limiting conditions**
- **Creating a 'Centre of Excellence' in Rowde, but keeping both St Nicholas in Chippenham and Larkrise in Trowbridge as satellite sites**
- **Widening the A342 to make access to the one school safer for mini-buses travelling to the site and having to contend with HGVs headed to the Hills site in Calne and Biomass plant in Bromham**
- **Installing wide pavements from the school site to the village of Rowde so that students can walk or be pushed in their wheelchairs in order to access the village**
- **Dual enrolment with a mainstream school so that students can integrate with their peers in their local community on a regular basis, where appropriate**
- **A PROMISE/GUARANTEE that all passenger transport times will not exceed 45 minutes**

While these ideas are not inclusive, they could go some way towards alleviating parents' worst fears and mitigating some of the problems caused by the one-site option, making it difficult for stakeholders to disagree with the proposal.

I hope that we will have your support in recommending the Cabinet considers the level of feeling felt by Wiltshire residents surrounding the future of special education, and some or all of the above amendments, for when they make their decision at the end of March.

Please feel free to get in contact if you have any questions or would like further details.

Many thanks and best wishes,

6.2.29 (26.02.19)

Hi

I completed the online consultation but ran out of room for comments.

Feedback

I do not support the new proposal.

My son is thriving in a resource base with the inclusion and social interaction he has from his mainstream peers. I feel consideration hasn't been made for SEN children who are in the middle. Children who will be too delayed for mainstream secondary school but are happy, well behaved, progressing yet vulnerable. I worry how my son will continue to make progress in an environment with severe, profound and multiple learning disabilities as he learns a great deal from his peers. I'm fortunate enough that I work part time and our school is minutes from our home, I do the school run every day but I won't be able to continue to work and travel to Rowde daily. Why should vulnerable SEN children have to travel such a distance and have to rely on transport for an education? If I had to give up my job then that's taking money away that we put into private therapies for my son as Virgin care is so poor in Wiltshire.

My son has epilepsy and has emergency meds, to think he would be even further away from a main hospital is very worrying.

Also, what happens when the new super school is at full capacity and the 3 current schools have been closed, where will children go then?

I have lots of concerns with the new proposal.

6.2.30 (27.02.19)

Hello,



I believe the schools are extremely important in Wiltshire and am very proud of the teachers and pupils at them and would like to see the government and council supporting them and maintaining them. They are a valuable asset to this country.

I know there's proposed changes and consultations and I hope you chose to do the right thing

I may not have made it clear as I thought it was obvious, that what I mean by the right thing is NOT closing the existing services and schools

6.2.31 (27.02.19)

Dear Councillors

We're writing in regards of the proposed closure of our son's SEN school, St Nicholas School in Chippenham to be replaced by a larger school near Rowde. This would be devastating for our son and his peers.

(Name of child) has a rare genetic syndrome, severe learning difficulties and autism. He is nearly 8 years old and completely non verbal and still wears nappies etc. As he gets older he is increasingly difficult to take out and about to parks/shops etc as he gets very distressed.

There are two places he is most comfortable and happy 1. home and 2. St Nicholas School. He absolutely loves his school and skips in in the morning. He loves the routine, the building (yes, there is actually something about the building that he loves, he is actually far less comfortable in other similar schools/public buildings!) and the staff and children.

The staff at St Nicholas work very hard to ensure (name of child) and his classmates are out in the community visiting parks and shops which makes it much easier for us to visit as a family. This is so important as he grows up.

As with all the children in Chippenham, (name of child) and his peers in particular need the following to help them do well

**1. To be part of the community near to where they live** - to visit local parks, shops, churches and other mainstream schools. They need to be familiar with their local surroundings through school, but also to be seen in the community where they live by the other people/children who live there. This will not be the case for the proposed school near Rowde.

**2. Small school environments**, small classes, small familiar buildings. Many of our children prefer quieter environments - they cannot speak but they will certainly show their distress through their behaviours. I am very concerned at the size of the proposed school.

**3. Minimal school commutes.** We have just 6 months ago moved around the corner from St Nicholas School with the aim that soon (name of child) will be able to walk with us to his school (he currently still uses a buggy/wheelchair although he can walk). The new proposal means that he will have to travel by bus. I believe the travel time with stops will be significantly extended by the need to pick up other children making this journey around an hour. To be

honest this is the last thing he needs at the beginning and end of the day. Also it seems extremely unfair that disabled children are put through this when their able bodied peers are not required to travel these distances to school (we have applied for his brother to attend Sheldon School next year - he will be about 1 minute's walk away).

**4. Easy/quick access to emergency medical care and hospitals.** Several children in my son's class have epilepsy and require urgent medical attention. I am very concerned about the distance of the proposed school to both an ambulance station and local hospitals. This is a serious safety issue.

The proposals for a new large SEN school in Rowde will not meet these needs being out of town, a larger environment and requiring longer commutes. In addition **it goes against recommendations from Wiltshire Council's Children's Select Committee report** which states "**It would not be appropriate to combine all three schools into one site**" (see Recommendation 2):

<https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=145771>

I also have another couple of observations:

- Given the population sizes and building work going on in both Chippenham and Trowbridge, both of these towns warrant a special school of their own. There are several sites in Chippenham with new houses and supermarkets - it seems unbelievable that a new SEN school couldn't be accommodated here.
- The proposal document appeared very biased to the single school solution. The majority of parents requested a three school solution, with only a minority opting for a single school. However this appeared to be ignored as the three school option wasn't even costed, but simply deemed too expensive. This hardly seems appropriate or fair given the considerable support for this. It feels that insufficient investigation into various options were given and simply the cheapest option was selected.
- Three Ways school in Bath is often cited as a great example of a single school that was developed to replace a number of other SEN schools. However, this is in an urban location near to amenities and a hospital, so is in a very different situation to the current Wiltshire proposal.

A petition has been put together which gained over 5000 signatures in just a few days (now at 7629) showing the value of the school to the community:

<https://www.change.org/p/save-st-nicholas-special-needs-school>

Michelle Donelan MP and Andrew Murrison MP are also both supporting the campaign against the proposals. Andrew Murrison also walked alongside hundreds of us parents at the march through Trowbridge to Save Wiltshire special schools as he understands our concerns with the new proposals, particularly around travel times.

Given all of the above, we are very much against the proposal for a single school near Rowde and sincerely hope you will reconsider this.

Yours Sincerely

6.2.32 (27.02.19)

Hi there,

I am a Wiltshire resident with family links to Rowdeford School.

Having read the proposals I feel that expanding the Rowdeford site would offer the best continued provision for SEND children.

I hope that the consultation will consider carefully the implications of closing all three schools and leaving students and parents in a state of uncertainty. Closing all three schools would also have a massive impact on staff retention, and I think that we need to focus on keeping existing staff and encouraging them to share their specialist knowledge.

Thank you

[6.2.33 \(28.02.19\)](#)

Hi

I wanted to contact you about the proposal to close Larkrise.

My daughter is 7 and has been at Larkrise since January 2018. I will say it is the happiest we have all been since she was born. She loves school, no more anxiety and she's made so much progress. For us, we know she is safe, settled, loved and thriving plus the support we get from the staff at the school is priceless.

My daughter is profoundly disabled. On paper. She can't talk, walk, move independently, feed herself or use the toilet. She has no hand use, suffers from seizures and needs constant 1-2-1 care 24 hours a day. Our life is exhausting and there is no light at the end of the tunnel. But now she has Larkrise we get some respite and we get support. We can take her to school and breath a little. For she is more than a profoundly disabled child, she has so much more to give and enjoy.

Before finding Larkrise our daughter was part time at a mainstream school. The reason for this is that in our area there are no suitable schools for a child like my daughter. We live in Shepton Mallet and the schools we can choose from at Critchill and three ways. Critchill sadly doesn't fit our daughter, her class is all boys, the classroom is plain and understimulating, plus the flow of the day there wouldn't suit her at all. Her anxiety would be through the roof. We would LOVE Critchill to be suitable as it's just 8 miles from our house. Three ways is 24 miles from home - a long drive for me each day. But more importantly three ways is a superschool. We have visited twice and both times it was overwhelming and too big. I've no doubt the teachers there are amazing but the space is just too big. Children like my daughter just get lost in these large spaces and due to their disabilities they can't access all the 'amazing resources' as changing chairs, moving down long corridors to different spaces is too much for them and takes too long. There was no way that our daughter could of coped at a large school like three ways.

Then we found Larkrise and it was like all our prayers were answered. It's a school with a heart. It feels like a proper school. It's not an institution or a specialist setting. It's a school for

children to flourish and learn, where they are loved and believed in. Where they feel safe. And that cannot be replaced.

Larkrise is 18 miles from my house and each day I spend around 4 hours in the car on the school run. This IS NOT ideal, some days it's too much for me and my daughter but we keep going as right now we have no other school to send our daughter too. If she doesn't go to Larkrise I would have to keep her at home and how long that would last before my mental and physical health declined???

The families that are already at Larkrise should not be being put through this. Having a child with additional needs is like living in constant fear. You don't know what is around the corner and regular life is something you no longer know. We don't even know how long we will have our daughter, each day is precious.

So when heads of councils etc come along and say that they are building a centre of excellence and try to sell it like this is a good thing it's not only an insult but it's incredibly hurtful and worrying. Us parents have massive daily challenges, do you think we need this as well? Don't you think our kids suffer enough without being moved to a school that for those most vulnerable will be an absolute nightmare? These children need somewhere that is like a second home, to feel safe and secure. A huge school is intimidating even for the most neurological typical child, but for my daughter? She wouldn't cope.

As for trying to sell it with state of the art physio etc, my daughter is nowhere near needing state of the art anything!!! She needs gentle, quiet days, where she gets to explore the world at her very slow pace. Her teachers can help her stretch and get stronger, she has all she needs right in that classroom. Her world needs to be small otherwise it's too overwhelming and she totally shuts down.

So I beg you, I plead. Please reconsider your plans. These children don't need an all singing all dancing school. We are going backwards, not forwards.

My son loves my daughters school. He says 'she's at a real school' now and that's true. Imagine if she was bused to school every day, he would never get chance to be part of her school day. He loves going into her classroom, he needs her to be included too.

Please don't institutionalise our children. Those days should be firmly in the past.

Yours hopefully

[6.2.34 \(28.02.19\)](#)

Dear Laura Mayes,

My youngest daughter (name of child) is 9 and attends Larkrise School in Trowbridge. I am alarmed about Wiltshire Council's proposal to close the school and build a new 'Super School' in Rowde.

It is not so much the travel to school distance although this will have a very negative impact on many of our children and the cost both financially and environmentally would be huge. It is that our children will be sent to a school in the middle of nowhere. Larkrise children access their local community in Trowbridge everyday. They visit the supermarkets, cafes, library, swimming pool, parks, cinema and museum. They learn road safety and visit the fire station and local residential homes. The local community get to know them and look out for them. This all helps to break down prejudices and gives local people especially the children a better understanding of our differences. None of this will be possible in Rowde.

On a personal level, my daughter (name of child) has profound and multiple learning and physical disabilities and relies on others to do everything for her. She also has complex medical needs including severe epilepsy. We live less than 5 minutes walk from Larkrise School. My eldest daughter attends Paxcroft Primary school which is next door to Larkrise. I take and pick (name of child) up from school each day, I push her in her wheelchair. We meet local residents including many children on this journey and most will smile and say hello to (name of child). When (name of child) started at Larkrise we thought she would be there until age 19. It was a bit of stability in our not very stable lives. I have built up an incredibly close relationship with (name of child)'s teacher and teaching assistants. They are my support network. They know (name of child) as well if not better than me so I am often asking their advice and running things past them. They have helped me many a time when I am having a bad day and I have cried on them a number of occasions! I can get to Larkrise within minutes when (name of child) is unwell or if there is an emergency. This happens weekly sometimes daily. If the school was in Rowde I would find this impossible. I do not drive and would have to rely on public transport to get there, which would involve two buses. Ambulances would be called to school much more often! My husband and I are struggling to see how we could send (name of child) to a school so far away and remote. We would seriously have to consider requesting a personal budget from the Local Authority and home school her. This would not be in (name of child)'s or my best interest but may be our only option. Having spoken to other parents we are not alone in this thinking.

I cannot think of a single positive for the new 'Super school' I am struggling to understand the logic in the proposal. In fact it goes against their own Childrens Select Committee's report dated 19 June 2018 which states in its summary 'It would not be appropriate to combine all three schools on to one site'. Wiltshire Council state they need an extra 220 special needs places. The new school will be built for 350. If you total up the current children at Larkrise, St Nicholas and Rowdeford you have close to 300, so where are these extra places? It could be full before it even opens! Even if you take away those 16-19 year olds you would still fall short. We have been told that post 16 aged children from Trowbridge will go to Wiltshire College. This environment would not be suitable for the majority of our children especially children with PMLD like (name of child). The Council state that many Wiltshire children have to go out of county to get the provision they require. I do know that this is true but you will find that a lot of these children are high functioning autistic children. The new school will not cater for these children and so they will continue to go out of County. I am also unsure how the school will be staffed. Many of our staff are very local, some do not drive. Some are only employed for 1.5 hours a day at lunchtimes. They will not be prepared or able to travel to the new school no matter how much they love their job. Years of experience will be lost. The new school goes against the councils own School Places Strategy 2017-2022 which states 'schools should be located at the heart of their local communities to promote social inclusion. 50% of children at

Larkrise live in Trowbridge the rest in the towns and villages of West Wiltshire so surely they should be educated there. Trowbridge is the County town, the commercial hub of West Wiltshire. Many of the supported housing and supported employment projects are located in the town. This is where the majority of our children will end up living as adults so it is extremely important that they get to know it as children and feel they belong here.

I am an active member of the Save our Schools campaign. We would love to be working with the Council not against them to find a solution that suits everyone. We have engaged lots of parents, members of the local community and professionals and we feel you should be using this knowledge, experience, energy and passion to help you. We have lots of ideas just ask!

Yours sincerely

6.2.35 (28.02.19)

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing in regard to the Special School Consultation currently running in Wiltshire, namely the proposal to erect one amalgamated school in the countryside in 2023 and close the three existing special schools of St Nicholas in Chippenham, Larkrise in Trowbridge, and Rowdeford at Rowde.

I am a key stakeholder as I am a parent of a five-year-old child at St Nicholas school and I would like to state for the record that I wholeheartedly OPPOSE these plans for the reasons I will outline below.

### **Social inclusion**

When I consider all of the merits of the single-option school, the main factor that leads me to believe that it is the wrong solution for children with SEND is that my son (and his friends) will be ripped away from his community, one that we as a family, and his school, have worked hard to ensure he can access and be a part of.

Research shows time and again that INCLUSION is the strongest factor in improving outcomes for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). While we don't have a truly inclusive education system, keeping schools in our main communities comes close. For instance, I was looking forward to the day when I could drop my daughter off at Hardenhuish Secondary school, which is right next door to her brother's school. Also, Hardenhuish hosts sports days and other events for St Nicholas students. My daughter would gain some semblance of normality, while my son would be able to interact and enjoy activities with his sister as well as his mainstream peers who he knows from outside school. Being able to learn life skills within his community, one that is part of his daily routine, will play a big part in his ability to gain any sort of independence. I can clearly see how hard St Nicholas school has worked to forge strong links with the Chippenham community, and how much the community values the school in its town, from supermarkets and Emery Gate, to Pit Stop raising money for us with their living Christmas trees each year and the manager at the café at John Coles Park running a scavenger hunt for students each spring.

Building a 'super-school' outside a small village does not meet the council's aim of community engagement; the proposal states that it will address the need for better community links with 'local' schools, but how will a rural school build better links with Hardenhuish, the school literally right next door to St Nicholas, where my daughter, her friends and his peers who all know my son and value him, will attend secondary school and is my son's 'local' school? I think the council doesn't understand the definition of 'community'; I'm sure there is a lovely community in Rowde village, but it is not OUR community, where we have friends and a support network, where we spend our leisure time, and the town in which my son will grow up and live as an adult.

Some might argue that the current schools aren't in every local community, and the Council claim that 80% of children are bussed in and are not local, but this is misleading as Trowbridge and Chippenham are major centres for shopping, leisure and employment and the schools are located in these strategic growth areas in the North of Wiltshire. Of the 65 students currently enrolled at St Nicholas, 55 of them live closer to St Nicholas than to Rowdeford, and 22 live within Chippenham itself (according to school data). My family and I live in Calne, but we consider Chippenham our community as it's where we spend most of our leisure time; it's where our son feels comfortable as he is in familiar surroundings, and therefore so do we.

This proposal will bring back institutionalisation. It will segregate young people with the most severe disabilities from their communities and reduce their options for participation, presence and making relationships and friendships. This could be seen as a human rights issue. Baroness Scott may have found sending her disabled child away to be educated worked 25 years ago, but times have changed – we want our children, disabled or not, to be seen and valued by their communities, and at present, they are. We hear awful stories in the news about vulnerable young people being bullied by other young people, both emotionally and physically, and I fear that if we isolate and prevent typical children from interacting with our SEND children, these crimes will only be set to rise as Wiltshire will move away from acceptance, tolerance and understanding.

The claim that the new school will act as a 'centre of excellence' to promote inclusive practice is aspirational only, since no evidence is provided that local schools would be better supported through outreach from a centralised hub, rather than by increased collaboration between existing schools based within their communities.

## **Money**

If the mega school is about cost-savings and economies of scale, consider this:

The Ofsted Annual Report from 2016/17 shows that 94% of state-funded special schools received a good or outstanding rating, compared with 90% of primary schools. So if this IS about saving money and economies of scale and improving outcomes, why is the council not proposing to amalgamate three underperforming and inefficient primary schools, with able-bodied neurotypical children who are much more able to cope with a large-scale site, long bus journeys and being far from their communities and hospitals? It would be extremely difficult to convince these parents that this is ok, so why do it to us? It feels very much because children with special needs are seen as an easy option.

I note in the Interim Report of the SEND School Provision Task Group they state 'A widely noted problem from the SEND schools regarding EHCP's were instances of children entering SEND schools on bandings lower than that which accurately reflected the levels of their need. This meant that they were not receiving the appropriate levels of funding required. Examples included receiving a child who was funded at a band two, who in fact required the needs of a band three or four.'

This is very much the case for my son. He met ALL of the criteria for Band 3 and some of Band 4, but was awarded upper Band 2 by the council. If a majority of children at St Nicholas fell into a similar predicament over a range of several years, this would cause the school to run at a deficit. So it is therefore not the school's fault that it will run at a deficit in the coming years, but the Local Authority's. This strong evidence has been ignored in the Proposal.

The Proposal states that St Nick's is no longer fit for purpose and is over capacity. Again, this is the fault of the Local Authority, which maintains the school. Due to increased demand for SEND places, the Local Authority had a responsibility to act quickly to ensure it was meeting its duty; instead, they have chosen to ask schools, including St Nick's, to take on more and more pupils and to reduce its facilities (ie library) in order to accommodate more students. The blame cannot be laid at the school when they were only trying to help and work with the LA to meet its increasing demand on special places.

The council has provided some costings for different options but these are not robust. I have also not had an answer about where this money is coming from. £20 million is the projected cost, but yet the one-school option is still only an idea and any suggestions of what it could offer are met with enthusiasm, but this money will only stretch so far. I wonder if we couldn't look to other counties and what they are doing (not just Three Ways), such as in Oxford who are building another special school for £9 million. Could we not build another special school in a high-needs area and thereby alleviating pressure on the current schools, and divvy up the remaining money so that the current schools can be updated?

Architects often do not consult the end user, and as the Council has shown a lack of engagement with parents, families and staff, I wonder if the school will actually meet the needs of those it's meant to serve.

### **Travel and health risks**

The theory is that healthcare professionals from VirginCare could work from the centre of excellence, rather than spending 30% of their time travelling (as mentioned during a consultation meeting); however, the Council is then just transferring this travel burden onto children as young as 4 years old! Why should 350+ children and young people be bussed into a central hub, when a few handfuls of adults can travel between sites? And if the centralised school is to indeed offer outreach opportunities, surely they will be travelling more? The focus of the proposal should be the quality of care to the child, not the healthcare professionals' travel times.

Which leads me to another major concern my family and I have: long transport times. We know this will be the case, as it is currently. The proposal uses the AA route planner, without taking into account multiple stops to collect/drop off children with different needs; it takes 10



minutes to get my son from our front door to being settled in the bus before they can set off (on the rare occasions he has got transport to school). Factor in a child who needs wheelchair access, and another 9 children to collect and the journey suddenly becomes 1.5hrs for what is normally 25 minutes for us. This is why I drive my son to school (after dropping off his sister at her school which is en route) and he only gets the bus home as otherwise, it's too long of a day for him and another barrier to learning.

We also worry that long journeys will affect his health; falling asleep in the car is a main trigger for his seizures and we often have to pull over to check he is ok and breathing. There is no point having an amazing school in the countryside if he has multiple seizures on the way there and back, which can cause brain damage and seriously affect his life chances. And because Rowde is in the opposite direction to his sister's school, he would have to travel on the bus both directions. Just this possibility has impacted my 8-year-old daughter who says 'But I don't want him to go to school there. I won't ever see him because he will spend so much time on the bus, and I love my little brother and like playing with him!' She attends dance classes in Chippenham and the logistics of managing her clubs or extracurricular activities with my son's school transport will be even trickier to manage if he were at school in Rowde.

We also have to consider the risks of being so far away from an A&E department, should he have a prolonged seizure, as well as GWH where (name of child) has routine hospital appts during the school day. It's currently 23 minutes to GWH from St Nick's, and there is an ambulance station around the corner to the school, while it would take nearly double the amount of time to drive from Rowde to GWH. Add to that the narrow and winding roads for an ambulance to access the school, and an emergency could prove dire. I just don't know if that's a risk I am willing take.

But I am concerned for those parents who don't drive, who won't be able to attend school events, parents' evenings, or even collect their children when they are ill, given such a remote location and the lack of public transport. What also of support staff who can currently walk to school and many of whom have disabled adult children of their own to work around? And what of the huge increase of traffic along a narrow road, frequented by HGVs headed to the Hills Recycling Centre or the Biomass Plant in Bromham? We heard the full council debate the impact of climate change should we choose to do nothing about it, and yet it looks as if the Council has an opportunity to look at the environmental impact this increase of traffic will have and come up with a more thoughtful solution.

### **Outreach vs Inreach**

The Proposal offers to have specially trained staff that can be outsourced from the centre of excellence, to train staff at mainstream schools in order to support children with SEND in mainstream classrooms. However, it is not so much the lack of specialist training that mainstream schools require, but smaller ratios! Which costs money! I can't tell you how many parents I know whose children could access mainstream curriculum if given 1-1 support, but mainstream schools do not have this within their budgets; one might say 'the money follows the child' but then why do mainstream schools then say the money is used to pay for a Teaching Assistant to help the whole class and not just the student with an EHCP? And the money follows the child from the year before, so it often leaves mainstream schools unable to budget adequately. As the Interim Report of the SEND School Provision Task Group explains,

many parents have found that mainstream schools are reluctant to take on children with SEND because of the impact their different progress has on league tables. This is another problem the Council must address if it ever wants to see more children with SEND in mainstream classrooms.

### **Flawed evidence**

Three Ways school in BaNES is cited by both the WPC and Cllr Mayes as an aspirational model because it is an amalgamated school, currently rated Outstanding by OfSTED. Yet this 'evidence' is flawed as it caters to just 220 pupils, much smaller than the 350+ planned for Wiltshire, with physical and sensory needs; it does not teach pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD), Severe Learning Difficulties and complex needs. It should also be noted that it is located in a much more urban environment and close to the community than the proposed site for Wiltshire. So this is not a fair comparison. Another example the council may have looked to is Severdale Academy in Shropshire, but while it caters to the entire range of special needs, it only has a Good Ofsted rating, and again is located closer to an urban environment, and therefore inclusion. This school also has trouble with staff retention, relying on a high-turnover of expensive agency staff, which is a detriment to children who need individual learning plans and staff who know them, the strategies that work, and are recognised rather than a constant stream of unfamiliar faces. I wonder how the Council plans to retain current staff and ensure they are 'appropriately paid' (p.39 of the report to Cabinet, Nov 2018), when support staff nearly double that of specialist staff?

It is also suggested that many Wiltshire families who currently send their children to Three Ways in BaNES will be more likely to choose the Rowde super school as it is 'in county', however there is no evidence to support this, and could very well have the opposite effect, with those of us with children with medical needs searching for a school closer to a hospital with specialist facilities and an A&E department.

This proposal drastically reduces parental choice. 71% of those who responded to the survey last summer voted to develop three schools, and the SEND task group recommended against building a super school and instead keeping schools in strategic towns, so why aren't stakeholders and experts being listened to and acted upon? The consultation findings also note that most respondents stated they preferred Rowde if a new school was built (which it would as they have more students!), but the Council draws a false correlation between this and respondents wanting it to be the site of a super school. It doesn't consider that perhaps respondents wanted specialist primary provision to be available at Rowde in ADDITION to the current schools in order to offer families more choice. The online survey in the summer was biased towards the one-school option, with many questions geared around it but not for the others, and misleading in its language as it left the 'one school' option open for interpretation.

The background of this proposal is a report commissioned in 2017 from an external consultant, John Wood. The data that informs the proposal is taken largely from this report (albeit selectively). However, the recommendations of the Wood Report differ considerably from the Special Schools Proposal. Wood proposed expanding provision in the south, and expanding collaboration between special and mainstream schools in the north of the county. He did not suggest closing popular local schools.

As I understand it, we are currently in the Representation phase for the one-school proposal, but in the formal Consultation period for the three school closures. Many of us parents have numerous and detailed questions regarding how either of these plans will work, yet even our initial questions submitted by the Council's deadline before the 27 November Cabinet meeting remain unanswered (or in the case of one question I asked regarding current transport costs and projected costs for the new school, I was told they would be 'about the same' which is NOT an appropriate answer!). This demonstrates a clear lack of engagement by the Council with key stakeholders to inform the future of specialist provision in Wiltshire. Even when I asked how the Council plans to engage with parents going forward, I'm told that this will be something new school will be responsible for. As the school will legally have to become an academy, it feels very much that the Council wants to wash its hands of SEND children.

### **Other objections:**

The impact on the local economies of Chippenham and Trowbridge has not been explored, and in fact has been disregarded as it's not a 'rural' environment. However, as economic advantages are foreseen for the area around Rowdeford (jobs at the school, new café, etc), it is obvious that their gain is others' loss.

Failure to sufficiently explore the alternatives – The viability of retaining 3 enhanced schools with executive management has not been evaluated by the Council, including shorter travel costs and times (perhaps those out of county could be persuaded back if there were more spaces and more options in North Wiltshire?).

The proposal says it will cater from 3 years old, but does not explain how; will this impact or be in addition to the services provided by District Inclusion Centres? Local Preschools?

The proposal is very vague about what post-16 provision will look like. Considering the law change to cater up to 25 years of age, how is the proposal a 'Vision for Special Needs Education' when it seems to drop off at 16? Stating that Wiltshire College will be able to pick up where the school leaves off is inappropriate and obvious ignorance to what young people with SEND require.

The £20 million figure has been floated around without pinning down what exactly it will pay for, but crucially it is mentioned in the proposal that this money will go toward TWO centres of excellence, one in the north and one in the south (Exeter House in Salisbury). How will this money be split exactly? And how does the Council envision making this reduced figure stretch to cover a purpose-built school for 350+ children who require specialist (and expensive) facilities?

Perhaps a compromise can be reached by making appropriate amendments to the current proposal, such as:

- Installing an ambulance station on the one-school site to help mitigate health risks for children with serious health and life-limiting conditions
- Creating a 'Centre of Excellence' in Rowde, but keeping both St Nicholas in Chippenham and Larkrise in Trowbridge as satellite sites

- Widening the A342 to make access to the one school safer for mini-buses travelling to the site and having to contend with HGVs headed to the Hills site in Calne and Biomass plant in Bromham
- Installing wide pavements from the school site to the village of Rowde so that students can walk or be pushed in their wheelchairs in order to access the village (including making all shops, pubs etc in Rowde wheelchair accessible)
- Dual enrolment with a mainstream school so that students can integrate with their peers in their local community on a regular basis, where appropriate
- A PROMISE/GUARANTEE that all passenger transport times will not exceed 45 minutes

While these ideas are not inclusive, they could go some way towards mitigating some of the problems caused by the one-site option, making it difficult for stakeholders to disagree with the proposal.

There are so many questions, so many flaws, and so much evidence to the contrary that make this current proposal untenable. I sincerely hope that you will heed the advice of parents, especially those of us who are campaigning with a determined strength only those of us who have had our lives shattered and built them again can, and work with us to reach a compromise that works for the majority in Wiltshire. We are not 20-somethings with a naïve view of the world; many of us are highly educated and have/had professional careers before we had children with disabilities that they did not ask for. We are normal parents faced with extraordinary circumstances and we have learned to take on the most insurmountable of challenges head on, garnering support, knowledge and experience along the way in order to do what is best for our children. Please use this passion and powerful force to your advantage!

We can be allies to shape the future of SEND in our county and be an example to the rest of the country. Let's work together on this.

With sincere thanks,

[6.2.36 \(01.03.19\)](#)

Sir or Madame

To be clear as a parent of a medically vulnerable child attending St. Nicholas I OPPOSE the proposal.

In this email I am attempting to comment on areas of concern to me. As At the conclusion of the consultation today I hope that views have been gathered that will allow the decision makers to make an informed and safe decisions. I personally hope the consultation can answer all questions ask. To prevent progressing an untested, unvalidated or unsafe plan.

These are

1. How is this proposal, BETTER FOR ALL?

2. What negative impacts are anticipated over the next 5 years by Wiltshire Council while this strategy is being developed, delivered and introduced? And what mitigation already/will be put in place to address negative impacts.
3. Who are the loser in terms of geographical location, SEND//EHCP and/or medical needs in the proposed future Centre of Excellence approach compared to maintaining provisions in all the current settlements in and for North Wiltshire? How is this better for all?
4. Do views, evidence and professional inputs agree that the following holds for the school closures as well the new school “will have an overwhelming positive impact for children and young people with SEND both in the school and supported through the Centre of Excellence in terms of:
  - Wellbeing
  - Progress
  - Attainment
  - Health
  - Community opportunities
  - Inclusion and integration”
1. At what age, why and from what previous placement do parents choose to send their children to
  1. Threeways
  2. St. Nicholas
  3. Larkrise
  4. Rowdeford
2. What differences in views exist between primary, secondary and post 16 parents and pupils at the different settings?
3. Specifically for Rowdeford without the benefit of hindsight is the feedback on whether parents would have chosen to send their child there at the start of primary schooling?
4. Is it understood if all the reasons parents made their current choices can be delivered by the enlarged Rowdeford to parental satisfaction?
5. What parental, educational and attendance concerns are not as yet definitely addressed in the published closure proposal, on which representation closes today 1st March
6. Will the enlarged Rowdeford as the current Rowdeford appears to be providing education to secondary school aged students Countywide.
7. Will or have changes to SEND provision in South Wiltshire been excluded from comments and assessments for changes to North Wiltshire.
8. Given the lack of students from Marlborough attending Larkrise or St. Nicholas.
  1. Is this due to there being no SEND children needing this provision
  2. That these students are being educated in independent special schools and/or out of area.
  3. Has the underlying reason be understood and would this reason impact the catchment area area of the enlarged Rowdeford for any specific SEND pupils.
  4. Separately will the new Rowdeford be better able to support children in and around Marlborough (and Cricklade)

Also from the published proposal I ask

1. How is the distance from the alternate site in Chippenham to the town centre measured at 2.2 miles, what are the impediments about alternate sites like the undeveloped land

near Chippenham Hospital. Or the original or remaining space on the council/ex-council land surrounding of the new Chippenham lidl foodstore.

2. Whether the transport plan is robust in design and test as it hasn't been shared.
  1. Does it distinguish between current and future time on transport separately for primary and secondary aged students. As even if overalls there was no significant increase in average travel time, increasing time from specific locations, or reducing travel time for less medically vulnerable Secondary aged students at the expense of increases for medically complex or Primary aged students should be stated and mitigated.
  2. How without reducing student numbers, having more parents drive to school or moving to a centralised pickup, drop off model (which has been dismissed) can the following claim be supported "be able to reduce the number of pick-ups". Particularly given some children at Larkrise (and St. Nicholas) are not using any transport to attend school.
  3. Whether the following can even be considered aspirational "There is guidance from the DfE about reasonable journeys. We will try to ensure that every child has a journey within these limits" as it appear impossible for a primary school child from Cricklade to reach the school on point to point transport within the primary school age limit even before considering "For children with SEN and/or disabilities, journeys may be more complex and a shorter journey time, although desirable, may not always be possible."
  4. What is at the heart of the travel plan apart from hope, as there should be good quality evidence to confirm the belief. & not aspirational sentences like "We hope that by choosing a non-town location we will reduce the amount of time in congested town traffic at peak times"
3. How the requirement to maintain Community usage of the Hydro pools has been addressed.
4. Where Displaced pupils are going as the proposal seems to be at best vague and a worst deny displacement will occur due to school closures. Beyond that it doesn't detail what schools and colleges the pupils will be offered places at.
5. How is this change being delivered by the proposal and closures "Currently pupils have to choose between a specialist or mainstream provision. The new approach will ensure flexibility of choice and a full range of provision to meet the spectrum of need."
6. Regarding medical support onsite this is an aspiration as I read it, "This will mean that there **can** be full time nursing provision as well as other therapeutic support, reducing the need for hospitalisation and parents to travel to the school to support medical concerns.", what level and type of medical care is being proposed, how will this avoid hospitalisation? As beyond first aid while emergency services arrive what can safely be provided? While there may be some occasion a medical opinion is helpful to day to day care, under what circumstances would it be prudent to not have parents aware and/or planning to attend school or a major hospital if their child's health has or is deteriorating? (Given just yesterday we were provide a urgent appointment following a hospital day admission a week ago for Physio in 2 weeks time, the next date a qualified Physio attends St. Nicholas School. The gap between current needs and expectation, future expectation and reality appears so wide as to require an immediate review outside this process.
7. Is there not a contradiction in needing in county capacity due to limits in availability out of county but rely on the same out of county provision to conversely maintain parental

chose "In addition, while Wiltshire has been able to benefit from school places in neighbouring counties, these schools are also now reaching capacity and need places for pupils from their own Local Authority. Parental choice will be maintained via continued access to all schools within the region which includes Outstanding and Good Special schools in BANES, Somerset and Swindon as well as Exeter House in the south of Wiltshire." Also were and have these other authorities made aware and agreed that they may by this proposal be called upon to provide places due to WCC need to deliver parental choice.

8. Finally "Rowde does have good community transport links" in context of comparison with the principle settlements of Trowbridge and Chippenham seems unlikely and isn't substantiated. What does "good community transport links" mean or look like for Rowde and does the distance and path between these "links" in Rowde and Rowdeford mean Rowdeford actually benefits from them. To give an example if meaning and misunderstanding, Fishguard once had the most regular train service in the country, twice a day around 2pm and 2am. Not frequent but regular.

On a tangent but maybe worth raising, will the proposal support distinguish between those solely with identified Learning Disabilities and those with identified Learning and Cognitively impairment. As many students have only the former diagnosis and may or may not be Cognitive impaired, therefore there should be an assumption in any provision that there is a learning capacity, without or until there is conclusive evidence to the contrary.

Thank you for your consideration

[6.2.37 \(01.03.19\)](#)

Related to the Decision maker

I meant to send several weeks back but appear to have missed it .Also note the ps which I put together back in November.

I ask in good faith that you consider the best interests of every child as individuals in the decision to authorise the closure and removal of current primary and secondary educational provision from Chippenham and Trowbridge.

Ultimately I believe I have previously reference school size, being in the local community, transport journey time, or this being a case of ambition over common sense.

I'm already unclear as to what the new school community or communities will be and on what basis these can be considered better than the current school communities. My wife suggested the new school could feel like a zoo. Particularly if it does have a cafe open to the public.

I want to raise children's lives in the absolute most literal sense.

If you decide to close these schools and increase the cumulative distance from home to school and school to hospital for any family. I feel sure this decision will be tested by the legal system. Either by Judicial Review or Coroners Court. Personally I hope it is the former.

I feel my personal experience today is a perfect example of the problems around the plan.

Having been called by school again due to seizure activity today, and agreeing she didn't sound fit to travel by bus. I arrived at school to be ushered into the medical room because she's had/was having another prolonged seizure.

If the distance were further would I drive faster, would I take more risks, would I be as safe driving home with her in the car given the increased distance, would the journey itself be more fatiguing and introduce its own additional health risks. Could I call an ambulance while in transit and correctly get them to my unfamiliar location. Could the school be honest in all circumstances as to the health of the child and not risk the parent taking undue risks, while worrying about their child.

The following is an edit of something already in the public domain as it was presented to WCC during the November council meeting.

This is our own experience which highlights issues and uncertainties at the core of many parent objections to this proposal. And why we never expected this idea to be seen as viable and progressed to a proposal.

We live in Corsham and our daughter attends St. Nics.

In 2011 she suffered a prolonged febrile convulsion, an event that changed our lives, as within the week we were devastated to be informed she had suffered life changing brain damage, from a brain insult.

The seizure was eventually controlled when she was anaesthetised at the RUH. Unfortunately the RUH wasn't equipped to provide her ongoing care and she had to be transferred to BCH PICU for specialist paediatric care. It took 6 weeks to get her home, 8 months to finally rid ourselves of the NG tube and feeding pump.

We do know pre event she was a Globally Delayed Autistic child who had taken her first and only independent steps two days before.

And now we have recovered to an 11 year old Epileptic wheelchair dependant non-verbal child with complex Cerebral Palsy and hidden under that is still Autism. She is on anti-epileptic medication while still having multiple seizure on many days.

The reason for outline this is to point out we will never know how much more or less of her cognitive skills she would have retained or lost due to variations in the time for the ambulance to attend our home, the time to transfer to A&E, or time taken to undertake steps to stop her convulsing at the RUH.

I'm not sure I would want to know.

We don't even know if the transfer between RUH and BCH hampered her recover.



I wouldn't want Wiltshire ambition to create uncertainty or worse certainty in others that the selected location and/or its proximity to home and amenities contributed to health deteriorates, injuries or death.

Our daughter today has a sense of humour and her own character, her facial expression communicate so much, and she isn't medically that complex.

As SEND parents we take and accept risks everyday. We as a family balance seizure control with quality of life.

When she is unwell we balance using or not using services, and for school this includes deciding between bus, which is already marginal on the state 45 minutes door to door or car which is closer to 15 minutes door to door.

Also whether to attend full day or truncated day, balancing education, rest and overall health. The one school proposal restriction and reduces options and adds risks and complexity for many parents.

Personally we are lucky. We aren't living with the fears an immediately life limiting conditions brings and therefore don't know what the future holds. Not every SEND parent has that luxury.

The proposal expect to deliver so much, it guarantees little. It takes away choice and importantly adds burdens and risk.

Is this proposal fair to parents and aligned to legal obligations to us. As parents do we have no option but to accept a lack of choice in tandem with being burden with additional costs, risks and stress?

The proposal appearing to be focused on Education not EHC, and doesn't appear to take account that our children are complex and vulnerable.

Yes every child now and in the future should be able to access high quality education. But to access education the child must first be present.

As a minimum expectation we as parents should be able to expect a future that does not require any one of us to accept greater burdens and risks.

As a final remark I would ask to look to your conscience as to where liability should lie if a child suffers as a result of these decisions.

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It was mentioned by WPCG that they have no remit to challenge council policy or decisions. And that they conduct consultation as requested by WCC. This creates a potential or actual conflict in their ability to act or support SEND parents in situations where an advocate is required or conflict exists with the council.

For the school closures the decision maker needs to align and group responses in accordance with stakeholder impact, as levels of impact are as important if not more important than the number of responders impacted. The current consultation / request for comment could be perceived or actually lacks clarity, which could invalidate the ability of a decision maker to understand the differing groups view and therefore make safe determination in favour of on the proposal impossible. This does lead to a question as to what organisation or process ensure consultation is of good quality and in accordance and alignment with legal and central government guidance and obligations.

Regards

Ps.

I was recently reminded of this

Further School building questions to be asked or addressed.

1. How many classrooms is the school likely to consist of?
2. Are all classrooms being build to the same footprint?
3. Will all classrooms be fitted with changing places?
4. How will Wilts Council ensure the school stays as a Centre of Excellence and at the leading edge of SEND education?
5. Has any academy or partnership already assisted in the design, discussion or planning of this proposal
6. Is or has any arrangement, agreement or discussion with any organisation to run or maintain the school or site been conducted?
7. What will be the design capacity of each classroom?
8. For a one size/location fits all school have multiple edge cases in terms of educational, health and care needs been considered for the proximity to location and provision?
9. Has Consultation included best practice review for school sizing to allow children to successful interact, associate and socialise with peers?
10. Government policy suggest Primary school children should never be expected to travel for more than 45 minutes by transport with the expectation disable will travel for less. Can and will this be fulfilled in letter and spirit for all locations in North Wilts with the proposed location of the school? Does this include boarding and disembarking of passengers?
11. Will Wiltshire or the School differentiate in travel restrictions for disabled students based on age or conditions?
- 11a. Does Wilts include real life pick up times for total route times? And what percentage of pupils journey are currently in the real world complete with 45minutes? The fact that already significant pupil journey fail this test doesn't mean it OK to let it persist.
- 11b. Was consultation with parents and pupils be graded by SEND need or just lump as one view? As parents and pupils from St .nic and Larkrise are likely to have very different views and ability to articulate them than pupils at Rowdeford given the differences in provision ages and needs between sites.
12. In comparison to Sainsbury's Chippenham how will the school compare in car parking and building footprint. We are assuming approx 80% the car park size with a predominantly single storey building similar in footprint to the store?
13. What size buses will be typically used to bus children in?
14. What will be the mix of buses and taxis to fulfil transport restrictions?

15. Given the greater distances will the school / LA compensate or provide transport as required by parents to support inclusion?
16. Will breakfast and after school clubs be guaranteed to be part of the offering?
17. Will LA or school be providing associated transport for out of school provisions?
18. How many disabled parking space for parents will be provided?
19. Will the school and parking be sized such that school events can be extended to invite all parents of all children?
20. Will there be a helipad on site for the air ambulance?
21. At the 3 schools under treat of closure is Wiltshire ensure each pupil is and will continue to be adequately funded/supported from all source to deliver on the commitments in each EHCP. How does the council as the responsible body ensure the funding is matched to the full education and association equipment needs of each individual.
22. Given significant numbers of students are non verbal, how did the evidence get gathered in a non discriminatory way.

#### 6.2.38 (01.03.19)

Dear Sir or Madam,

Further to my previous email, I realised I haven't explained exactly why St Nicholas School should remain in Chippenham. It isn't just that it is located in our community and that our son is near home and A&E to reduce health risks, it is also because it is a really good school. I know OfSTED disagree, but parents of older children and young people alike give it rave reviews for the progress their children have made.

I was weary of my son leaving Springboard DSC in Pewsham to start school last September as they are exceptionally brilliant at helping very young children make progress, and were crucial to us as a family learning how to support our son. I was worried that his new school would be more or less a babysitting service, or that they would flap about him having epilepsy and needing to walk them through his types of seizures, how to respond etc. But my fears were alleviated almost immediately: they could recognise our son's extreme sensory needs straight away; they could see he was a climber and pushed the OT to get him a helmet to keep him safe; they have stringent rules on his emergency medication and are eager to hear about any changes in his seizures; they saw the gaps in his learning that we hadn't, such as being able to use utensils to eat and getting the speech and language team to assess him straight away, which resulted in him progressing from PECS to using a speech device. His teacher and his TAs are incredibly knowledgeable and patient people who know how to keep children like my son moving forward! And the experiences he has had are wide and varied: from weekly swims in the hydrotherapy pool (swimming is a crucial skill we want (name of child) to learn as the rate of children with severe, non-verbal autism who go wandering and are found in water is much too high), to his first nativity at the local church, a Halloween party, Remembrance Day picnic, and an after-school disco in which families could come and be sociable, baking bread, making Christmas crafts, rebound therapy, soft play, sensory room... He is SO much calmer than he was, will sit for long periods of time (from a maximum of 2mins when he started to 10mins+ now!), engaging with an activity. He is much more aware of his world and of us. I can't tell you how pleased we are at how well he is thriving at school! Our test for a good school was: will he be safe? Check. Will he make progress? Check. Will he be

happy? Check. This last point is important, because we don't know how long we will have with (name of child) and we want him to have the best life possible.

So it isn't that St Nicholas is just any old school in our community, but because it is the BEST school for him and children with SEND, and I vehemently oppose its closure! We need MORE special schools, not fewer.

I also wanted to point out that I am disappointed that John Hamp, the headteacher at Springfields Academy, an independent (and therefore expensive to the Council?) special school, has previously been consulted and is often quoted as supporting the one-school option in North Wiltshire. It feels that he has a vested interest, perhaps vying for the executive head role or the same academy trust taking over the new school when it must be handed over to an academy. And if this is the case, why is the Council pandering to him at all (especially if there is a clear conflict of interest) given that he is running a school which also 'Requires Improvement' by OfSTED and one of the main aims of the proposal seems to be focused on creating an 'Outstanding' school?

Finally, I would like to ask that a flood risk assessment for the Rowdeford site is published in any further documentation going forward.

Many thanks,

6.2.39 (01.03.19)

Dear Directors, Commissioners, and Councillors,

I am writing with reference to the potential changes at Rowdeford School.

I would first like to say that it is very pleasing to hear that Wiltshire Council have decided to keep a school at Rowdeford, and it's encouraging that extra funding is being provided.

I have a son at Rowdeford School and during his time there he has blossomed, and grown from a vulnerable, animal fearing, heavily dependent child into a confident young man who is willing to try new things, do things for himself, has embraced the natural world, and is more aware of his place in society and how to manage himself within it.

The current school at Rowdeford has made my son the person he now is.

Rowdeford have used the fantastic enriching outside space for my son that enables non-academic students to learn practical skills, such as animal welfare and horticulture, for future employment which in turn leads to more independent adult lives. The outside space also provides benefits for all pupils by reducing stress and decreasing undesirable behaviours, it increases happiness and teaches patience & resilience. This mixture of woodland, field, walled garden, small holding, and so on must be maintained.

The existing teams of committed staff who work hard together helping pupils fulfil their potential and enabling them to become as independent as possible within their local communities must be allowed to continue the fabulous work they do and the teams must be allowed to grow organically. The school is already growing naturally, this needs to continue.

The suggestion that the existing Rowdeford School be replaced is worrying. It would be a huge and almost impossible challenge to create new cohesive teams of staff, in a new environment, with all new buildings and equipment and expect them to be able to provide the best support to both existing pupils who, in the main, find change difficult and to new pupils who staff have to learn and understand their individual needs. Growth needs to be managed sympathetically to the needs of all pupils and with minimum disruption to existing students.

The existing school has a wonderful ethos, a fantastic sense of and place in the

Yours sincerely

6.2.40 (23.01.19)

Dear Councillor Wickham,

We are writing to you as concerned governors and parents regarding the local authority proposal to close Larkrise and St Nicholas Special Schools and move the pupils to a new 'super school' in Rowde. We ask you to reflect upon and reconsider the cabinet decision made on November 27<sup>th</sup> as we firmly believe that it is not in the best interests of Wiltshire children.

We are aware that the increase in numbers of children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities [SEND] means that the present schools have run out of space. We do understand and agree that both schools need new sites but we think that re-locating to Rowde is the wrong solution for both schools and more importantly for the communities of Chippenham and Trowbridge.

The proposal you have seen does list as unique to the 'one school' option all those advantages for pupils which apply EQUALLY to the two school option. In addition the two school option actually resolves the outstanding objections especially those concerning social inclusion and transport.

Our children have complex and severe learning and physical disabilities. Some are on oxygen and some have life limiting conditions. Many have autism. 'An outstanding education' for these pupils is about learning life skills embraced within their ever growing and thriving communities alongside their peers in mainstream schools. Most children like ours do not leave home at 18, go to university, travel the world. But one day, they are going to grow up and leave school. And if school is miles away in a small village they never visit out of school time - somewhere they've only ever been to on a bus or in a taxi - then where will they belong? You will be aware that Wiltshire Council has long argued against sending children out of county, in part because of the difficulty of re-integration when they return. Putting all children with SEND in one school, disconnected from any community with which they are familiar will simply create the same reintegration problem all over again.

Today, many of our school leavers still live in the Chippenham or Trowbridge area. Some of them have worked voluntarily at a local garden centre. Some are in independent supported living. Some of them go to the cinema together. Sometimes they meet up, with their support

assistants in local cafes. Many of them have been friends since they were at nursery together. They will probably be friends for life. These are successful young adults, living in the area they have grown up in, learning to manage their lives one step at a time in a place where they are recognised, greeted in the street, fussed over in the shops. This is invaluable support - and it costs nothing. We need the communities of Chippenham and Trowbridge to help us to raise our children. A wonderful example of what can be achieved when young people are put at the heart of their community.

Being in Chippenham or Trowbridge places our children near their peers in mainstream schools. These mainstream children will be the doctors, teacher and policy makers of the future. They need to know about SEND children who experience all disabilities. You will agree, I am sure, that we do not want to go back to the days of discrimination, isolation and exclusion.

We understand the need to spend money in the most effective way possible but we do not think the current proposal is the best way to achieve this. We have not seen any proper costed proposals, and wonder if you have either, and question whether the projected capital outlay and 'economies of scale' would be enough to cover all promises made in the proposal. We question how resources such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy are suddenly going to be available in Rowde when there is a current significant shortage in the county. We feel particularly that the estimated costs for transport will be much higher than predicted. Wherever you place a new school, children will need to be transported to it but as the majority of our children live in the Chippenham or Trowbridge area there can be no advantage in transporting them further away. Additionally this would create lengthy travel times for vulnerable children, potentially causing further distress and, of course, parents would have greater difficulty in getting to the school.

Wiltshire Council has a fantastic opportunity to develop a properly integrated system of education and social care, from birth to supported independent living, with two Centres of Excellence supporting SEND children right at the HEART of their own community. Over the last five years, the Council has shown that it can be cutting edge in developing its "Local Offer": a 0 - 25 SEND service which brings education and social care together to put the needs of its children and young people first, from planning to funding to placement. The next logical step, surely, is to develop this provision in the same community - not to focus upon only the cheapest option, which is miles away from where it is most needed. The two school option, with a cost of just £4 million more than the one school option, would retain special needs education in the fastest growing areas in the north. Wiltshire Council's own Task Group concluded that, "it would not be appropriate to combine all three schools into one site," and their own School Places strategy document states that children are best educated, "at the heart of their community."

We do wish you to understand that we are not negative about the council. However we believe and assert that the two school option is not only in the best interest of our children but is also the best use of Wiltshire funds. As a Wiltshire councillor we urge you look again at the issue and listen to the wishes of the 73% of respondents who clearly voted against the one school option and wanted Wiltshire SEND children to be socially included in the two growing communities that provide services and social activities for everyone. Please reconsider the two school option, to save special needs education in Chippenham and Trowbridge and

ensure that our most vulnerable young people are enabled to live and learn seamlessly within their family communities.

#### 6.2.41 (26.02.19)

We would like to raise the following concerns regarding the Special Schools Consultation:

1) Whilst the proposals for the new school in the North of the county sound great on paper, our concern is that the bulk of the project (and therefore, the money) seems to be focusing on this, and we are unclear as to how the provision at Exeter House School will be expanded - ie how many pupils do Exeter House school currently have on roll, and how many will there be after the expansion? What new facilities will there be at Exeter House?

2) Following on from this, we understand that the £20m investment is capital investment only. Where is the money that will enable the schools to afford to run once the buildings are in place?

3) What provision will there be for those children who do not need to be in a Special School full time (or at all) but who need more than a main stream school can offer? The county currently has only one resource base for secondary school aged pupils which is in Chippenham, and all of the resource bases for primary school aged pupils in the Salisbury area are full. There is a HUGE level of need for this type of provision across the county but these new proposals do not address this need at all.

4) Linked to this, the John McNeill Centre in Salisbury currently has a waiting list. They are unable to open for additional hours to accommodate more children due to a lack of funds. Will there be any increase in the provision for pre-school children with additional needs as well as those of school age?

5) Part of the proposal is to use outreach work to link the special schools with main stream schools. Could you please inform us as to how this will work in practice?

We hope these questions will be addressed in future communications regarding the consultation.

6.3 Additional emails from professionals  
6.3.1 Dr Andrew Murrison MP (10.01.19)

Dear Sir,

I write to formally object to plans by Wiltshire Council to close Larkrise School in my constituency.

Larkrise is classified as good by Ofsted. It has the active support of the community and engagement with the community is a very special feature of school life. Larkrise is well loved by its students and their families. It is located centrally in Trowbridge which is the county town.

The council is right to want to improve provision for students with special educational needs. I am pleased that it will underpin its commitment by spending £20 million. It has correctly identified that something needs to be done but, in my view, come up with the wrong solution, one that will disadvantage those I represent.

Wiltshire council appears to have designed a solution before adequately exploring unfulfilled need. I regret to say that the council has been intent on closing Larkrise for a long time. I recall a wholly specious argument placed in the public domain about hoists being unfit for purpose which was simply incorrect and was distressing. The council's single minded approach to creating a very large school near Devizes and closing down more local provision seems odd and its argument strained.

My experience over many years and as an ex governor of a special school has been that the most traumatic part of the school day for students and their families is travel to and from school. I believe the authors of the plan have seriously misunderstood the importance of this. The proposals would make that feature of the school day so much worse. I would say that the transport consideration is at least as important as the extra services that the council is saying can only be provided through its proposed new school near Devizes.

The student population in question responds best to smaller, more intimate settings. Given than this is generally accepted, the closure of three small schools and their replacement with one catering for 350 pupils seems perverse.

To a greater extent than is the case for mainstream pupils, special needs students are likely to remain in their locality into adulthood. Consequently, familiarity and local links are so much more important. That is well understood at Larkrise where community involvement and inculcation with the locality are defining features of the school experience. That is a model that should be emulated, not undermined. I fear the centralising proposals will destroy one of the very great merits of special needs schooling for my constituents.

I share the council's desire to reduce out of county placement, particularly where this is disproportionately costly as a result of private placement or involves unreasonable travel. However, I am not convinced that the council has maximally explored joint working with neighbouring authorities. I have no principled objection to Wiltshire students being educated just across the border or students from neighbouring counties being schooled in Wiltshire. What matters is what works for them, commensurate with affordability.



The council has said that the Larkrise site is inadequate, that its buildings are old and that the footprint as it is insufficient for current demand and for the future. I agree. However, I do not accept that the council has done all it can to identify an alternative site or sites, particularly given the availability of nearby brownfield assets and the large scale greenfield home building programme with attendant infrastructure including mainstream schools underway around Trowbridge and in West Wiltshire generally.

Finally, can I finish by saying that I welcome the attention being given by Wiltshire Council to special needs and its willingness to invest. I feel strongly that its plan is misconceived and I look forward to working with it to achieve an outcome that improves the school experience of some of my most vulnerable constituents.

Yours sincerely,  
Andrew Murrison  
DR ANDREW MURRISON MP

### 6.3.2 St Paul Without Parish Council (27.01.19)

The St Paul Without Parish Council wishes Wiltshire Council to consider the following comments during its final round of decision making on the proposed new 'super-school' for special needs education.

This Council acknowledges the undoubted benefits of centralising the use of the available capital funding and the best technical and teaching expertise in one place. Our concern is that the chosen location for the new school will present children living in the north of the county additional and unnecessary challenges to those that they already experience.

This Council believes it is important that all children remain and are educated in their wider local communities. In this way children become known to other members of the community, have reasonable access to important facilities such as shops and libraries, and have access to mainstream schools.

In apparent direct conflict with these important features, the WC proposal intends to build the new school in a rural location distant from many of the population centres in northern Wiltshire. Assuming a capacity of 350, this will produce a minimum of 50 minibus journeys both morning and afternoon. Leaving aside the potential adverse impact upon local rural roads, the journey time for children from the north of the county could be almost 2 hours each trip assuming a number of enroute pickups. No young child, let alone one with medical needs should have to endure this.

The choice of this rural site has produced a further concern in that medical attention will take longer to reach the school than hitherto. Evidence is available to demonstrate that paramedics are required regularly at these facilities and frequently need to arrive as quickly as possible, particularly in the case of epileptic children where timing is crucial.

In summary, this Council acknowledges the difficulty in balancing the need to provide the best possible care and education for these children given the present financial constraints, however it is not convinced that the chosen site is adequate to deliver the undoubted benefits of centralising facilities and expertise.

### 6.3.3 Chair of Governors, St Sampson's CoE Primary School (04.02.2019)

I'm writing this email on behalf of St Sampson's CoE Primary School, where I am the Chair of Governors. Whilst the building of any new specialist provision has to be welcomed, there are a few key areas that concern both our Governing Body, as well as some of the parents who may wish to use the specialist school in the future. A key issue is the simple geographical distance from our school to the new proposed school near Devizes. We believe that it's too far for our children to travel and would have appreciated a specialist provision being closer to us. Whilst I appreciate that not everyone can be satisfied by the geographical location in a large county, the large distance to be covered daily will also hinder parental engagement with the new school; It may well be that such a geographical distance will simply deter some parents from forging key links with teachers at the school, by not attending parents' evenings, phonics sessions and drop-ins etc. Clearly, there is the idea that the new school will be able to share its excellent resources and knowledge with teachers at other schools in the county, however I feel that our school will be at a disadvantage again, as it's too far to send our staff there to benefit from regular outreach work.

I do hope you take our views in account when making your decisions.

Kind regards,

Julian Thomas

Chair of Governors,

St Sampson's CoE Primary School, Cricklade.

### 6.3.4 Nicola Grove, SEND Researcher and Trainer (08.02.2019)

Dear Wiltshire Council

I am writing to you as a Wiltshire resident and as a professional researcher and trainer in the field of special needs and disabilities, with particular expertise in youngsters with complex needs and severe disabilities. I have also a background in policy and curriculum development in special education. I have carefully considered your proposal and have read all your supporting documents.

This is an extremely retrograde step and one that I would urge you to reconsider.

My objections and concerns are as follows:

The idea of creating a large generic special school in 30 acres of grounds 3 miles out of Devizes has all the hallmarks of an institution. This may not be your intention at the outset, but this is a real risk when you are talking about the placement of young people with severe and profound disabilities who do not live locally. Your comments on engagement with the community (visiting to take advantage of the grounds and a cafe) are insensitive to say the least and indicate that you have little understanding of what is meant by social inclusion.

The notion of a "centre of excellence" that will support inclusion is long on aspiration and very short on evidence. Large training schools may work in urban areas and where the outreach/inreach is local for the majority of pupils, but here they would suck in expertise that would be better deployed in local schools.

You claim that journey times will cancel each other out, and make the extraordinary suggestion that because one child and one assistant enjoyed their travel time, this will have little impact. You must realise that for young people with ASDs, and with severe and profound disabilities, travel is - on the contrary - stressful and exhausting for them and their families. In fact my analysis indicates that journey times are likely to increase significantly for 75% of Larkrise youngsters and 45% of St Nicholas youngsters - in total, 63% of children will be travelling further to school. There is also the question of how staff who currently live near their local schools will get to work, even supposing they are able to keep their jobs.

You are riding roughshod over the views of 71% of parents whose lives will be affected by the proposal, and will severely restrict their choices of the right school for their children.

I am amazed by your dismissal of concerns regarding the impact of the school closures on the local economies. Put simply, since you yourselves estimate that Rowde and Devizes will benefit from the proposed new school, it is clear that Chippenham and Trowbridge (already towns in need of an economic boost) will lose out.

You appear not to have considered other possible alternatives which could in fact be cheaper in the long run. Your financial predictions are not robust.

I urge you to go back to the drawing board and consult in a real and authentic way with the local communities, with educational experts and above all with parents and families. Yes, Wiltshire is facing challenges, but with good will and the use of real evidence of what works, it is possible to come up with a solution that will mean that all children with SENDs are able to access the provision that is right for them, within reasonable distance of where they live.

Yours sincerely  
Nicola Grove

#### 6.3.5 Jon Hamp, Head Teacher, Springfields Academy (15.02.19)

I support the bravery and pragmatism of the Local Authority's proposal to create a centre of excellence for SEND provision in North Wiltshire. Although Rowdeford, St Nics and Larkrise are undoubtedly good schools, small schools with small numbers are not viable or sustainable long term.

This proposal allows for a centralisation of expertise and resources with the necessary range of required services and provision to meet need, in one location.

For children this can mean that specialist equipment and facilities are available on site for those who need them, supported by a broad team of therapists, teachers and care staff, whilst admin and other functions are kept to a minimum rather than duplicated across three schools.

This project will succeed through collaboration. As a special school leader in Wiltshire I aim to work with the Local Authority, and others, to ensure that; the proposal is delivered, that current concerns are taken into account and answered, and that it provides outstanding opportunity for children and young people with SEND. This is an exciting opportunity to build a beacon of outstanding practice for Wiltshire.

#### 6.3.6 Westbury Town Council (19.02.19)

Westbury Town Council met last night to agree their response to the above consultation. Councillor King read out the letter from Aileen Bates – chair of governors at St Nicholas. Our members would like to add their support to all the comments made in this communication. In addition, the members would like you to note the following and to ask that you to feed their comments into the consultation.

- There are significant concerns about the size of the schools proposed. Smaller schools are more suited to children with complex needs.
- Locality - The schools are outside of the local community and this can lead to isolation.
- Community – There are concerns that the proposal disconnects children from the community in which they live.
- Transport – the length of journeys both in time & distance for vulnerable children (and their families).
- Staff – There will be an impact on staff and their work life balance, travel & transporting resources.

Many thanks for your help in this matter,  
*Deborah Urch MBIFM*  
*Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer*  
*Westbury Town Council*

#### 6.3.7 Chippenham Town Council Response to Consultation (27.02.19)

Dear Sir or Madam,

A meeting of Town Councillors was held on Tuesday 12th February to consider a response to the Statutory Notice on the intention to discontinue three special schools; St Nicholas School, Chippenham, Rowdeford School, Devizes, and Larkrise School, Trowbridge.

As a result of this meeting and in consultation with my Councillors I have been asked to respond to your request for comments. The Town Council objects to the closure of St. Nicholas School on the grounds of the following:

##### **1. Social Inclusion**

Councillors are of the opinion that the majority of St. Nicholas students are from Chippenham and that they should be educated alongside their peers and not separated by having to travel to a school outside of the Town. The Council are of the view that special needs children should not be treated any differently to mainstream schoolchildren and should be educated within the

Town. An integral part of social learning of students who attend St. Nicholas School is that they derive from the community within it. This is due to children being recognised in the community by their peers and others and is an example of how children are learning to live their lives independently.

## **2. Transport**

The Town Council has noted that the existing transport budget is under considerable pressure with increasing costs to be met from a reduction in overall budget. The travel time as set out in the proposals ignores pick-ups and that vulnerable children will be travelling further which in some cases exceeds the recommended maximum travel time as set out by Central Government. St. Nicholas School currently offers children the opportunity to get to a range of activities within walking distance. This would not be possible at the proposed new school in Rowde. Finally, the Town Council feel that access to the new school would present a number of problems including congestion, increased pollution/CO2 emissions and other infrastructure costs that have not been fully considered. In addition visitors, volunteers and other professionals who need to attend St. Nicholas School will undoubtedly be put off from attending the new school due to the longer journey time.

## **3. Resources**

The Town Council is aware that some of the students who attend St. Nicholas School have profound, life-limiting conditions and there is often the need for a parent or an ambulance to attend the School quickly. The location of St. Nicholas School is very close to an ambulance station and clearly such emergency services would take considerably longer to attend the new location in Rowde, should there be an emergency. There would be considerable disruption to the teaching and pastoral care staff of St. Nicholas School should services be transferred to Rowde. It is questionable whether the current resource team including volunteers would relocate such a distance given the cost to individuals. It is also questionable whether there is sufficient population in Rowde to support the new school in terms of teaching/pastoral care staff.

Councillors noted that the hydrotherapy pool at St. Nicholas School was funded and supported by the people of Chippenham including numerous businesses and a large charity. It is unclear at this point whether the combined demand from three schools into one at Rowde would be able to provide sufficient hydrotherapy pool facilities.

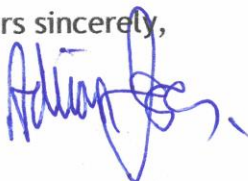
## **4. Finances**

The Town Council wishes to question whether the proposed budget of £20 million to provide a new school is realistic. Given comments already made on access roads and local infrastructure considerations it is questionable whether £20 million is an accurate capital figure to provide what is such a specialist school facility. In addition, the running costs of any new school should be brought into the decision-making process.

Finally, Councillors provided the following comments against the new school proposal;

- Chippenham has unique support services including the hydrotherapy pool, Chippenham Borough Lands Charity as well as the funds and support for the School over the years through minibuses, improvement in equality which is not available in Rowde.
- The size of the school is important, with a smaller more intimate school being preferred.
- The large size of the new school would have to take into consideration the size of the car park and infrastructure to support this.
- The finance and running costs of the new school have not been detailed. There will be wider social and economic costs.
- The disruption to pupils who would have to move may cause psychological and emotional harm which could take months to overcome. To face different staff, and longer journeys. The transition from primary to secondary school is big anyway but increased with special school children.
- The location and access of the new school would affect the resources available to the children including activities and health services. The access is currently on a bend in the road and traffic would be greatly increased.
- The increased distance to the new location would have an impact in situations where a child is unwell at school and the child needed to be collected to return home.
- There is a good existing relationship with mainstream schools in Chippenham.
- There are better outcomes for special schools children when they are situated within the community
- The increasing number of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) which means the present schools have run out of space.
- Councillors are minded to recommend that any future housing developments within the town should include consideration of the needs of the increasing number of SEND children and lack of local facilities with special reference to infrastructure requirements.

Yours sincerely,



**Adrian Jones**  
Deputy Chief Executive

### 6.3.8 Governing Bodies of St Nicholas and Larkrise Special Schools (27.02.19)

Dear Sirs,

(With attachment)

I write on behalf of the governing bodies of St Nicholas Special School and Larkrise Special School

Please find attached our response to the Proposal issued on 9th January 2019, to close 3 Wiltshire special schools and replace them with a Centre of Excellence.

Our comments in response to each stage of the proposal are set out in the attached table.

Yours faithfully,

Jan Winfield

Vice Chair of Governors

Larkrise School



**PROPOSAL FOR SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN NORTH WILTSHIRE PURSUANT TO A STATUTORY NOTICE PUBLISHED ON THE 9<sup>TH</sup> OF JANUARY 2019**

<b>Proposal Statement</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
The numbers of pupils in Wiltshire needing a special school place are growing and there is insufficient space for the number of pupils who need a special school place in the north of the county. Currently over 300 pupils are educated out of county because there are not enough places of the right <b>quality</b> in Wiltshire schools. With housing growth and military rebasing this, number will continue to grow.	Designation is the issue, not quality. There is a historical lack of understanding by the LA of the types of SEND primary and secondary need in the county. Where is the breakdown showing which needs currently cannot be met in county? With no breakdown to show which pupils currently go out of county and why, there is no evidence to show how the new school would meet this need. Re Housing growth: major building is ongoing in both Chippenham and Trowbridge – the areas of greatest expansion over the next 5 years. Future-proofing should be in these areas.	‘Seizing the Agenda’ Discussion Paper 2 June 2016  Wood Report, P20 Para 1.8.5 provides a breakdown of independent out of county placements to show this. See Wood Report P5 Fig 4
The three schools proposed for closure have a collective in-year deficit which is projected to grow to a shared trajectory of over £1m by the end of 2021-22. There are also wider pressures across the council budgets for provision for children and young people with SEND.	Financial claims made by the LA throughout this process have been inaccurate: ‘We expect all schools to be in deficit by 2017’ (Seizing the Agenda 2016) The proposal is clearly based on financial savings, not on the best interests of the children. The national crisis in High Needs Funding may or may not continue into the future. This cannot be accurately projected as the La suggest.	No schools were in deficit in 2017. Many mainstream schools are in a similar position. Would the LA expect to close them?
The opportunity exists to improve provision by closing these schools. This would enable the establishment of a new academy as a SEND <b>Centre of Excellence</b> at a size of operation which could provide economies of scale and a <b>wide range of professional skills and expertise</b> alongside a consistent outreach capacity to support mainstream schools.	This could be achieved in the two/three school model as favoured by the 71% of survey respondents. This could provide individual Centres of Excellence in strategic locations, where skills and expertise already exist. Outreach would be less expensive delivered locally through the Collaborative Schools model, as already presented to the LA.	No evidence exists to prove that a new school would achieve ‘excellence’ until it has been inspected. No evidence exists to prove that the theory of ‘economies of scale’ only works in a one site solution.
St Nicholas		



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school, which was originally built for 56 pupils, regularly educates more pupils on roll (79) than the current capacity (77). Expansion across the sites is not possible and the best available site in Chippenham is <b>not well-located</b>, being 2.2 miles from the town centre and adjacent to a growing comprehensive school with concomitant <b>transport congestion</b> issues at key times</li> <li>The school was judged as Requires Improvement in an Ofsted inspection of November 2017.</li> </ul>	<p>The expansion in the Poplar College site increased the capacity of the main school - not here acknowledged. The location of the Abbeyfields site is suitable, as agreed at consultation. Distance to local community facilities is considerably less than that at Rowde. Population wise, St Nicholas is very well placed, being centrally located for its outlying rural community, yet within walking distance of the town centre. The school population is likely to grow, not decline. Furthermore, there is no evidence to show that traffic congestion would be any worse at Abbeyfields, as roads and access are considerably better than at Rowde.</p>	<p>What evidence is there that other sites have been explored in this process?</p>
<p>Rowdeford</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school currently has 137 pupils on roll, with a current capacity of only 130. In 2017, we extended the designation to include Severe Learning Difficulties, (SLD) and <b>we expect to go to consultation to extend numbers further during this year as we deliver a short-term plan to increase places in the county.</b></li> <li>Expansion on the site is possible, but DfE guidance states that due to the significant change in size and impact on the other two schools, the proposed education provision should be established as a new school.</li> </ul> <p>Larkrise School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school has significantly more pupils on roll (95) than the current agreement (85) and was built originally for 48 pupils. The site would no longer meets DfE</li> </ul>	<p>This needs clarification: will the current expansion (as in the short term plan) form part of the 'new school?' When and how will schools and parents be consulted on this?</p> <p>The current lack of outdoor space at Larkrise is a problem of the LA's own making. In 2017 the LA completed a capacity audit, which stated that the school building could accommodate 10% MORE pupils. This was challenged by the school and it was agreed an extra mobile classroom would need to be added to accommodate additional numbers</p> <p>The site across the road at the Ashton Street Centre, when combined with the present site would more than meet the demand</p>	<p>Other sites suggested have been dismissed without consideration or explanation as 'not viable.'</p>

<p>guidance<sup>1</sup> for even 48 pupils as there is insufficient space for both indoor and outdoor learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansion on site is not possible. Land close by and further afield in Trowbridge has been considered, but the possible sites are either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ not well-located, accessed along residential side-streets with concomitant transport congestion at key times</li> <li>○ too small, even when combined with the existing site, for the number of pupils</li> <li>○ not sufficiently central for the north of the county to ensure workable journeys for the maximum number of pupils</li> <li>○ or a combination of each of these.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Population wise, Larkrise is very well-located, with over 50% of pupils currently living in Trowbridge. This percentage is likely to grow, not decline.</p> <p>A one school option does not offer workable journeys for the maximum number of pupils; however a two or three school option would.</p>	
<p>All three schools are coeducation special day schools. Both Larkrise and St Nicholas offer provision for pupils with <b>Physical, Medical</b> and Learning Difficulties (PMLD) and Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), including pupils who may also have Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Rowdeford also offers provision to young people with Moderate Learning Disabilities (MLD), but not currently PMLD.</p>	<p>PROFOUND and MULTIPLE...!! How can the LA be trusted to create a Centre of Excellence when they clearly do not understand the needs of the children they are serving?! Both Larkrise and St Nicholas have always taken MLD children as designated by the LA.</p> <p>Note also that Rowdeford is currently a secondary school, which only offers MLD/SLD, with no PMLD, EYFS or primary KS1 or 2 provision</p>	<p>The current specialist expertise in PMLD/SLD (complex needs) resides in Chippenham and Trowbridge, with no guarantee that staff will be willing to move to a rural location for work.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Area guidelines for SEND and alternative provision; Including special schools, alternative provision, specially resourced provision and units  
Building bulletin 104; December 2015

<p><b>Admissions arrangements for the proposed new school</b></p> <p>All pupils currently in the three proposed closing schools will have the opportunity to transition to the new school proposed to be in place from 1 September 2023. Each child will have a transition plan agreed through the annual review process. Following this, all new admissions will be via the Wiltshire Council SEND panel for pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). This will be a co-educational special school for children and young people aged 3 – 16 with SLD, PMLD, MLD and associated ASD (often called complex needs).</p>	<p>This would be expected practice for any child with an EHCP – to have a transition plan when moving to a new school. The two school option would offer the same.</p>	
<p>There is no expectation that pupils currently placed in schools out of county will go to the new school unless requested by them and their parent/carer. However, the new school will reduce the number of children/young people who will need to be placed out of county in the future.</p>	<p>What of parents with children currently in specialist district centres who have an expectation of a place at Larkrise or St Nicholas in Sept 2019? They will already have made their choice of school.</p> <p>Early indications suggest that some parents are already considering home tuition and/or out of county placements as an alternative to no choice!</p>	<p>There is no evidence that out of county placements will reduce; indeed it is more likely that they will increase if a one school only option is available. With a two school option this would not be an issue.</p>
<p><b>Ethos and Religious Character</b></p> <p>The replacement school is expected to be non-denominational. Its ethos would be the provision of high quality learning which will give pupils the <b>best start for adulthood and being active citizens in their communities</b>. It will provide a Centre of Excellence, supporting pupils and staff of mainstream schools to <b>promote inclusion</b> and local provision where it is most effective.</p> <p><b>Balance of denominational provision</b></p>	<p>Schools which are miles away from the communities in which children and young people live, work and play are NOT promoting inclusion. Children do not become active members of their community if they only ever visit it on a bus or in a taxi</p> <p>How is inclusion promoted in mainstream schools if all complex SEND children are educated miles away in one rural school? Both Larkrise and St Nicholas are already situated at the heart of their local mainstream education hubs with long standing and close relationships forged over many years. Both SEND and mainstream children benefit from this</p>	

<p>As all three existing schools are non-denominational and the proposed replacement school is also non-denominational, there will be no impact on the balance of religious provision or the opportunity for parental choice in this area as a result of the proposed closures.</p>	<p>approach to inclusion which builds tolerance and familiarity with difference. Formal and informal links already exist between mainstream and special schools which are beneficial to staff in both settings.</p>	
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**Displaced pupils**

Given the nature of the proposals, the closing of 3 existing schools and the opening of a larger and purpose built school, there are unlikely to be displaced pupils needing accommodation as there will be more places in the new provision.

The context for these proposals is a long-standing strategic review of special school places and pupil numbers across the county. Based on analysis of growth due to SEND reforms, housing developments and military rebasing, the projected requirement for additional places is shown in the table below.

By SEN Designation	Placements in Wiltshire Special Schools (5 – 16yrs)	2yrs (2019)	5yrs (2022)	9yrs (2026)
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	Places North	Places South	North	South	All new	North	South	All new	North	South	All new
<b>ASD</b>	111		4	9	13	24	22	46	50	40	90
<b>SEMH<sup>2</sup></b>	68		2	3	5	10	9	19	21	17	38
<b>Complex</b>	279	82	4	8	12	23	20	43	49	37	86
<b>Sensory</b>			0	1	1	2	1	3	3	3	6
<b>All</b>	<b>458</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>220</b>

In addition, while Wiltshire has been able to benefit from school places in neighbouring counties, these schools are also now reaching capacity and need places for pupils from their own Local Authority. Parental choice will be maintained via continued access to all schools within the region which includes Outstanding and	These first two statements contradict each other; how is choice maintained if out of county placements become less available and in county choice is reduced to one school?? All the schools listed here are currently over capacity and predicted to have rising numbers. It is disingenuous to imply that places will be available e.g. out of county, when the number of places will be reducing rapidly.	This table is over two years old. It has no date or origin and the inaccurate figures it contains do not match with current realities.
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<sup>2</sup> Social Emotional and Mental Health

<p>Good Special schools in BANES, Somerset and Swindon as well as Exeter House in the south of Wiltshire. There are also additional special schools for children and young people with ASD/SEMH (Autism and Social Emotional and Mental Health) in Devizes, Calne and now Salisbury, all in Wiltshire.</p>		
<p>There have been concerns that the new school would be for all pupils with SEND regardless of their particular needs. This will not be the case. We will continue to have schools for children and young people with ASD and SEMH and will also continue to expand the places available in mainstream schools. The Centre of Excellence will be a key development that will enhance integration, inclusion and differentiated support and opportunity across all schools in Wiltshire. Closures of the three schools are timed for 2023, by which time the proposed new special school would be established in Rowde. The new school would cater for 350 pupils aged 3-16. Post-16 education will be available at Wiltshire College, already a provider of relevant SEND education in several locations across Wiltshire, and other private sector providers already working in partnership with Wiltshire Council.</p>	<p>There will still be no choice of school for children with ASD. The current school available, Springfields, is full and there is no plan here to increase ASD places anywhere else. How are inclusion, integration and differentiated support promoted in mainstream schools if all SEND children are educated miles away in one rural school and all specialist staff are situated there? Both Larkrise and St Nicholas are already situated at the heart of their local mainstream education hubs with long standing and close relationships forged over many years. Wiltshire College already fail to meet the needs of SEND pupils, year on year. What changes will be made to ensure that they can fulfil the roles that Poplars and the Larkrise sixth form currently provide for pupils with complex needs and PMLD? Current provision at St Nicholas and Larkrise is 5 days per week. Will this be replicated at all Wiltshire College sites?</p>	
<p>We recognise that for pupils who will be attending Larkrise, St Nicholas, and to a lesser, but still significant degree, Rowdeford in 5 years' time, any move from the proposed closed schools to the proposed new school will be disruptive and may cause some anxiety for pupils and their families. However, we hope to minimise this disruption by:</p>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring as many children/young people and their parent/carers can engage in the design and creation of the new school</li> <li>• Considering opening a first phase of the proposed school for 3 and 4-year olds ahead of the main start for all pupils. This would involve phasing the construction of the school. This would reduce the need for transition for these youngest pupils</li> <li>• A similar arrangement could be offered for 15/16yr olds if it were in their best individual interests, with an early phased transition to college which could reduce transitions for this group also</li> <li>• Ensuring that every child has an individual transition plan</li> <li>• Having a 5-year programme during which we will prepare children, young people, their families and staff for the proposed change</li> <li>• Appointing an academy sponsor early on so that the leadership of the new Centre of Excellence can start making a positive impact as soon as possible</li> <li>• Creating communication plans, such as newsletters and online engagements, that keep everybody involved and informed</li> <li>• Learning from other schools that have managed similar changes, such as Three Ways School in Bath.</li> </ul>	<p>So the introduction to school for a 3 or 4 year old pupil in their new Centre of Excellence in Sept 2019 would be 2 mobile classrooms next to a building site, with none of the promised new facilities in place? We cannot see how this would be attractive to any parent!            What choice regarding 'best individual interests' would schools, parents and young people have?            This is simply a way of avoiding over capacity in the present schools, rather than investing in them. This is not in the best interests of the pupils! How will the interests of current 3- 5 yr olds or Post 15 children be protected?</p> <p>An early appointment of an Academy Sponsor is another example of the LA pre-empting the outcome of the consultation.</p> <p>The comparison with 3 Ways School is not valid as 3 Ways did NOT close 3 schools, is smaller by one third than Wiltshire's proposal and is situated in an urban environment in a strategic population hub.</p>	<p>The viability of the closing schools would be seriously compromised by the early removal of children. This will bring problems of staff recruitment/retention and budgeting constraints. How do the LA propose to avoid this?</p> <p>What assurances can be given that any chosen Academy Sponsor will not renege on promises made here?</p>
<p><b>Impact on the community</b>            None of the three special schools specifically serves a local area due to the rural nature of the</p>	<p>It is precisely because of the dispersed nature of the population of Wiltshire that a three school option makes</p>	

<p>county and, therefore, no individual community would be disproportionately adversely impacted by the proposed closures. Each school teaches pupils who are predominantly transported from communities across Wiltshire rather than from their local area. Currently, around <b>80% of children/young people attending special schools do not live in the town where their school is located.</b></p>	<p>most sense. Larkrise and St Nicholas serve the largest and fastest growing communities in North and West Wiltshire and are therefore key to providing an excellent, local service to the maximum number of pupils. At St Nicholas school over 45% of the current school aged pupils live either in Chippenham or close to Chippenham. 0% live in Rowde. At Larkrise over 50% of pupils live in Trowbridge, and attend school in their hometown. 0% of Larkrise pupils live in Rowde</p>	
<p>However, we recognise that the communities around St Nicholas and Larkrise, and indeed Rowdeford, have taken the schools to their hearts. Therefore, we will work with the local communities to explore ways in which they can continue to be involved in the lives of both the children/young people who attend the new school, but also the many children/young people with SEND who attend local mainstream schools and colleges.</p> <p>Rowde itself has embraced Rowdeford school and has actively supported the continuation of a special school in this rural community close to the busy town of Devizes. <b>It is hoped</b> the proposed new school will support the local economy, bus services, facilities and employment. To date, <b>Rowdeford school has not struggled to recruit staff</b>, and welcomes the opportunity to offer greater local employment to people living in the local and wider area.</p>	<p>How? This is a vague idea, completely without substance. Larkrise and St Nicholas pupils currently access their local communities, with all the attendant services of a large town, on foot, on a daily basis. At Rowde they would only be able to do this by getting back onto a bus – again. Given the time it takes to load/unload wheelchairs etc we wonder how many children will actually access Devizes – and how much curriculum time they will lose to more bus travel?!</p> <p>Rowde has supported the continuation of a small secondary school for MLD pupils. It is not good enough to ‘hope’ that this community support will continue, given the scale of the proposed new school.</p> <p>Rowdeford School struggles, like every other school, to recruit enough local staff. Most Teaching Assistants/MDSA’s/Passenger Transport Assistants do not have cars/do not drive and expect to work close to their home. Could the local area supply the high number of such staff required by such a large institution? And what of the negative effect this would have on the economies of Trowbridge and Chippenham?</p>	<p>Has Rowde Parish Council been formally consulted regarding the increase in traffic, the need for road and pavement improvements and the noise and disruption created by a large scale site development?</p>
<p>The location of the proposed replacement school is central to the north of Wiltshire, matching an equivalent special school covering the south. These two schools will be well placed to ensure</p>	<p>This deliberately ignores the fact that the bulk of the population resides in the two main centres of Trowbridge and Chippenham. Geographical position is irrelevant when looked at against population distribution. How costly will</p>	



access to inclusive special education in all parts of the county and to offer support and outreach to local mainstream schools.	outreach be when virtually every school is miles away, situated in the very population centres from which you are proposing to remove all SEND education?	
All current staff will be subject to TUPE <sup>3</sup> regulations.		
<p><b>Rural primary schools</b></p> <p>None of the schools proposed for closure are a rural primary school designated as such by regulation. Special educational provision will continue in the rural location of Rowde. The Centre of Excellence will have a wider impact and will be able to support rural schools that often do not have the capacity for specialist SEND provision, allowing greater local inclusion.</p>	<p>The only education for SLD/PMLD will be in a rural location, the reality is the vast majority of pupils live in an urban environment. This is where they need to build the skills they will need for their future lives. There is little to no housing for supported independent living in rural locations; SEND children need to learn how to live in a town.</p>	
<p><b>Early years provision</b></p> <p>Early Years provision at St Nicholas and Larkrise would be replicated and extended in the proposed new school and further supported by the three specialist nursery settings that will benefit from the outreach delivered by the Centre of Excellence. The Centre of Excellence would also be able to support mainstream nursery settings and child minders to ensure that every child with SEND has a good start in life. We will explore the possibilities of offering multi-agency partners, such as health visitors, space in the new provision to offer integrated support from birth onwards.</p>	<p>Whilst it might make sense to collect all of these services together centrally – it does not make sense to then transport all the children to them! 3 and 4 year olds on long bus journeys every day is a terrifying prospect for parents, let alone the risks of transporting children who have regular seizures and may need rescue medicines on route to a school which will be twice the distance away from the nearest hospital than at present for all current PMLD pupils. What outreach could be provided to nurseries and child minders?</p> <p>Where does all this capacity come from and how is it funded?</p> <p>Why would the health visitors need to be at the school? Surely they would be visiting children in their homes, prior to coming to school? These are confused ideas with no clear benefit to be derived for anyone.</p>	

<sup>3</sup> Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations

<p><b>Sixth form provision</b></p> <p>St Nicholas and Larkrise schools currently provide post-16 Education which will be closed or taken on by an alternate provider. Rowdeford does not have post 16 provision. It is proposed that all 16 -19 education will be provided by Wiltshire College and the range of private providers across Wiltshire with whom the Council has developed strong relationships. This may involve the current buildings or other community based sites.</p> <p>The aim is to increase the opportunities for preparation for adulthood in a wider range of locations, expanding on arrangements already in place and judged by Ofsted as effective. For those learners who will have formerly received their post 16 education through one of the special schools, there will be some change involved, however, this should lead to better development of life skills closer to home.</p>	<p>This is a very vague generalisation, with the hope that if the current provision ends, Wiltshire College, or someone else will pick it up.</p> <p>Where outside the Special School settings are the facilities for the most complex PMLD students and post 16?</p> <p>Preparation for adulthood starts well before the 6<sup>th</sup> Form so the LA is narrowing where this is provided</p> <p>The pupils are learning life skills from when they enter Larkrise / St Nicholas at age 4, Rowdeford is not closer to home for the vast majority of pupils</p>	<p>There is no description, or costing, in this proposal for the changes in curriculum, staffing, training or building adaptations that would be required at Wiltshire College sites – or any other establishment – to meet the needs of SEND pupils with SLD/complex needs or PMLD.</p>
<p><b>Special educational needs provision</b></p> <p>Of the three schools proposed for closure, two are rated by Ofsted as Good and one as Requires Improvement. The proposal will lead to improvements in the standard, quality and range of special education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new 350-place school will replace significantly overcrowded schools which currently do not comply with relevant DfE regulations, and will offer up-to-date facilities in a new build</li> <li>• The replacement school will provide economies of scale which reduce the</li> </ul>	<p>This would be equally true of a 2 or 3 school option. This is a problem which could have been resolved much earlier, without resorting to school closures or multi-million pound white elephant schemes.</p> <p>This is completely unproven! What if it doesn't? How will you ensure you secure the best Academy sponsor?</p>	<p>The LA have known about the rise in demand for places for years, yet they have continued to place more and more children in already over-crowded schools, without investing in their infrastructure.</p> <p>The investment does not match the promise</p>

<p>financial pressures faced by the existing smaller schools. The ambition of the project will attract national interest and affordably secure the best academy sponsor/provider and the best leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current schools have limited access to therapies. By bring the schools together all pupils can access good shared resources such as such as therapy, SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning), sensory support, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Paediatricians and community/school nursing</li> <li>• Currently we are not always able to offer all children and young people a place in our local schools because of lack of space and insufficient specialist support on site. The new school will offer more places and higher levels of support</li> <li>• Currently pupils have to choose between a specialist or mainstream provision. The new approach will ensure flexibility of choice and a full range of provision to meet the spectrum of need.</li> </ul>	<p>Not unless the number of therapists is increased! The same number of children would still require support. Is the answer just longer queues?</p>	
<p><b>Curriculum and special educational needs provision</b> The proposed new school will deliver a curriculum compliant with the general requirements of Section 78 of Education Act 2002, enabling students to benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum which will allow them to develop their skills and knowledge, preparing</p>	<p>This is a narrower curriculum than is on offer at present. It seems dated in its approach and certainly won't attract positive national interest</p> <p>For the vast majority of SLD pupils preparation for life after school involves a great deal of access to their local communities.</p>	<p>It is clear from the comparisons made here that there is nothing new or 'cutting edge' in the proposed curriculum for the new school. All of the examples given for the 'scope' of the new provision are already</p>

<p>them for life after school. As a special school, it will place great emphasis on personalised learning, aiming to ensure that all students develop their expertise in literacy, numeracy and life skills, but in a way best suited to each individual student. There will be separate approaches for different key stages and levels of engagement and ability, including those who will potentially have dual placements with mainstream schools.</p> <p>Broad curriculum pathways would include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A curriculum that covers the broad topics first introduced in the Early Years Foundation Stage</li> <li>• A Profound Curriculum designed for students with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties</li> <li>• A broad curriculum developing the learning of students with moderate learning difficulties, speech, language and communication needs and autism in all areas whilst focusing on reducing specific barriers to learning that individuals with complex needs may experience.</li> </ul> <p>At every stage of their education, each child's strengths and needs would be considered carefully and the best curriculum pathway for them chosen and reviewed regularly in the context of assessed needs and EHCP targets. The aim would be that challenge is pitched at the right level for each student to make the best progress possible.</p>	<p>Our current schools already offer highly personalised learning and have the best expertise in differentiating learning for a wide range of designations.</p> <p>Can the LA explain what Literacy and Numeracy looks like for a PMLD child and how it is relevant to their needs? This seems like a backward step in terms of narrow curriculum offer.</p> <p>Dual placements are already possible, given the flexibility of funding and current pupils already spend time in mainstream schools.</p> <p>This already happens in their current schools and is better tracked in a small school with fewer changes of staff and easier, more immediate communication. Thus, it is more appropriate to a 2 or 3 school model</p> <p>It is at best unwise and at worst unlawful to imply in a public proposal that a particular curriculum offer will be made, when an academy proposer has not yet been established.</p>	<p>established practice in all special schools in the county. What is clear, is that smaller, local schools are better equipped to respond quickly and flexibly to change and can adapt an individual child's curriculum, based on the most up to date information through the intervention of staff who know their pupils very well because they see them across a range of contexts every day.</p>
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<p>Further details will be set out once an academy proposer has been established as noted within the DfE Guidance for opening schools, but, we hope the above gives a feel for the scope of the provision.</p>		
<p><b>Effect on standards and contribution to school improvement</b> The new school will build upon the recognised good practice of the existing three schools and, therefore, will not have a detrimental impact. This will enable a comprehensive, viable school fit for the future which will support not only the pupils who attend the school but also the wider population of pupils with SEND in Wiltshire as a Centre of Excellence, using curriculum approaches and expertise described above to support pupils and staff in schools across the county.</p>	<p>This is merely a repetition of the unsubstantiated promises made earlier in this document.</p>	
<p><b>Travel</b> It is recognised that, for some pupils, journeys will be longer while, for others, shorter. This change can be a concern, when children/young people have significant medical or behavioural needs. Currently, pupils' journeys average 40 minutes (Rowdeford 43 minutes, St Nicholas 37 minutes and Larkrise 41 minutes), with the shortest being 4 minutes (St Nicholas child) and the longest 119 minutes (St Nicholas child). Initial estimates for the proposed new provision suggest there is likely to be a similar range of journey times, but potentially for different children/young people.</p>	<p>Not all pupils are eligible for LA paid transport; children living within Trowbridge/Chippenham are often not eligible. However, by default all pupils will be eligible for transport to the new school because of its remote location. For most pupils journeys will be longer as the new school will be further away from the centres of population – therefore MORE children will have LONGER journeys. Both Calne and Melksham are equidistant from Chippenham and Devizes, but both of these routes are much more difficult to Rowde than to the larger towns. In Trowbridge our parents survey shows that only 66% of current pupils need to access Wilts transport. 51% of current Larkrise pupils live in Trowbridge. Currently 80% of special school children access transport. Whilst we recognise this is a high figure; it is currently a decreasing one, as families move to the new housing in</p>	<p>Suitability of arrangements 34. As a general guide, transport arrangements should not require a child to make several changes on public transport resulting in an unreasonably long journey time. Best practice suggests that the maximum each way length of journey for a child of primary school age to be 45 minutes and for secondary school age 75 minutes, but these should be regarded as the maximum. For children</p>

	<p>Trowbridge and Chippenham. In the proposal, however, this would rise to 100% for the new school at Rowde, with the additional increased cost of vehicles, drivers and PA's that this would necessitate. This is very unlikely to decrease over time as there is no planned housing expansion for Rowde.</p>	<p>with SEN and/or disabilities, journeys may be more complex and a shorter journey time, although desirable, may not always be possible.</p>
<p>All pupils who attend Special schools can be considered for transport provided by the local authority and the vast majority will be eligible (all current pupils are eligible). For the three schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rowdeford pupils would continue travelling to the same location on transport provided by the local authority</li> <li>• For pupils who live in or close to Trowbridge and Chippenham, it is likely that journeys may be longer. Our initial assessment of pupils traveling now (and this will be different in 5 years' time when the new school opens) is that about half of the pupils will have longer and half will have shorter journeys</li> <li>• There is guidance from the DfE about reasonable journeys. We will try to ensure that every child has a journey within these limits but, as the guidance recognises, this may not be possible for every child in a rural county like Wiltshire</li> <li>• We hope that by choosing a non-town location we will reduce the amount of time in congested town traffic at peak times and, by having one destination, <b>be able to reduce the number of pick-ups, or time between pick-ups</b>, so that the longer</li> </ul>	<p>This depends on how travel times are calculated. There is a big difference between the time taken by car in a single journey and the journey by mini-bus or taxi which may involve picking up several other children en route. As the number of children living in urban areas will continue to rise with the planned expansion of our strategic towns, inevitably most journeys will become longer.</p> <p>Clearly, no reduction is possible unless you reduce the number of pick up points! Is this the underlying plan? Have parents been consulted on the potential for such a change? "We hope" is a hopelessly vague premise for families to base their travel and/or child care arrangements on. Has the LA considered the impact of longer journey times on families with siblings at other schools, working parents etc.?</p> <p>The increased risks to health of PMLD pupils involved in travelling long distances twice a day to a site much further away from the nearest hospital have not been properly considered by the LA. These are serious, life-threatening issues which families grapple with every day. We know of a number of families who have moved home to be within a reasonable distance from both school and nearest hospital. It is unfair and unrealistic to expect them to have to move again because of an ill-thought through LA plan.</p>	<p>35.</p> <p>Consideration should also be given to the walking distance required in order to access public transport. The maximum distances will depend on a range of circumstances, including the age of the child, their individual needs and the nature of the routes they are expected to walk to the pick up or set down points and should try to be combined with the transport time when considering the overall duration of a journey. With regards to pick up points, local authorities may at their discretion use appropriate pick up points when making travel arrangements. For arrangements to be suitable, they must also be safe and reasonably stress free, to enable the child to arrive at school ready for a day of study.</p>

<p>distance is balanced by a more efficient fleet of transport options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will be creating transport plans for every child/young person with particular regard for the support they may need for medical, behaviour and/or sensory needs.</li> </ul>		
<p>We also recognise that this may be a difficulty for staff who will have a longer journey to work and for parent/carers with limited access to transport. Rowde does have good community transport links and, as the local authority also has a role in public and community transport, we will seek to ensure this is continued and, where possible, improved.</p> <p>Rowde has good access routes, being close to Julia's House and Canon's House respite facilities, quick access from local ambulance stations and onwards to major hospitals if needed. It will also offer Virgin Care (our current community health provider) consulting, office and therapy rooms. This will mean that there can be full time nursing provision as well as other therapeutic support, reducing the need for hospitalisation and parents to travel to the school to support medical concerns.</p>	<p>This fails to take into account total journey times on public transport. From e.g. Warminster it would take 3 buses to get to Rowde and there is no train service. Rowde village does NOT have 'quick access' to major hospitals!!</p> <p>It is a dangerous proposition to suggest that Virgin Care nurses can replace professionals at a hospital to 'reduce the need for hospitalisation' Parents will be rightly very concerned at such a suggestion!. The provision of a school nurse at St Nicholas did not in any way reduce the need either for hospitalisation or for parents to attend for medical concerns. That is not the role of a school nurse and should never be the role of any health professional other than a medical doctor. People go to hospital because they need to be in hospital, not in school.</p>	<p>Is there a proposal to increase public transport services to Rowde? If not, then it is disingenuous to suggest that "we will seek to ensure."</p>
<p><b>Location and Costs</b></p> <p>The school will serve the northern, middle and western parts of the county of Wiltshire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The land utilised will include space available in the grounds of Rowdeford School and potentially additional current</li> </ul>	<p>We think this is an under-estimation of the final cost. It is likely to be more like £40 million</p> <p>This rather pre-supposes that the proposal is agreed without amendment. Pre-determination?</p>	

<p>farm land that will be re-designated, also owned by Wiltshire Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cost is estimated at £20m and will be met Wiltshire Council (agreed 27.11.2018 Cabinet)</li> <li>• Planning permission will be required; this should be obtained in the summer/autumn of 2019</li> </ul>		
<p>Pre-consultation raised some concerns that this rural site could segregate and isolate children and young people with SEND. This has not been evidenced by the current school, which has a strong and proactive relationship with the community. The Centre of Excellence will also enable the school to build strong links with all schools across Wiltshire, offering opportunities for both staff and pupils to engage in both in and out reach education.</p>	<p>The current school has only MLD 11-16 pupils: ie those more able to recognise and manage the change from one community to another.          The current school at Rowdeford provides a more subject based, outdoor learning curriculum which meets the needs of MLD secondary aged pupils.          Younger children and those with SLD/ASD need stability and continuity more than any other designation.          No mention has been made of the strong links that Larkrise and St Nicholas have which are promoting and building social inclusion in Strategic growth hubs.</p>	

<p><b>Summary</b>          As part of these proposals, the local authority has taken forward a series of Equality Impact Assessments. The impact assessment suggests that mitigating actions can reduce, but not eliminate all concerns. There are over 3500 pupils with an EHCP in Wiltshire and many more on SEN support in mainstream schools. It is essential that the proposals support both the individual and majority needs. We recognise the loss of well-loved schools will be difficult, but believe the plan for the Centre of Excellence will provide an outstanding provision and approach to ensuring every child/young person with SEND</p>	<p>It is not just that St Nicholas and Larkrise are 'well-loved 'but rather more that they are in the right place to meet the needs of pupils with PLMD/ SLD, provide and promote social inclusion and work with the mainstream schools and resources bases within the area. The 2 school model can support both the majority and the individual needs of pupils with SEND .There is no evidence to suggest a single new build will achieve this.</p>	
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has a good education and is able to make good life choices as they grow up.		
<p>Overall, the proposals will have an overwhelming positive impact for children and young people with SEND both in the school and supported through the Centre of Excellence in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wellbeing</li> <li>• Progress</li> <li>• Attainment</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Community opportunities</li> <li>• Inclusion and integration</li> </ul>	<p>Do longer transport times and isolation increase wellbeing?          If skills aren't generalised until post 16 how can you argue for improved attainment and progress?          Journeys involve children being less mobile and so where are the health benefits?          Far fewer community opportunities          Less inclusion and integration</p>	
<p>However, it is recognised that some students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will have longer journeys</li> <li>• May experience a level of disruption as they move from the old to new school</li> <li>• May have worries during the development of the project about what school will be like in the future.</li> </ul>	<p>For most pupils journeys will be longer as the new school will be further away from the centres of population. Only children from the Devizes area will have shorter journeys. For all other children the journey will be longer.          Wiltshire Council have completely under-estimated the level of disruption that these moves would cause to Wiltshire families. E.g.          In moving to the new school, long-standing peer groups would not be maintained as year groups from 3 schools are amalgamated. A similar dispersal would occur with teachers and TA's from each school.          Families organise their lives around the needs of their SEN child: other siblings who need to get to school, working parents etc all fit in around their routines. Earlier waking times can interfere with feeding, medical and personal care; longer journeys mean that young children can have very long days.          Most SEN children have no clear concept of 'the future' on which a local authority would base the spending of £20 million.</p>	
We hope this will be mitigated by:	Throughout this process the opportunities for engagement for families have been woefully inadequate. None of the mitigating	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many opportunities for engagement in the development of the school and centres of excellence</li> <li>• Good transition plans and support from staff and families</li> <li>• Well-arranged transport and transport plans</li> <li>• Good planning and communication through the progress of the project.</li> </ul>	<p>factors you cite address the complexity of the problems you fail to foresee.</p>	
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### 6.3.9 Jan Winfield. Former, Vice Chair of Governors Larkrise School (28.02.19)

Dear Sirs,

I have been involved in the discussions around SEND provision in Wiltshire, in a range of different roles and contexts, since at least 2013.

As first a parent governor and now Vice Chair at Larkrise School, I was closely involved in the plans to expand Larkrise into the Ashton Street Centre in 2013/14, working with the project managers and architects to produce plans for a new school, either on one or both sites. Later, I was involved in the many discussions held between the Local Authority and the six special schools around the 'Seizing the Agenda' project, which ultimately evolved into the proposal now under consultation.

I also co-founded The Friends of Larkrise School and have been heavily involved in the campaign mounted by parents and the wider Trowbridge community to Keep Special Schools Local.

So, you will forgive me if I say at the outset that I understand very well the urgent need to expand provision and improve the facilities available to our current children and their families. And I understand, too, the economic necessity of providing an excellent service, whilst living within a constantly reducing budget. These are problems that I, too, have wrestled with, alongside your officers and commissioners, school heads and governors for several years.

From special school MATs and community MATs, through Academy chains and free schools to re-furbs and new builds – I have rehearsed the same arguments and considered the possible outcomes again and again. In the end, I, too, have reached the conclusion that a Centre of Excellence has much to commend it, in achieving the aims of excellence of provision, state-of-the-art facilities and economies of scale.

**However, where I depart from the current proposal is in the proposed siting of such a school in the rural location of Rowde village, separated as it is, from every social, cultural and economic link that has been built up over years in the towns where our special schools are currently situated.**

The arguments for Rowde seem initially to be sound ones; the availability of adjacent, council owned land lowers the cost of building/expansion and reduces the complexities of planning. Its position, in the geographical centre of the county has a seeming logic, but Wiltshire is a large rural county with a widely dispersed population. Geographically, Rowde is away to the east, on the edge of Salisbury Plain, close to Devizes – which is not earmarked for anything like the kind of population expansion of the West Wilts towns, but does have a serious problem with traffic congestion. I know, because I sit in the traffic jams crawling up Caen Hill every week!

Almost all the current cohort of children at Larkrise, Rowdeford and St Nicholas schools live in and around the major population centres of West Wiltshire; from Warminster towards the south, through Westbury, Trowbridge, Bradford-on-Avon and Melksham to Chippenham and Malmesbury in the north. These towns are linked by a well-developed system of roads, including the upgraded A350, a range of frequent bus services and a train station in every town. They are the major employment centres of Wiltshire - and Trowbridge, Melksham and

Chippenham form part of the strategic hub for housing expansion. Why on earth would you site a Centre of Excellence anywhere other than at the centre of this cluster?

Building a large, single site school at Rowde makes neither logical nor economical sense. It is not a child-centred idea and does not take into account the many ways a Centre of Excellence could be used, if located more sensibly. The apparent convenience of Rowde cannot, must not, outweigh the huge benefits to our most vulnerable children of being educated in their own local communities - the places where they are most likely to spend the rest of their lives - and the very places with which they most need to be familiar and confident as they grow towards independence. A special school is not like a mainstream school. It is not a staging post on the way to university, work and an independent adult life. For the majority of children in special schools the transition to independence is a much slower, less certain one, requiring a great deal of sensitive and experienced support - and with no guarantee of reaching the goal of full independence. That some young people do eventually manage to live independent lives, with support, is testament not only to the schooling they have received, but also to the community that has helped to raise them. That is why it is so important that special schools are situated at the heart of their communities, surrounded by the very services, facilities, leisure activities and volunteer opportunities they will need throughout their lives.

And the benefits of local SEND education do not stop there. Dual placements at mainstream schools, the proximity of nurseries, district specialist centres and resource bases, the training opportunities for mainstream SEND teachers and TA's from a local Centre of Excellence all help to spread and grow the expertise – much more cost effectively than servicing them from half way across the county! Furthermore, the benefits to the communities themselves should not be ignored. Wiltshire Council has spent much time, effort and money in the last five years on developing its SEND 0 – 25 provision, with a clear vision for wrap-around support from birth to 'stability' – precisely so that young people **can** stay in their own communities, be supported to live fulfilling, meaningful lives and access the same work and leisure opportunities that the rest of the population can. This kind of inclusion right from the start means there is recognition and familiarity with learning disability amongst the general population which encourages a kinder, more tolerant society. If our SEND children are nowhere to be seen in our towns, then their chances for acceptance and equality are vastly reduced – and we, too, are diminished by their absence.

So, if a Centre of Excellence would bring a new dynamic to SEND education in Wiltshire – what could it look like, and where should it be sited?

Given the linear dispersal of towns along the western county border, the most sensible idea might be to preserve the three current sites, turning them into a central, expanded site at Rowde – perhaps to take secondary age pupils who might be better able to manage the longer journeys – with two satellite primary-age sites at Chippenham and Trowbridge. The Rowde site has the space, potentially, to grow its designation to include SLD and ASD learners, whilst the two smaller primary based sites could also accommodate those PMLD children for whom travelling long distances may be too costly, too time-consuming and present too much of a health risk. Post 16 provision is already established at Poplar College in Chippenham and at other Wiltshire College sites, so a smaller provision catering for SLD and PMLD children in Trowbridge would complement this service and ensure that post-16 education is not only accessible, but differentiated to take account of the diverging needs at this age; some towards

work and employment opportunities and others towards life-skills training. Services such as therapists, passenger transport etc could be centralised at Rowde, and although this would still entail some journeys between the three schools, this could be more efficiently managed than at present through the strategic leadership of the three sites as one Centre of Excellence.

A different model might be to split the Centre of Excellence across just two sites and develop these in Rowde and Melksham. If the primary site was in Melksham, then the two sites would be geographically close. Melksham is equi-distant from both Trowbridge and Chippenham and, with its supermarkets and town facilities, replicates the kind of urban community our SEND children need to learn to negotiate. It wouldn't be everyone's own community – but it would be much closer to it than Rowde! Centralising services here would be much more cost-effective than at Rowde and parents would find attending appointments much easier if they were reliant on public transport. In fact transport begins to look considerably less problematic, given the A350 linking all the towns of West Wiltshire, with Melksham right in the centre. Journey times for the majority of pupils become manageable and anxieties around health issues reduce, with a major hospital only 20 minutes away. Health and education support workers on low wages would find Melksham a much more accessible option, so recruitment and retention issues are...less of an issue!

The advantage of retaining Rowde as the second site, apart from the space on hand to develop/expand, is that the current Rowdeford School already offers a more rural, outdoor curriculum, with many opportunities to encourage vocational education to its MLD and possibly ASD students, in addition to the more traditional curriculum. It would be a great tragedy, I think, to lose that link to the land-based industries that a rural county like Wiltshire relies on.

A Centre of Excellence across two or three sites would also give parents choice – and perhaps offer better opportunities with less travelling for some of those families who currently need costly out of county placements. It also offers the possibility of better differentiated Post 16 courses, both on and off site.

**So, a two/three site Centre of Excellence offering an age appropriate, broader and more differentiated curriculum right through to 18 and beyond. Closer to home in distance and feel, with flexibility and choice built in under strategic leadership with a centralised range of SEND services on hand. Now that's an exciting proposition!**

Trowbridge has a unique opportunity at this moment to build such a school - and by siting it close to its strategic town centres, to make a clear statement about how it values its most vulnerable young people. It is an opportunity to demonstrate to the rest of the county - and the country - what outstanding education provision for young people with SEND looks like in the 21st century. To provide cutting edge, state-of-the-art centres for young people from birth to independence where they can share services, experiences and spaces with local people - and, by playing their part in their community perhaps help to make it a more tolerant and inclusive society for all of us.

£20 million is a lot of money. Let's do something really special with it. Our young people deserve it. Our communities deserve it. We were bold when we developed our Local Offer and our SEND 0 - 25 agenda. Let's not lose faith in those same youngsters now. Let's build them something they - and we - can be proud of, now and for the next generation to come.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission.

With respect,

**Jan Winfield**

Former Larkrise parent, Vice Chair of Governors, Secretary, The Friends of Larkrise School

#### 6.3.10 Staff member, St Nicholas (28.02.19)

All the documents that have come from WC have felt very biased towards persuading people to the Councils view, it does not feel like a democratic process.

To quote from the FAQ:

The school will include hydro-pools, sensory rooms, physio, open outdoor space, speech and language therapy and family care

There will be attractive child friendly buildings which are safe, friendly, calm and engaging places with wide corridors and lots of natural light

The school will have excellent teaching from well-trained, caring, specialist and dedicated staff.

This suggests that all these facilities are not currently available in the current schools. The truth is that St Nicholas already provides a hydro-pool, sensory room, physio, outdoor space, speech and language therapy and family care

We already have an attractive child friendly building (just 25 years old purpose built) which is safe, friendly, calm and an engaging place with wide corridors and lots of natural light

The school has excellent teaching from well-trained, caring, specialist and dedicated staff and it is insulting to our amazingly dedicated staff to imply that we don't already have that.

St Nicholas has a fabulous Hydro pool already that is approx 10 years old, We only need one for 80 pupils plus it is available for hundreds of the local community to use. The new school to cater for 350 pupils would need 3 or 4 Hydro pools to give all the children the same access. Will this happen?. We have no idea the consultation just says in a general way that it will have everything but in reality nobody knows if the new school could provide hydrotherapy in the same way that St Nicholas can.

Another quote from FAQ: Rowde is an active community with small shops, pubs, a church, bus services, cafés and a primary school.

In reality Rowdford has one shop not shops, one cafe not cafes, 2 pubs, and a church. Bus services seem to consist of 5 buses a day from Chippenham and 4 buses back to Chippenham, there is nowhere for the children to go without getting onto a bus, you cannot walk in to the village from Rowdeford as it is not safe to do so. A member of staff needing to use the bus living in Chippenham and working in Rowde on a school day would arrive at 7.33 in the morning for work at 9.00 and leave at 16.18 when finishing at 15.15. This is simply not practical.

It is so important for our children to maintain their links to the Community they are already a part of in Chippenham. Previous pupils work, live and socialise in Chippenham and that is surely because it is their community and where they are known and feel safe and confident. There are also the concerns regarding our most vulnerable pupils with high medical needs, Chippenham is well placed to access emergency aid when required and this is required on a regular basis.

There are many other reasons for keeping a SEND school in Chippenham not least the retention of our highly trained skilled staff, some of whom won't make the transition to Rowde due to not having transport or already travelling a distance to work. We understand that change is required but we already have everything in place at St Nicholas we just need a new, larger school building in Chippenham. Chippenham is a large town with further development planned for some time, it would be the wrong decision not to have SEND provision in this town.

#### [6.3.11 Somerset County Council \(01.03.19\)](#)

Somerset currently has one child accessing Larkrise School and as such, we have an interest in this proposal.

That child, who is a current NCY 3, lives 20 miles from Larkrise. The proposed new school at Rowdeford (Due to open in September 2023) would extend that distance to 30 miles.

We as an LA, and the child's parents, will need to consider the impact of that increased distance and through the Phase Transfer review process, decide where that child is best placed from 2022 onwards.

On the proposal itself, we have no objections and recognise a similar pressure on special school places in our own area.

Kind regards

**Phil Curd** | Strategic Manager | Access & Additional Learning Needs  
Somerset County Council, C402, County Hall, Taunton, TA1 4DY

#### [6.3.12 Wiltshire Music Centre \(01.03.19\)](#)

Dear Sir/Madam

Wiltshire Music Centre (WMC) has a long track record of engaging culturally and creatively with young people with learning difficulties through our artistic and creative learning/outreach work, and we will continue to be proactive in our support and development of this provision in schools across the county.

We engage highly skilled artists and therapists who are committed to offering a wide range of opportunities to young people despite the many challenges that they may face. WMC hosted a national disability arts festival in October (Fast Forward), we curate and produce a bi-annual Special Schools Festival, and our Zone Club for learning disabled young adults provides a monthly music and film making session supported by a range of specialist practitioners.

We will continue to develop and promote this work whether the schools remain on separate sites or are combined on the proposed new site at Rowde. Despite some concerns about the potential impact on the individual schools and communities, we are supportive of the draft plan. WMC is also keen to support schools and families during the transition/consultation period, be involved where appropriate in the development of this plan in the future, and we would be delighted to engage as fully as possible with the project over the coming months and years.

Yours sincerely  
James Slater, Artistic Director

## 6.4 Emails received during Phase 2

### 6.4.1 22.03.2019 Speech and Language Therapist

Dear Wiltshire Council

I am writing to you about your proposal to close local special schools in Wiltshire, which I have read. I strongly disagree with this proposal.

I am a speech and language therapist with clinical expertise in young people with complex communication disabilities. Complex communication disabilities present barriers to all aspects of learning, especially social, emotional and friendship building opportunities. Young people with communication disabilities need **enhanced** opportunities to participate in and contribute to their **local** communities so that they can develop and maintain **friendships**.

Your proposal is gravely mistaken. You are proposing to create an institution-style school for all students with SEN to travel to, miles away from their local communities, and miles outside a town. This will present these young people with **enormous social inclusion barriers**. You are removing the very opportunities these students need. This will have a severely damaging effect upon their current and future quality of life. It cannot and will not provide the type of education that these students need to prepare them for their adulthoods.

I would urge you to reconsider.

### 6.4.2 05.04.2019 Ex-Chair of Larkrise School

Jane,

It has been a number years since I was the Chair of Larkrise School, but I would like you to take into account my consider thoughts on the decision you will need to take on the proposed mergers. I can well understand the parents' concerns, changes are always worrying, but so often are short term

In my view the Council needs to take a long-term view of what is best for the children NOT the parents.

Larkrise location is not suitable for extending, but has wonderful facilities with the excellent hydro pool. The question of transport is a red herring for most of the children come via taxis or school busses from wider area than Trowbridge. I strongly believe if at the earlier consultation stages the staff and Governors had visited the Devizes and seen the beautiful



grounds and the fact their children would be breathing much cleaner clean air and benefiting from the open countryside, nature and wildlife, many objections would have been muted.

What I never have been able to understand has been the policy of bringing children on long journeys across Salisbury Plain to Devizes with facilities being available in Salisbury. Also, the decision to reduce the number of beds for boarders at Devizes, resulting in those £100,000 high costs being incurred for their stay in Somerset. I felt a different approach could have been made by refurbishing the facilities at Devizes and merging Larkrise as a part of that refurbishment programme, including tackling the problems of stairs and improving the accessible at the house.

However, my priority was always the welfare of those young children and providing them with skills to become more independent, though very often the wonderful skills and efforts by our staff to develop the children independent skill's, were so often frustrated by parents insisting on doing everything for their child.

Hope these comments are helpful, best of luck.

#### 6.4.3 08.04.2019 Parent using unit within mainstream school

My son is currently attending Rainbows, a unit within a mainstream school. This works well for his primary education; he has the specialist support he needs for his moderate learning disability and behavioural issues but is also in an integrated setting. I would like him to have this opportunity when attending secondary school.

Our ambition for our son is that he is able to live as part of the community, seen as a valued and accepted member. I have real concerns that if he is schooled away from this community he and other children like him will be invisible to 'mainstream' community members when they leave their school and try and establish their adult life. Other 'mainstream' children need daily experiencing of being alongside children with disabilities and additional needs, in order to accept them as part of their world. We are setting children like my son up to fail as an adult, if he can't walk into any social setting and have the confidence to know he will be accepted as a community member.

I know proposals for the new school include access to the latest therapies and therapists. My son doesn't need this, he needs to grow into an adult and to know he can have friends, be loved and make a valued contribution to the world he lives in.

A good quote I once heard: 'you take a child with a disability out of a mainstream school and you teach the other 25 children in his class that he doesn't belong in their world'

Yours sincerely  
Mary Reed

#### 6.4.4 08.04.2019 Parent (St Nicholas School) response 1/6

Please can you consider and address the several questions that popped into my mind on reviewing the presentation [at Hardenhuish School, Chippenham on 5 April].

The key one is can we have the underlying data as was agreed which has been used to generate the tables. Particularly as to whether the current and future transport figures are based on the same process and procedure, and that the current figures have been compared with actuals for validation of both these and the future expectations.

Particularly of interest is how the formulates and simulations discovered Rowdeford students will have an average 20% reduction in journey times to Rowdeford in the new world.

Whether Rowdeford school will need a Right turn filter lane given it on the same road as Rowde primary.

Whether the need for 59 as opposed to 51 routes and a small increase in overall mileage adds or reduces transport costs.

As an aside it is interesting to see that of the Rowdeford contributes 600+ of the 1000+ miles driven currently and 30 of the 55 students already travelling over 1 hours. And would make me want to ensure my future figures are accurate and reliable. Given primary school children have an expectation for less than 45 minutes and only once secondary age does the limit increase to 75 minutes. The figures are uninformative to address this constraint. Therefore, whether and what the impacts and assessments are to primary as opposed to all students is a question that should be answered. Using currents students as a example of potential future expectations.

Whether the calculations include children not currently using transport and/or within walking distance of a current school.

Whether additional time on transport to gain access to the principle settlement communities is factored in to the transport times and cost models.

What The 5 million difference in 2 \* 100 pupil.verse a single 200 pupil school actually represents, is it the additional setup or a annual cost benefit. If setup what is the annual cost delta between the two scenarios.

$98+81+130 = 309$  with the new school proposed for 350 to address the 2026 requirement of 50 complex places in North Wilts suggest the currents schools already need students displaced to other setting. Unless the new school is planned for 400+ places the remain 73 places must be going into other settings, therefore where, when and how are these being developed. Although post 16 hasn't been separated and could marginally address the mismatch in capacity.

The figures suggest the new school may not be intended to be the school of choice for the current types and abilities of students attending the 3 existing schools. And/or is only designed in this phase to deliver to Wiltshire 2026 expectation.

Although ultimately the whole presentation is based on the premise that a single school fulfils Wiltshire's PSED and other obligations in North Wiltshire, which is something would be helpful to address head on in any decision to progress on such a plan.

As no comparison exist to a 3 location 5-15 model there is no true comparison in reference, for journey times and mileage to a 3 local school model.

#### 6.4.5 08.04.2019 Parent (St Nicholas School) response 2/6

I also think this is the right time to send this

With respect to the proceeding consultation it feels this wasn't of sufficient rigorous and enquiring to ensure the views of the consulted were understood and address in the proposal. With the views of some stakeholder groups either overlooked or combined and therefore potentially seen as statistically irrelevant. For example, the views of non-verbal and primary

school age children failed to be identified and expressed separately. Why should their views appearing to be unheard and undocumented? As if asked they may have different, unvoiced or similar views to the seemingly quoted secondary school verbal children. The details were insufficient to understand if there is any splitting views between pupils at sites proposed for closure and the current secondary school only site intended to be reused for the wider educational needs. If the cross section of views are not provided and assigned how is the appearance of predetermination avoided or the impression of impartiality demonstrated, For these vulnerable suggestible individuals an approach that ensures impartiality needs to be defined and used. Without impartiality built in any questioner's bias in expectation or opinion could influence the responses.

With particular reference to the Equality Impact Assessment and Public Sector Equality Duties, the very existence of which I have only during the challenge to this process become aware of. There appears to be a requirement that from the instance that forced relocation of pupils and removal of educational establishments became a consideration an impact that needs to be assess. The update needed to reflect this seismic shift. Given the preceding guidance In the 2017 equality impact statement shared during the legal challenge in people impact. state "no existing child/young person will be moved (unless they want to)"

As the proposal is toted as a once in a generation / 30 year plan the risks to current and future pupils across North Wiltshire base on actual or synthesised locations, with common educational, health risks/consideration should be understood and addressed. This would create a cross-section of impacts to be scoped for the likely SEND cohort attending Wiltshire special schools. Given our personal experiences and circumstances we know the relocation to a school further from us will have negative impacts. And that we chose to use the local (St. Nicholas School, Chippenham) school and not the perceived better (Threeways, Bath) school for many of the reason now being expressed and argued, with the added disadvantage that the proposed school is further from the acute care hospitals required in an emergency. Even providing a helipad for the air ambulance offers no guarantees, and suggests Wiltshire Council will be relying on a Charity to mitigate against flaws in the proposal.

The impact assessment should as previously stated document restrictions and/or mitigations of impacts. To understand the range of impacts that need addressing from a health perspective to my own knowledge St. Nicholas School has now or previously supported children with

End of life plans

Care plans

Epilepsy, with various seizure triggers and levels of control Autism Oxygen dependency PEGs/NG and pump feeds Shunts Continence Constipation Medication & toileting regimes Requirements for Emergency med at and away from school.

And

Classes of predominantly non ambulant children

I also understand the direction of travel for health globally is to move support for long term conditions out of the hospital toward the community, which could add to the schools obligations over time.

The school also celebrates friendship day annually to remember those who have departed.

I know the proposal to close schools will have negative impacts and believe these impacts are significant, varied, risking physical and mental health of children, parents, extended family and potential beyond.

As a parent of a child who has suffered a life changing health event I know how much the "what ifs" risks family, mental and even physical health. And that blame and uncertainty are inevitable part of the equation.

Blame may be direct, i.e. an event happened while in someone else's care (whether or not they could or should have had the foreknowledge or training to prevent or mitigate impacts), or indirect, the child became or is/was more frequently ill due to infection or over tiredness to a level they were more susceptible to other complications. The blame may be in the nature of why didn't I do? Or why didn't I have? Or why didn't they? Or why did they?

Potential the most damaging to mental health is the why didn't I? Which could in relation to the proposal be anything from keep my child off school, self-educate, visit school that day, take my child to the doctor before school. Pick up from school, the underlying current on the blames outlined here is why did I have my child educated at a large establishment away from me. And the self-blame will be tempered by being force due to the compulsory nature of education to travel my child further to an imposed restriction in location choice of schools and/or have them educated at a school with potential 3 times as many pupils and staff as I otherwise would have chosen or expected to choose.

More pupils will almost certainly equate to more illnesses persisting for longer, more travel distance irrespective of time may equal more tiredness and fatigue. It could equate to increased levels of constipation, which could among other thing be an epileptic trigger. Given the multitude of epilepsy triggers there could be others introducing more seizures for some children.

Using transport to access the community for learning will just exasperate the situation.

Blame may be justified or not. It doesn't stop it being real to the individual. And apart from anything else that could lead to legal actions.

Our daughter was going to need support and input pre brain insult/damage, post event our anticipated level of inputs and support increased, although the most immediate changed was in her needs for medical and Occupational Therapy equipment and inputs. I do not believe today she is supported fully in reaching her full potential, while I fear this plan add risks to her and others very lives.

The claim is made the current schools will be in financial deficit and this is being promoted as in part a justification of the closures. At all schools I can believe budgets are stretched already and restricting delivery particularly to the more severe PMLD children's educational needs, in these circumstances it is likely schools will be in deficit financially or in provision whether of theirs, the LAs or Governments making.

Given all this particular in relation to the risks to my daughter's and family's well being I feel aggrieved we are having to take this course of action at this time. There are clearly risks and little evidence these are known, documented, understood or robustly addressed.

Regarding the previous statutory proposal publish 9th January.

Firstly, and foremost to be able to feedback effectively it seems key as to have the details as to where are our children are actually being displaced to as part of the closure proposals. Given there is no linked equivalent new school decision aligned to the same timeframe and if the Education Adjudicator decides against it or WCC never proceed with the new school proposal then there may never be.

There is little detail in the new POST 16 provision. There is little to no certainty at all. In this current proposal WCC could move the new school into the middle of Salisbury plain or

Scotland once closures are confirmed and we would have no consultation or representation period to have our views with respect to closures on this basis heard.

The guidance even implies that linked proposal should be considered together and that the LA doesn't act as the decision maker in these circumstances. Page 24 of the guidance first paragraph of the Decision section "The LA will be the decision-maker on a school closure proposal, unless the closure proposal is 'related' to another proposal that is to be decided by the Schools Adjudicator."

Going further I struggle to see how I meaningfully respond on some aspects, as the closure proposals which at publication appears to lack details and clarity against the requirements set out in the guidance. key ones to me being.

i) Under Annex B Travel P29 how the proposal actual provides the requested "Details of length and journeys to alternative provision." The response begins "It is recognised that, for some pupils, journeys will be longer while, for others, shorter. This change can be a concern, when children/young people have significant medical or behavioural needs. Currently, pupils' journeys average 40 minutes (Rowdeford 43 minutes, St Nicholas 37 minutes and Larkrise 41 minutes), with the shortest being 4 minutes (St Nicholas child) and the longest 119 minutes (St Nicholas child). Initial estimates for the proposed new provision suggest there is likely to be a similar range of journey times, but potentially for different children/young people." Makes it unclear what is being said, committed or included, particularly regarding children not current using transport. Picking on just one statement "We hope that by choosing a non-town location we will reduce the amount of time in congested town traffic at peak times" I could hope to win the lottery it doesn't make it happen. This change includes a range of times but doesn't provide testable or indicated routes, distance and times for locations around the county. So even in what little it does say could include unsafe assumptions, expectations or proposals.

We believe our epileptic, nonverbal, incontinent, Cerebral Palsy daughter's time on transport if she attended Rowdeford would increase. In tandem with the risk her hours in attendance could reduce. Without transparency on the way timing used by the council were obtained and calculated this assumption will remain until proved otherwise. While being further from major hospitals in an emergency or home if she has a significant but non-hospitalising seizure.

ii) Under Annex B Travel P30 how does the consultation identify and proposal show compliance with "the proposed arrangements will mitigate against increased car use." particularly give the current school locations include the 2 North Wiltshire principle settlements and future state doesn't, in conjunction with the population density and expected growth across the North of county. With the expected number of meetings and visits parents can be expected to make to the school. And no clarity as to whether all students have even been accommodated in any transport plan.

iii) Under Annex B Impact on the community P29 the closure or assumed closure of a community accessed Hydro pool (Starfish Hydro Pool, St. Nicholas School, Chippenham) <https://www.neptuneaquatics.co.uk/starfish-hydrotherapy-pool> is not referenced or addressed as required by the sentence "A statement and supporting evidence about the impact on the community of the closure of the school and any measures proposed to mitigate any adverse impact." Particularly when read in conjunction with page 18 Community services "Some schools may be a focal point for family and community activity, providing extended services for a range of users, and their closure may have wider social consequences. Where the school is providing access to extended services, provision should be made for the pupils and their families to access similar services through their new schools or other means."

iv) Under Travel and accessibility P12 apart from vague statement and promises on the councils intent to attempt to improve the good community access to Rowdeford there is no

details nor comparison as to the adverse or not of impacts on disadvantaged groups between existing and future situations which is at odds with the expectation the “Proposers and decision-makers should satisfy themselves that accessibility planning has been properly taken into account and that the the proposal will not adversely impact on disadvantaged groups.”

v) Under Annex B Sixth form provision P29 the proposal is expect to cover in additional to where these students will be displaced to “Where the school proposed to be discontinued provides sixth form education, the effect for 16 to 19 year olds in the area that the closure will have in respect of—

a) their educational or training achievements;

b) their participation in education or training; and the range of educational or training opportunities available to them.” It seems the proposal has little details on what will be provided given all that is said is “St Nicholas and Larkrise schools currently provide post-16 Education which will be closed or taken on by an alternate provider. Rowdeford does not have post 16 provision. It is proposed that all 16 -19 education will be provided by Wiltshire College and the range of private providers across Wiltshire with whom the Council has developed strong relationships. This may involve the current buildings or other community based sites.

The aim is to increase the opportunities for preparation for adulthood in a wider range of locations, expanding on arrangements already in place and judged by Ofsted as effective. For those learners who will have formerly received their post 16 education through one of the special schools, there will be some change involved, however, this should lead to better development of life skills closer to home.”. An aim is not a commitment, and without detailing the capabilities of the current provisions, how do you benchmark improvement. As our daughter will be approaching this phase of her education the lack of clarity and certainty around this is very relevant and concerning.

vi) It was note to demonstrate the issues and concerns in out of step consultation there seeming to be suggesting of adding a “challenging behaviour unit” which could change the nature of the faculty and would needs very clear guidance and controls on how ALL risks to ALL pupils will be mitigated at ALL times on and off school premises due to the inclusion of this provision on site. And would be something I would have liked to be able to raised during the closure representation process for the decision maker review.

I also can't understand how the decision maker based on proposal and <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council-democracy-consultations> survey could have made an informed choice in conjunction with the published proposal as opinions (while attributed to parents) are not by design further aligned to a specific school, nor online did there appear to be any controls preventing statical errors being introduced due to individuals making multiple submissions. Similar deficits appearing to existing in preceding consultation. Potential leading to a over representation of Devizes and surrounding area relative to population density. Even without this distortion in theory if greater than 50% of all parents supported the proposal from all parents this could still represent less than 25% support from both St Nicholas and Larkrise parents. Meaning the views of distinct stakeholder groups may be diluted or statistically misrepresented. Particular given in 4 years at the time of implementation the number of the current children still attending these schools is likely to be over 50% at Larkrise and St Nicholas across the upper primary years and the whole senior school while only 20% and all entering their last year of education at Rowdeford given the schools different intakes.

Also while at separate stages it was impossible to support or express preferences and expectations around the increase in school capacity proposal while objecting to the school closures.

Regards



#### 6.4.6 09.04.2019 Collective voice from South Wiltshire (1)

We are contacting you as a collective voice of parents with children with SEN (Special Educational Needs) in Salisbury & South Wiltshire.

We would like to bring your attention to the extended special schools consultation that is currently running till May 6th 2019 so are also very aware we are running short on time to get our points across of how the proposed plans and the current lack of provision in South Wiltshire will and is already seriously effecting children and their families in the south of the county.

The proposed plans at present are to close 3 existing schools north of the county and to build one super school in Rowde near to the existing school Rowdeford in 2023.

Rowde is almost 30 miles from Salisbury and on a good journey without stopping can take on average around an hour.

Parents at the schools north of the county have been fighting against these proposed plans with support of the local constituencies to keep the current special schools open, keeping children with complex medical and educational needs within their local communities, an inclusive environment where they continue to learn and flourish with minimal disruption in terms of travelling.

After talking to the parents in the north of the county we feel its now time for parents in the south to be heard, our children matter too!

At present there is one special school in Salisbury this being Exeter House, this school is primarily for children with severe learning needs.

We have the recently opened satellite Springfields South at the Sarum Academy site and 4 small resource bases attached to local primary schools that are all at capacity and oversubscribed there is currently no secondary SEN provision this side of Devizes!!!

The crisis for SEN places in South Wiltshire is very real and is happening right now! It is expected for children of South Wiltshire to hang on till 2023 for this super school that is miles away from home. There is no mention of the funding creating a school for children in Salisbury or South Wiltshire with moderate learning difficulties or creating more resource bases so children can stay within schools in their local communities.

The proposed Free School for ASD/SEMH is not due to open till 2026! in the meantime all these vulnerable children that deserve a happy education are either being sent miles away to schools north of the county that are bursting at the seams, or are having to be homeschooled causing hardship on many families, or children are being sent miles out of county to suitable placements!

Instead of this super school that no one seems happy about why can't Wiltshire County Council focus on using this funding to provide appropriate provisions within different areas of the county?

We look forward to hearing from you!

Natalie Romano - on behalf of parents in South Wiltshire

#### 6.4.7 17.04.2019 Parent (St Nicholas School) response 3/6

This is a personal view based on a gut feeling so would need working up to a skeleton proposal to allow for comparison with the 1 school proposal.

What is not a personal view is the travel data in the 1 school proposal seems to lack clarity (We assume the biggest winners and loser are Larkrise and St. Nicholas pupils but can't see this, and assume South Wiltshire pupils at a Whole county school are included in a future North Wiltshire Proposals travel planning) and appears current actuals are being compared with future theoretical, so isn't giving a fair or potential true comparison or reflection on the future transport quality compliance.

Seeing as a 1 site school can't achieve greater than neutral in respect to transport and the figures should be open to significant scrutiny to ensure the quality is even as adequate as neutral. This quality scoring being based on the reading of transport guidance that less than 45 minutes on transport for primary SEND children is ONLY advisory.

A three site approach for 4 to 15 schooling across North Wiltshire should be used for comparison, as logic says this can work towards a geographic splitting of pupils between schools and provide transport routes which will be reduced in distance and time relative to a 1 school option. If the sufficiency criteria can be addresses due to the pre-existence of the school on the St. Nicholas and Larkrise as this would address to some degree the value for money question. If not, then 2 new suitable sites will need to be identified, (preferably within the footprint of a new housing development) for the review. I would think Larkrise and St. Nicholas are used these are sized for around 60 pupils in the current buildings eventually (although adding Ashton Rd may increase Larkrise capacity, these being an estimate based on the current occupancy and not current guidance), if new sites are proposed then each site would be good to size for 150 pupils even if built out to smaller footprints initially.

Also, the proximity of schools to colleges could improve the outcomes scoring.

Regards

#### 6.4.8 25.04.2019 Collective voice from South Wiltshire (2)

We are contacting you on behalf of parent/carer of children with SEN in Salisbury and South Wiltshire. It has come to our attention that during the special school's consultation that the south of the county has been omitted. Although today on writing this it has been confirmed that a consultation has been set up in Salisbury. Unfortunately, we feel that due to only having one week's notice this consultation will be poorly attended.

This has led to many experiencing first-hand repercussions of inadequate SEN provision in Salisbury and South Wiltshire. We have a strong support network that is present on social media, and due to this, we have produced a document to prove that the needs of our children are being ignored. Please note this covers only a small number of families in Salisbury and South Wiltshire, there are many more we have unfortunately been unable to reach in this short space of time.

At present we have one SEN school Exeter House (future centre of excellence), please see the attached document for travel times to other schools in Wiltshire. These are unacceptable for any child. We do not dispute that Exeter House is an exceptional provision. However, many children fall outside of their criteria. Which ultimately means they are placed into mainstream schools. A few children are placed into resource bases, unfortunately, again these are all full, and the spaces are few and far between. These also do not address the provision for children who need secondary education.



We have recently had a temporary provision provided for children with ASD in Salisbury. However, this is now full and has a waiting list. This provision again does not cater for secondary age children.

At present there is no middle tier for SEN children in Salisbury and South Wiltshire, there are many children who do not fit either the criteria for Exeter House, Springfields South or this proposed free school in 2026. Again, while this proposal is decisive for the future, this doesn't cover the educational and social aspirations of children with moderate learning disabilities, complex needs and other associated needs. Not every child has ASD/SEMH, each child is an individual and while we understand that it is challenging to provide a school that everyone is happy with, a middle ground does need to be found. As currently too many children are missing out or receiving an inadequate education, in Salisbury and South Wiltshire.

This is similarly represented by children who have ASD who can keep up with the National Curriculum; however, they are unable to cope in a mainstream setting.

Please see attached an excel spreadsheet. This has been produced by using an online survey. The answers from parents have been copied and pasted into the spreadsheet for ease of reading. Ninety-two parents filled out the survey and overwhelmingly only around 4 of these parents have had a positive outcome, when considering their child's diagnosis process and their education, in Salisbury and South Wiltshire.

It is simply unacceptable to continue to send children from Salisbury and South Wiltshire to provisions in Devizes, Calne and beyond. To end this email on this note, would you make a 60-mile round trip daily without having a drink, stopping for a toilet break etc.? Would you send a vulnerable senior on this journey with no support or assistance? Would you send a child without SEN/Disabilities on this journey every day and be happy about it?

This needs to stop! The crisis is real and happening now Salisbury, and South Wiltshire need adequate provision sooner rather than later.

#### 6.4.9 28.04.2019 Parent (St Nicholas School) response 4/6

Having reviewed the presentation in detail it does raise several queries.

For me the key ones at this time being

1. Where is the underlying data which was promised as my assumption is Larkrise and St. Nicholas pupils are the biggest winners and losers in the transport delta statistics.
2. That there appears to be a predetermining that a single North Wiltshire school is acceptable. Which doesn't appear to be evidenced. Nor evidence that scaling up the plan that a single school for Wiltshire is not better value and also acceptable.
3. Where in the assessment process does the alignment to government regulation, council obligations and equality duties take place, particularly with respect to
  1. pupils and their families right to family life
  2. That some disabled primary school pupils are not being more discriminated against due to the reduction in choice from 2 to 1 and relocation out of the principle settlement to 1 educational location in the north of the county
  3. That some disabled secondary school pupils are not being more discriminated against due to the reduction in choice from 2 (or 3) and removal from principle settlements to 1 educational location in the north of the county
4. Where is the POST 16 plan, and/or evidence the impacts around their existence in the closing school and that their needs have been incorporated in the overall plan

and sanitised out of the primary and secondary school proposals, statistics and planning.

5. Have any risk assessment been taken to ensure external factors that could impact the validity of the proposal are known and address, like regulations changing transport guidelines to transport requirements. Which could happen as the result of a human rights case or other event outside the councils control.
6. How and where is the validation of the assumption used for the statistics and transport models to ensure some level of fairness in the comparisons.
  1. As where and how are the not on transport pupils included in the transport plans, figures and statistics
  2. As have and how have POST 16 pupils attending Larkrise and Poplar college been extracted and/or realigned in the statistics, or are they in fact included in the pupils being delivered to Rowdeford in the travel comparisons, an establishment which is not being proposed to have POST 16 provision.

Also have the South Wiltshire pupils attending Rowdeford today which are not part of the long term future North Wiltshire Rowdeford school site plan been removed, to ensure the consistency of the snapshot modelling to the future catchment.

#### 6.4.10 30.04.2019 Parent (St Nicholas School) response 5/6

The following [submitted from HAMPSHIRE HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUS] is a health professional's response for inclusion in the consultation to my enquire of her as to the health risks associated with additional time and distance on transport and relocation of an educational establishment further from their homes and acute A&E hospitals.

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Sorry it has taken me so long to get back to you. Just a little background about me, I have been a Paediatric Nurse since 1995 and am now a Children's Community Nurse with a Public Health Degree and I have about 15yrs experience in community nursing.

I have read through your email and I empathise with your concerns. One of things you may want Wiltshire to clarify is who is going to provide the school nurses for the new super school, as it is obvious from your list there are children with a wide range of health issues accessing education at the three present schools.

Below I have listed generalised potential detrimental effects of prolonged journeys to school, however there is no research papers I can find to back these statements up. This information comes from my experience of supporting children and families in the community, I will continue to research and see if I can find anything more substantial to support these statements. I wondered if it would be worth each parent contacting their child's Lead Paediatric Consultant or Children's Community Nurse and asking them to provide a supportive letter specific to their child's health needs detailing how this change may affect each of their diagnoses.

#### 1) POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF A PROLONGED JOURNEY TO SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN WITH PRE-EXISTING COMPLEX HEALTH CONDITIONS:

- Increased fatigue/stress on the child from the length of journey decreasing their ability to focus and learn when they get to school.
  - Extended school day on transport after a busy day at school reducing their family time.
  - This fatigue could reduce the child's resilience to fight infections leading to lowered school attendance.
  - Excessive fatigue is also one of the main triggers for epileptic seizures.

- It is not recommended that children are enterally fed by PEG/NG whilst being transported therefore this reduces the times at which they can receive nutrition. This increases the stress on parents to ensure that the right amount of nutrition is being given over a 24hr period.
- Some children that are PEG fed are prone to vomiting/refluxing and therefore transporting them long distances after these feeds could place them at higher risk of this, which could also lead to increased chest infections.
- Some children on the autistic spectrum find it hard to sit still for long periods of time and the sensory overload of transport may make them feel highly anxious which would manifest in challenging behaviour in an enclosed space.
- This challenging behaviour could be very stressful for children who are more sensitive and prone to startling reflexes. Such as children who are partially sighted or deaf/blind.
- Inactivity on transport would not be recommended for children with constipation, exercise, walking to school for example would be advised.
- Extended times in wheelchairs for non-ambulant children where they could be at home chilling in their more comfortable seating, preventing any potential skin breakdown from pressure areas.
- Potential medical emergencies whilst having to travel a longer distance to reach school/home/hospital.

## 2) POTENTIAL RISKS OF THE SCHOOL BEING SITUATED FURTHER AWAY FROM THE CHILDREN'S HOME AND FAMILIES:

- If child is unwell and requires parents to collect them there would be a time delay as parents have a longer journey to the school: this delay could have a negative impact on medical outcomes.
- If the school require support with specialist equipment such as suction machines, feeding pumps, ventilators etc from parents: care would be delayed by parents travel time, this could have wide consequences ranging from needing to access emergency medical support; to children missing out on important nutrition/education.
- For parents to attend for specialist meetings, plays, assemblies etc. they would need more time off work to allow for travel time and then may not be able to attend these : missed opportunities for memory making with their child who has an uncertain future.

I hope this is of some help to you, I think you already had most of these covered, I wish you well with your campaign to keep St Nicholas school open as it looks like a lovely school and you obviously feel strongly that it is the best option for your daughter to reach her potential, if there is anything else you think I can help with please let me know.

### 6.4.11 30.04.2019 Parent Governors submission from St Nicholas School

We hereby submit comments, views and concerns collated during two parent/carer workshop sessions facilitated by myself and Duncan Carter, part of our role as Parent Governors.

The workshops were held at St. Nicholas School and only St. Nicholas parents/carers attended. We anticipated sessions to run for approximately one hour. However, the evening session ran for two hours while the workshop in the morning had to be drawn to an end after three hours while continuing to generate a wealth of comments and concerns.

We ran the workshops on the understanding we would share the findings with this wider consultation. We therefore hope you find the feedback useful in order to fully understand what and why parents/carers have the views and feelings about Wiltshire Councils proposal and will add these to the consultation evidence.

Kind regards,

Duncan Carter and Corinna Davidson  
(Parent Governors)

Workshop facilitated on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2019 from 7-9pm

**IS a single combined school at Rowdeford a good plan for your child?**

100% of attendees replied with "NO".

**Why?**

Too large (children and staff)  
Travel  
No community  
The complexity of needs  
Segregation  
No choice  
Parental engagement (lack of)  
Quality staff will be hard to find due to location  
Environmental sustainability  
NO POST 16 provision

**IS it a good plan for ALL children?**

No, as for the same reason as above!  
No- Remote location, no community links/ties  
No- emergency travel to hospital time increased  
NO- time not in education  
No- Pollution and allergies  
No- lack of specialist knowledge of EACH pupil

**WHY would a one school option not work?**

Transport/time/logistics  
Impact on home life – i.e. adhere to siblings school times and work times, less time with family!  
Too many children  
Too intimidating for parents, too  
This would NOT be an option for mainstream children/families - DISCRIMINATION  
This would increase discrimination further re: travel time  
Location  
Community links not strong, children need to be visible in the community = belonging.  
Social cohesion, NEED TO MIX WITH MAINSTREAM (this works both ways!)  
Inclusion  
Physical therapy = will it be big enough? Time? Staff? Costs? Gym, sensory, etc.  
Collection of unwell children  
Are health needs met in an emergency?  
Staff need to know ALL children's needs as stated in EHCP  
Staffing

**WHAT would need to be in place to make a one school option in Rowde acceptable?**

Detailed plans of what would happen to pupils' needs BEFORE to even consider a one school option!  
And those plans to be adhered to IF one school option is accepted and acceptable

It is not an option  
A one school option could kill

### Parental discussion

This parent/carer group said that:

Accept a plan: expand Rowdeford to cover full age range and abilities with or without POST 16 at a superior level. This would mean it would release the pressure of St. Nicholas School with a view to reduce to school capacity  
Parents would rather send their children to an “adequate” St. Nicholas than to an “exceptional” Rowdeford super school

Workshop facilitated on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2019 from 9.15-12.15pm

### IS a single combined school at Rowdeford a good plan for your child?

100% of attendees replied with “NO”.

### WHY?

Segregation/social inclusion

Size – too large – too many people – unfamiliar faces, sensory impact?

Not within a community, too rural

No choice

No quick access to emergency services

No mobile phone signal

No public transport = how do parents/carers go to meetings/events/emergencies/illness?

Less likely to recruit parents to volunteer

Would be too polluted/lots of traffic

Travel time

Staff? Retainable in this area? Midday supervisor in this rural area?

The village of Rowde is not a big enough community! Library? Gym? Shops?

### IS it a good plan for ALL children?

No!

Reasons the same as mentioned above

For some but not for ALL

### WHY would a one school option not work?

Size (all aspects)

Travel

Choice

Environmental impact (pollution, impact to residents)

Unfair for those who want their children to be educated CLOSE to their own community

Staffing

Parental engagement

Not future proof

More out of county

More discriminatory than the current situation

### WHAT would need to be in place to make a one school option in Rowde acceptable?

A miracle!

Acceptable could be: use Rowdeford as a “centre of excellence” WITH large satellite sites in strategic towns in North Wiltshire

Dual enrolment was discussed however too many issues were raised (funding, transport, staffing etc) and parents realised this rarely works (personal experiences were shared)

### Parental Discussion

Whatever proposal put forward needs to be

Transparent

Clear

Evidence based

Looking closely at the children’s needs

Realistic and achievable

Meeting EHCPs

Not including aspirations or hopes

Considering the impact of family life

Giving equal weight to social inclusion as their (WCs) value for money/budget

Concerns about Academy status i.e. cant hold WC accountable

If EWC does not deliver = complaints, tribunals!

WC has no idea or knowledge about our children’s needs/abilities and we can see this in everything they publish!

POST 16???

An overriding concern raised was that Poplar College is seen by some, as part of the future POST 16 provision as it is not called St. Nicholas school therefore safe.

That the need to access the Community includes learning life skills

That the need to access the Community includes learning and developing awareness of dangers for independence

Feeling that additionally time in transport accessing the community should be added to the daily transport times

Feeling that being known and part of a local community and social cohesion will suffer. The children displaced will be seen as them and not us. Children being safe as they are known by the community.

Wiltshire Council argue against attendance to National Star for POST 16 as this is outside the pupils community. The argument followed here Rowdeford to a 5 year old is similarly outside many pupils community. No consistency in their thoughts.

The discussion returned to the satellite provision and suggested this idea extend beyond principle settlements if enough local demand exists.

Further that criteria should be defined to trigger a review, as to whether there is sufficient local demand and need to justify an additional satellite.

Parental choice to relocate closer to the school at Rowdeford, particularly for the subset of children with childhood life limiting conditions, will be restricted due to the limited housing stock in close proximity to Rowdeford.

Converting to an Academy was raised as a concern as the Council pick up the bill but doesn’t retain ownership of the asset. In conjunction with recent media attention on the financial issues with some academies.

Parent fundraising could diminish with the remoteness i.e. no or low engagement with friends of....

No understanding how site security will be maintained. And how risks to children will be addressed with public rights of way across or near the site.

It appears impacts to POST 16 have not been understood and even confused as closing St Nicholas will also close Poplar college as is.

Not been clear what will be the broad impact of closures of Larkrise and St. Nicholas POST 16 provision



Little indication across the board that current POST 16 providers have the knowledge and experience to adapt to the mix of cognitive, physical and medical needs currently supported by Larkrise and St. Nicholas POST 16 settings. Nor that a robust plan has been sufficiently developed to successfully support these students into adulthood.

#### 6.4.12 01.05.2019 Parent (Larkrise)

Good morning.

As a parent of a child at Larkrise this isn't my first email.

Sadly, the timings for the consultation meeting aren't possible as that is my child's bedtime and it takes both me and my husband to do her bedtime routine.

In my last email I went through the many reasons why my child is at Larkrise, what sets it out from other special needs schools and most importantly why children like my daughter, so not need a super school - this is like hell to a child like her.

As I can't make the consultation I wanted to make my voice heard again. If Larkrise closes and a new school is opened in Rowdeford my daughter wouldn't follow. It's too far and if we wanted a super school she would be at three ways.

I just had to stop typing as [name of child] had a big seizure. This is our reality. We live in traumatic, nightmare, unwanted worlds with or complex children.

I beg, I plead, please don't add to our horrendous daily worries by taking these schools away.

Many thanks  
Charlotte Body

#### 6.4.13 01.05.2019 On behalf of the Keep Special Schools Local Campaign

An open letter to Wiltshire Council:

After what felt like a positive meeting between parents and friends of St Nicholas and Larkrise schools and Wiltshire Council's commissioning officers on 3 April, we were surprised to hear from other parents and fellow campaigners that, during your consultation meeting on 5 April, you were still very much plugging your rural one-school model, using skewed statistics and unfair comparisons in order to try to influence stakeholders. Our impression from you was that rather than covering old ground, these meetings were intended to generate new and fresh ideas in order to consult on constructive solutions and alternative options to address the lack of special school places provided by Wiltshire Council.

As news of this consultation meeting spreads amongst key stakeholders, namely those families whose vulnerable children will have 7+ years of schooling remaining from 2023, more if you include Post 16+ provision, I feel it is my duty to convey to you that the brewing resentment felt towards Wiltshire Council is reaching an all-time high. There is a real danger that, rather than 'fostering good working relationships with families', as you stated was your aim in settling the legal case against you, you will achieve the exact opposite - with spectacular results - should you continue with your short-sighted, short-term plan for the future prospects of our children.

We understand that you hold a preference for the one-school option, to which you are entitled, as it meets a lot of your own criteria. However, there are a number of boxes which this model

simply does not tick for school governors, parents and children. For us, the heavily weighted boxes MUST include:

- social and community inclusion
- ensuring children with vulnerable health needs are within reasonable distance of an A&E department and other health risks are considered
- an accurately calculated transport model (note your data claims that Rowdeford students will save 986 minutes in transport time with a new school at Rowdeford, which is clearly oxymoronic; your data does not seem to include those not currently using transport and will have to; and your data does not show how the number of children who can walk/be pushed to school will be significantly reduced)
- improved access to education for disabled students (let's face it: education professionals agree that long journeys are not conducive to learning for even typical students, let alone those with disabilities, as they arrive fatigued before their school day has even begun).
- Advancement of equality of opportunity
- Parental choice
- School size
- Access by public transport if Wiltshire Council is meant to mitigate against environmental impact and encourage parental engagement/access for meetings, events, illness
- Quality of life

So while we formulate our own ideas and SEND vision for Wiltshire, our question for you is:

**What alternative options have you generated that better meet stakeholders' needs?**

What new ideas have you analysed, in as much depth as the one-school option, that you can present to us for consultation? We appreciate you will have a much greater understanding of the parameters and resources at the council's disposal and we do not have your knowledge and expertise for what is financially viable in formulating these plans. However, just as climate change activists campaigning to reduce the use of plastic cannot be held responsible for developing recyclable alternatives, as they are not scientists - you will appreciate that, although through our campaigning we can make suggestions, it is up to YOU to devise provision that meets the needs of our young people - utilising our input.

At the full Wiltshire Council meeting on 26 February, the two schools submitted their individual petitions, including more than 7,500 signatures each, for 'debate' (although your definition of this is debatable in itself). There the Council voted on and agreed that Wiltshire Council would receive the petitions and 'a response given that demonstrates a meaningful engagement'. I sincerely ask that you adhere to this motion as we have tried every reasonable avenue to gain your attention and to help you understand why your plans will not work and must be changed. If the one-school option is what is proposed to Cabinet once again, we will be forced to challenge it by any and all means necessary, including but not limited to legal action. I am sure both parties will agree this is very costly for all involved, both financially and psychologically, and only further delays education provision for the most vulnerable children in our county.



This also brings me to point out that the consultation period ends on 6 May, which technically only adds up to 16 full working days, when it was agreed it would be extended by four weeks. Guidance suggests that any consultation is run during term time and you will appreciate the Easter Holidays is a time for families, but also when we become carers 24/7 and have other siblings at home, so don't be surprised if the bulk of information provided by stakeholders is submitted to you at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour. We understand that there is a rescheduled Cabinet meeting to discuss special schools on 22 May. Should you wish to submit a report and a proposal for Cabinet's consideration, we understand this must be published 10 working days prior, which would take us to 8 May. Any court in the land would agree that one full working day from the end of the consultation period to the publication of a full report, is not adequate time to collate and analyse all of the responses and to investigate and analyse all proposals put forward by stakeholders. This is not due consideration.

If you haven't done so already, we implore you to seek independent legal advice on how to meet statutory guidance. In particular, you must go back and check that any proposal will meet your legal obligations, including your Public Sector Equality of Duty, and ensure you have a robust Equality Impact Statement. Furthermore, Guidance suggests that when proposals are linked, such as amalgamating schools, the Schools Adjudicator is the decision maker, not the local authority. Attempting to skirt this issue will only cause you problems down the line.

To date, the underlying data that you agreed would be provided to parents has not been forthcoming; specifically the data that will show the 20% of journeys with significant increases in travel times and how many students will fail the 45-minute maximum transport guidance. Where is the information that was promised on the possible use of the former Law Courts in Chippenham as a redeveloped special school site? What is your response to the points raised during the consultation period of 9 Jan-31 March, for instance the need for wider wheelchair-accessible pavements in Rowde, and the numerous other questions raised? Where are the full replies to our questions submitted prior to the Cabinet meeting in November? Refusing to answer our questions and concerns by ignoring us undermines any trust between parents, families, staff and governors and the council.

**STOP IGNORING US.**

First, you ignored headteachers, governors and staff when they formulated plans to help you improve and expand provision across Wiltshire; then you ignored the Wood Report and your own SEND Task Group's recommendations; next you ignored the 72% of people who responded to the pre-publication consultation in the summer of 2018 who voted for the development of three special schools in North Wiltshire. As campaigners, we have organised petitions and protests, lobbied councillors, had this issue debated in Parliament by MPs, gained media coverage across local papers, radio, BBC Points West and ITV West Country, and launched a legal challenge to which you conceded. What more must we do to get you to listen to us, the governors, parents and carers who are the key stakeholders for children with special needs? For a long time, we have thought 'surely if they could understand our children and what they need to achieve, they will be able to see that a one-school option at Rowdeford is illogical and actually institutionalisation and discrimination by any other name,' but we are now beginning to think that this isn't the case: is the truth simply that you do not care? That money comes before people? While we understand that budgets are tight, that burden should not be shouldered by already hard-pressed families. Why should our children simply take what they are given or have any less right to an appropriate education to reach their true potential than any other child? If there is not enough money to provide what is needed for SEND provision, then it is your duty to put pressure on central government to supply it or to consider your other budget headings. It is just a matter of priorities.

At the moment, we are a large group of families, carers and school governors, representing our wider SEND community, who have become advocates and campaigners, spurred on by our passionate understanding of our children's needs; and the council's one-school-fits-all model is not it. We feel this in every fibre of our being. So, despite the considerable strain and toll it is taking on families already pushed to breaking point given their disabled children's needs, we will continue to fight for what is right. But this comes at a price: at the moment we are passionate campaigners, but it won't be long before we are forced into becoming angry activists.

Please help us in shaping a proposal that can be agreed not just by Cabinet, but by families who are directly affected by these decisions and will have to endure the consequences of them for the rest of their lives. You have an extraordinary opportunity here to create a far-reaching SEND strategy for the whole of Wiltshire, from 0-25 years, and not just a sticking plaster for the short term. Let's create something that will meet the needs of ALL children, that will improve their outcomes into adulthood and enable them to reach their full potential.

Yours sincerely,

Melissa Loveday

On behalf of the Keep Special Schools Local Campaign

Wiltshire SEND Action

#### 6.4.14 02.05.2019 Wiltshire resident and expert in SEND

I am contributing to this extended consultation to voice my strong objections, as a Wiltshire resident, and expert in special needs (40 years as a speech and language therapist), to the proposal to build a large school at Rowdeford and close the existing schools in Trowbridge and Chippenham catering for young people with severe and profound learning difficulties.

I have read WC's proposals in detail, and have also watched the film of the interview between Stuart Hall and Laura Mayes. The extended consultation time has enabled me to do further research on the topic, which has confirmed my original scepticism, and raised new points for consideration.

1. Building a large special school is likely to prove a white elephant, and prove extremely costly in the long run.

An expert in SEND policy provision whom I consulted from the University of Exeter was aghast when I outlined the proposal (he had read the Wood report, which I sent him). In his experience, this proposal is ill considered. Borrowing millions of pounds to fund new provision is extremely short sighted, and demonstrates naivety. The most responsible and successful authorities with whom he has worked are collaborating honestly and directly with mainstream and special schools to state what the budget is and to strengthen the universal offer, rather than creating large centres which in turn contribute to creating more youngsters labelled SEND in order to fill the places and justify the expense. I object because WC are showing financial irresponsibility in going down this route.

2. Outreach into local schools

There is conflation in the interview between two issues: one - how to provide for young people within special schools, and how to support young people who are in mainstream. There is no need whatsoever for a large special school to be built in order to develop an effective and co-ordinated outreach support system.

Economies of scale (see below) can be effected without this. Part of the problem has been created by the closure of resource bases. The money available would be better spent in reviewing and reconstructing flexible provision across the special and mainstream sector. This is the path recommended by experts in special education (see the work of the Exeter Policy Research Seminars).

I object on the grounds that a new special school is not the only, nor the most appropriate way to develop outreach support, which is best achieved by small local teams who know the schools and can work in classrooms alongside teachers rather than driving huge distances to places they do not know.

3. Failure to take account of the specific needs of young people with severe and profound learning difficulties.

Neither Ms. Mayes and Mr. Hall made any reference to this cohort, which is the group most impacted by the closure of their local schools. With respect to transport, for example, both agreed that it was "important that the journey be a positive experience". In the documents outlining the provision, reference is made to one young person "enjoying the journey to school". Journey times for a youngster with MLD who can converse with the driver and his friends and relax is a totally different experience to that of a young person with profound and multiple disabilities who finds the journey stressful and exhausting and who will be impacted both emotionally and medically by long journeys. Analysis of the likely journey times for the young people show that a majority of the young people at St Nicholas and Larkrise will be travelling further than they already do (the claim was that about the same number will travel more and less, which is false). At Larkrise, over half the children currently live in Trowbridge. Many of these journey times are going to exceed the recommended travel times of The quoted example of ONE family who would rather their child spend an hour getting to the right provision than 5 minutes to the "wrong provision" is disingenuous and is highly unlikely to apply to parents with children who have S/PMLDs. Of course parents want the right provision. The argument of those whose children attend St Nicholas and Larkrise is that they have BOTH the right provision and shorter journey times than will apply to Rowdeford.

It is unimaginable that you are proposing to send 3 years olds such distances away from home Cllr Mayes describes local transport as "good". Buses currently go every hour from Trowbridge and the journey is an hour; from Chippenham hourly and 40 minutes. It is clear that in fact the access to the school is dangerous, and that major works will need to be undertaken. How are parents and indeed staff to reach the school?

4. Social inclusion

I was interested to hear from Councillor Mayes that " at 16 they should be back in their communities". This is a tacit acceptance that the school at Rowdeford will remove these youngsters from their communities. The majority of Larkrise children (70%) come from an area where Trowbridge is their main local town for recreation, shopping and other facilities. At present they are known and valued, and they use the town regularly. What is proposed is in effect an institution. It was horrifying to read the view that social inclusion would be effected through visitors coming to an onsite cafe and gardens. This is a 19th Century view of children with disabilities as spectacle and objects of charity, of which you should be truly ashamed.

It is unclear how children with severe and profound disabilities will be included in the local town. Again it will involve journeys. You should be reminded that a 3 mile journey for children with profound disabilities, on top of an hours journey into school and back, is disruptive and stressful.

5. Failure to take account of the impact on the local economies I have yet to see any financial projections regarding the impact on two struggling towns of the closure of two schools which are major employers and consumers. Please provide this information. As you yourselves estimate that the Rowdeford area will benefit, you are clearly aware of this issue.

I urge you to work closely with parents on developing a more responsive and flexible provision.

kind regards

Nicola Grove

#### 6.4.15 03.05.2019 Rowdeford School TA

My name is Marion O'Brien and I am a TA at Rowdeford School. I was also at the meeting in County Hall last night.

And was hoping you could forward this to the appropriate people as part of the consultation.

I have worked with SEN students for 25 years, in both Primary and Secondary settings. Here in England and in Forces Schools abroad.

And the one thing I personally believe is that each student requires a individual plan for their needs met by different environments.

Some as we are aware find safety in a small enclosed space with little interaction to achieve their best.

Others need so much more!

An environment that offers them, opportunities that they, might not, have been able to access before.

I believe that unless we are introduced to new experiences, we might not go looking for them!! And in doing so miss out on our key skill or our safe, happy place.

Rowdeford School offers so much more.

We could offer that safe cosy environment But we can also offer the chance to walk or wheel though a very peaceful green environment.

Where you can experience working with animals and gardening in a controlled safe space. That is a Really working environment.

On a personal level My father always said "if we didn't have our large garden, where would we have stomped off to?"

Rowdeford also offers this space to exercise any frustrations we all might have on occasions, once again in a safe, controlled environment.

It truly is a beautiful space to work in and a privilege to grow up in!

In conclusion

In my experience we all need something different to help us reach our goal in life and who knows what that is unless we, as individuals are given the chance to find out for ourselves?

Many Thanks  
Marion O'brien

#### 6.4.16 03.05.2019 Wiltshire resident

Children with disability and their parents are very unfortunate. These families need maximum support and genuine sympathy from the Council. I believe the proposal to close local Special Needs schools and concentrate all Wilts disabled or SN children into a single special institution in a comparatively isolated location to be unkind, impractical and wasteful. The consequent

much increased transportation by motor vehicle would be hard on the children, disproportionately costly and, of course, environmentally detrimental. I ask Wiltshire Council to be open to proposals from the parents and others with understanding of the overall requirements.

John Bowley, Warminster

#### 6.4.17 01.05.2019 Parent (Larkrise School)

This is my second letter to Wiltshire Council regarding their decision to close Larkrise school and I would like it to be included as part of the extended consultation please.

I find it very disturbing that Terence Herbert, Corporate Director Children and Education, Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children Education and Skills and the entire committee who voted unanimously in favour of closing Larkrise would consider it the best way forward for the vulnerable children they serve. For me it seems that the decision was taken to ease a challenging financial situation and not with the best interests of the children at its heart. I have no idea how many councillors voted but find it astounding that all of them would feel that vulnerable children should be hidden away in a large and unfamiliar location.

Laura Mayes replied to my first letter and one of the points she made was that therapy staff had to travel to different sites which was time consuming. Was any consideration given to the parent's time in preparing their child for earlier starts and longer journeys and later returns to their homes? Therapists are able to travel unaided between sites and although I appreciate the time this may take surely a timetable could be devised which would maximise their time in each school?

Another reason Laura Mayes gave was that knowledge of the school and child is lost when staff change or are on leave. I hope that this is not the case as full and proper recording of care and input to every child is an essential part of any professional role and if this is not being done then it should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Extended travel and transfer time for these vulnerable children cannot be in their best interests as it will be both confusing and exhausting adding stress and distress to both the children themselves and to their parents and siblings. It is hard for me to understand how a unanimous vote could condone this alone never mind the "hiding away" of children with such individual special needs.

Terence Herbert is quoted as wanting to work with families to find a solution and it is such a shame that this didn't happen before causing so much distress to the families concerned. It shows a complete disregard for the needs of pupils and their family's expertise in what would be best for the children rather than what is best for Wiltshire Council.

To even consider placing all of the county's children in one institution shows a complete disregard for the inclusion which the individual schools have embraced which such success. Such large institutions are outdated as they have proved to be unsuccessful.

I do hope that the extended consultation will include the knowledge and expertise of all the medical, mental health and teaching professionals involved in the care of these children and families as well as take advantage of the considerable research available as to why institutionalising groups of vulnerable children is ill advised.

A valid answer as to why the unused Aston Street venue cannot be adapted to help space issues at Larkrise site would be appreciated.

I look forward to a positive outcome for the children as a result of the consultation as well as a response to my comments above.

Yours sincerely

Erica Watson (Mrs)

#### 6.4.18 03.05.2019 [Melissa Loveday \(follow up from 2 May consultation\)](#)

Further to the consultation meeting that took place in Trowbridge last night, I wanted to expand on a few points raised during the meeting.

You explained your criteria and the framework you have been working to HISTORICALLY. We have explained our own set of criteria, and you (David) agreed that we could come up with a joint framework to prevent us going round in circles (ie further legal challenges against illegal proposals).

You have asked for alternative proposals and we presented one. However, until we agree a framework, we're not sure how this or any other proposal can be put to the test to ensure it ticks the most boxes of our combined criteria.

Also, our proposal to keep specialist provision in Chippenham, Trowbridge and Rowde is not specific on sites because we want the flexibility to work with you. As I said in my letter to you all, it is not up to us to know what land or other resources Wiltshire Council has at its disposal. After the meeting last night, I spoke with Michelle Donelan (MP) and asked her thoughts on the former Law Courts as a potential redeveloped school for Chippenham. She said that Wiltshire Council owns lots of land across Chippenham and that she isn't an architect; therefore, she can't say whether redeveloping the Law Courts would be more cost effective than building a brand new school elsewhere in Chippenham. We can, of course, give you suggestions, but we feel time is better spent by all if you can tell us which sites would be most cost effective. Otherwise, we will ask that you run ALL council-owned land (and the Law Courts) through a jointly created framework, for a school in Chippenham in order to meet the need for specialist provision in this area (ie 140 places with room to grow). You could also tell us if utilising the existing St Nicholas site for primary, while rebuilding or renovating elsewhere for a secondary site would be more cost effective than a one-site St Nicholas in Chippenham.

The exact same can be said for Larkrise in Trowbridge. Expand, co-locate, relocate or rebuild? You tell us what is the most cost effective and where, as we know this is a key issue for why other proposals, historically, have been turned down.

I also wanted to say that we do not wish to pursue further legal action. The only winners in that scenario are the lawyers and barristers, and the emotional and financial toll on families only fuels the fire of anger and resentment towards the council. We WANT you to come up with a proposal that is LEGAL! So please, ensure any future proposal meets your PSED and that you conduct a robust EIA. In particular, the one-school model for such a wide catchment such as North Wiltshire will not 'advance equality of opportunity for disabled people' with non-disabled people, nor will it 'reduce discrimination' as you aren't taking mainstream students and amalgamating them into a mega institution far from home.

David seemed to imply that the council got to the one-school decision in Rowdeford due to 'miscommunication'. If you could agree that this proposal is dead in the water because it is too controversial and disliked by too many, it would go some way towards rebuilding trust and goodwill between stakeholders and the council.

Finally, it occurred to me that there is some confusion between the Rowdeford contingent and our campaign group. They don't understand why community is so important to us, and I thought perhaps maybe you, as officers, don't either.

'Where does community stop and start?' one Rowdeford parent asked, and it's a great question! For me, it's simple: it's where my family and I spend our leisure time. We don't even live in Chippenham and probably live closer to Rowde. But we never go to Rowde. But we do go to Chippenham, several times a week in fact, for dance lessons (my typical daughter), out to eat, grocery shopping, park runs, the splash pad at John Coles and picnics/playdates in the various parks, meeting up with our friends, going to the cinema, shopping, etc. It is a natural hub and the place we feel comfortable spending time as a family, and it is important that Noah visits these same places during the school day so he is also comfortable and familiar with them. It is important for families with other children who attend mainstream Chippenham schools to feel part of the same community. It is important for mainstream students to be able to do work experience at our school and vice versa, not to mention the shared activities such as St Nicholas' Sports Day at Hardenhuish, where disabled and non-disabled children and young people can integrate and have the opportunity to get to know each and understand each other.

Community is more than something that happens at the weekends. **Ensuring the best outcomes for our children is completely entwined with community and social inclusion.** Enabling them to reach their full potential is dependant upon them having the opportunities to explore, engage with and be valued in their own community **as part of their curriculum.** We may not have a fully inclusive education system, but this as close as we can get. So yes, while parents across all three schools just want the best provision possible for their children, for many, **community inclusion is a huge part of quality provision,** as equally weighted (if not more) as high-tech equipment, specially designed facilities, and even magical, tranquil woodlands. Families should have the choice to decide what is important to them based on what each school has to offer and their own child's needs, in the same way we do when we choose a school for our typical children. I truly hope this helps you to understand why inclusion needs to be heavily considered in any future proposal.

Yours sincerely,

Melissa Loveday

[6.4.19 03.05.2019 St Nicholas Special Schools Governors](#)

#### FUTURE OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS

As governors of St Nicholas Special School in Chippenham we are writing to confirm our strong commitment to the criteria we outlined during our meeting with council officers on February 12th. [This meeting was recorded although we have not received a transcript].

In that meeting we reminded you yet again of the importance to our children of:

- Inclusion and social integration
- Learning within the local community in order to provide a quality outcome
- Size
- Choice
- Transport
- Medical services
- Parental support and engagement

We refer you to our letter to councilors, copied below that further outlines our views and concerns.\*



We believe that all these criteria can only be met by keeping two schools, with primary and secondary sets, in Chippenham and Trowbridge, the two towns in the North with the greatest economic development and growing populations.

The following 2 options provide for the expansion of St Nicholas School in Chippenham to support the forecasted growth in SEND education requirements

### **Option 1 – Split Site for 140 Pupils**

- The existing school to be remodeled and used as a lower school to support up to 60 pupils.
- A new site to be sought to house an upper school for 60 pupils and a Post 16 facility for 20 pupils. The site could be a new school build or could be an existing building that could be converted. The cost of a new build or existing building conversion could be offset from the sale of the existing Post 16 College.
- Existing land/buildings owned by the council to be made available

### **Option 2 – New School for 140 Pupils with Planned Expansion to 180**

- A new St Nicholas School to be built on a new site with the cost offset from the sale of the existing school and the Post 16 College.
- The new site to be chosen to build a school designed to house an initial 140 pupils with planned expansion to 180 as follows:
  - Lower School – 60 pupils with planned expansion for a further 15
  - Upper School – 60 pupils with planned expansion for a further 15
  - Post 16 Facility – 20 pupils with planned expansion for a further 10.

Both of these options would ensure a school that is:

- Financially viable
- Is able to accommodate potential increase in numbers
- Has the flexibility to make sure every child is in the place best fitted to meet their needs and best outcomes
- At the heart of the community

Increased financial security would enable the school to carry on and expand the work it already does in:

- Supporting high needs in mainstream schools and resource bases
- Co-operating with the mainstream schools and providing links between the two
- Working with SEN and other nurseries to ensure early intervention where needed
- Creating a continuum of education within the local area where pupils can be moved as their needs changed
- Linking with Health and Social Care to provide integrated support for the child and their family

In addition both options would allow for change to be introduced gradually and new strategies to be pursued.

We know that our views are supported by parents, professionals, the local council and local people. This is evidenced by their comments to you. They are also evidenced by research on successful SEND provision, which highlights social inclusion and small size as vital elements in the delivery of service that provides best outcomes for our most vulnerable children. Other



local authorities, such as Suffolk, with similar budget restrictions are managing the issue with inclusion, not exclusion.

We are very supportive of the presentation made by the parents of both schools and have worked with Larkrise to give joint comments on your Special Schools Provision Option Appraisal Tool. We support the Larkrise proposal for the expansion of their school in line with our criteria.

The special schools already work closely together and we believe there is already a shared Vision of Excellence that with the suggested expansion of service would ensure that every child gets the best possible education that prepares them for a happy life in their local community.

Aileen Bates  
On behalf of the St Nicholas Special School Governors

#### \* LETTER RE PROPOSED CLOSURES OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Dear Councillor,

We are writing to you as concerned governors and parents regarding the local authority proposal to close Larkrise and St Nicholas Special Schools and move the pupils to a new 'super school' in Rowde. We ask you to reflect upon and reconsider the cabinet decision made on November 27<sup>th</sup> as we firmly believe that it is not in the best interests of Wiltshire children.

We are aware that the increase in numbers of children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities [SEND] means that the present schools have run out of space. We do understand and agree that both schools need new sites but we think that re-locating to Rowde is the wrong solution for both schools and more importantly for the communities of Chippenham and Trowbridge.

The proposal you have seen does list as unique to the 'one school' option all those advantages for pupils which apply EQUALLY to the two school option. In addition the two school option actually resolves the outstanding objections especially those concerning social inclusion and transport.

Our children have complex and severe learning and physical disabilities. Some are on oxygen and some have life limiting conditions. Many have autism. 'An outstanding education' for these pupils is about learning life skills embraced within their ever growing and thriving communities alongside their peers in mainstream schools. Most children like ours do not leave home at 18, go to university, travel the world. But one day, they are going to grow up and leave school. And if school is miles away in a small village they never visit out of school time - somewhere they've only ever been to on a bus or in a taxi - then where will they belong? You will be aware that Wiltshire Council has long argued against sending children out of county, in part because of the difficulty of re-integration when they return. Putting all children with SEND in one school, disconnected from any community with which they are familiar will simply create the same reintegration problem all over again.

Today, many of our school leavers still live in the Chippenham or Trowbridge area. Some of them have worked voluntarily at a local garden centre. Some are in independent supported living. Some of them go to the cinema together. Sometimes they meet up, with their support assistants in local cafes. Many of them have been friends since they were at nursery together. They will probably be friends for life. These are successful young adults, living in the area they

have grown up in, learning to manage their lives one step at a time in a place where they are recognised, greeted in the street, fussed over in the shops. This is invaluable support - and it costs nothing. We need the communities of Chippenham and Trowbridge to help us to raise our children. A wonderful example of what can be achieved when young people are put at the heart of their community.

Being in Chippenham or Trowbridge places our children near their peers in mainstream schools. These mainstream children will be the doctors, teacher and policy makers of the future. They need to know about SEND children who experience all disabilities. You will agree, I am sure, that we do not want to go back to the days of discrimination, isolation and exclusion.

We understand the need to spend money in the most effective way possible but we do not think the current proposal is the best way to achieve this. We have not seen any proper costed proposals, and wonder if you have either, and question whether the projected capital outlay and 'economies of scale' would be enough to cover all promises made in the proposal. We question how resources such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy are suddenly going to be available in Rowde when there is a current significant shortage in the county. We feel particularly that the estimated costs for transport will be much higher than predicted. Wherever you place a new school, children will need to be transported to it but as the majority of our children live in the Chippenham or Trowbridge area there can be no advantage in transporting them further away. Additionally this would create lengthy travel times for vulnerable children, potentially causing further distress and, of course, parents would have greater difficulty in getting to the school.

Wiltshire Council has a fantastic opportunity to develop a properly integrated system of education and social care, from birth to supported independent living, with two Centres of Excellence supporting SEND children right at the HEART of their own community. Over the last five years, the Council has shown that it can be cutting edge in developing its "Local Offer": a 0 - 25 SEND service which brings education and social care together to put the needs of its children and young people first, from planning to funding to placement. The next logical step, surely, is to develop this provision in the same community - not to focus upon only the cheapest option, which is miles away from where it is most needed. The two school option, with a cost of just £4 million more than the one school option, would retain special needs education in the fastest growing areas in the north. Wiltshire Council's own Task Group concluded that, "it would not be appropriate to combine all three schools into one site," and their own School Places strategy document states that children are best educated, "at the heart of their community."

We do wish you to understand that we are not negative about the council. However we believe and assert that the two school option is not only in the best interest of our children but is also the best use of Wiltshire funds. As a Wiltshire councillor we urge you look again at the issue and listen to the wishes of the 73% of respondents who clearly voted against the one school option and wanted Wiltshire SEND children to be socially included in the two growing communities that provide services and social activities for everyone. Please reconsider the two school option, to save special needs education in Chippenham and Trowbridge and ensure that our most vulnerable young people are enabled to live and learn seamlessly within their family communities.

Aileen Bates  
Governor

Corinna Davidson  
Parent

6.4.20 04.05.2019 Wiltshire resident

I am writing to protest about the proposed closure of the three Special needs schools at Chippenham, Trowbridge and Rowdeford in favour of one much larger school at Rowde.

A large school of over 300 pupils will be confusing and overwhelming for children with special needs. Special needs children are best educated as near as possible to where they live. This means that the local environment is familiar to them and they will grow up where people know them and they know local people. Special needs children should have the same rights as others to be educated locally. Longer travel times is not always easy for these children, or for the parents who are further away when needed in case of illness or distress. More journeys mean more traffic, more congestion and more pollution. Surely this goes against the policies of Wiltshire Council. This whole scheme is ill advised.

Joyce Field, Westbury

#### 6.4.21 04.05.2019 Parent (St Nicholas School) response 6/6

Personally I don't wish to proposal or proceed on this but a 400-600 pupil Wiltshire wide school at or around Market Lavington looks feasible based on geography and the original criteria and reports.

I believe it fails on every level be this moral, legal, community, health or environmental and would create a hostage to fortune for the council, but I do feel the need to raise it to clarify whether the previously used 4 criteria were ever robust enough to protect decisions makers from being expected to support a larger and therefore probably better value for money option at a central location like Market Lavington even though it is even further away from all 3 key population densities and acute care. Therefore increasingly likely to lead to negative medical outcomes.

#### 6.4.22 06.05.2019 Rowdeford School TA

I have worked as a Teaching Assistant at Rowdeford School for 11 years, and it is the best place I have ever worked, with the most positive, happy atmosphere I have come across in my experience working and volunteering at other schools in New Zealand and, since 2000, in Wiltshire. I do believe Rowdeford has a 'magic' formula that would be hard to replicate if the school was closed down, and worse, amalgamated with another school/s on an alternative site.

When considering the Council's plans to make major changes to Special School arrangements in North Wiltshire, I can't help thinking of the proverb 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it'. I think it would be a tragedy if Rowdeford School was closed and its beautiful grounds no longer able to be enjoyed by special needs pupils, their families, staff and the community, across the county. The sense of space, peacefulness and calm that the Rowdeford environment provides could not be replicated in a different facility elsewhere in the county. The setting, with the woods, the historic grounds and ancient trees, is so integral to our school, and the setting is a major factor behind why Rowdeford has done so well as a LOfC provider.

Many times I have seen pupils' emotional or behavioural problems improved or resolved when they are given space and judicious support outdoors, by Rowdeford's caring and experienced Teachers and TAs. The spacious outdoor setting is especially valuable to those pupils - some from urban areas - who would otherwise not get the opportunity to spend time outdoors and to appreciate and learn about nature.

With its location near Devizes, roughly halfway between Trowbridge and Chippenham, Rowdeford offers the best of both worlds - a quiet, spacious outdoor setting, but not too far from the major towns. If Rowdeford school was made larger to accommodate the expected

increase in SEN pupils in the coming years, the grounds around the school could be extended, allowing for well thought out entrance and drop off arrangements for pupils arriving by taxi. I believe any increased traffic from greater pupil numbers would be accommodated more easily from a semi-rural site such as Rowdeford, than from a new site in a more built up area.

If Rowdeford School was amalgamated with schools on another greenfield/brownfield site, the school's magic formula would be lost forever. It would take decades to establish an outdoor setting approaching anything like what we have developed over the years. It is a privilege for pupils to be able to attend a setting like Rowdeford School. As concerns about damage to the environment get worse every day, it would be a tragedy if that inspirational environment was lost forever.

#### 6.4.23 06.05.2019 Rowdeford School Headteacher

You will be aware that I have provided significant feedback to the consultation over the past year through written reports and face to face feedback. I thought it might be helpful to share a few newer ideas and thoughts. My aim is not to replace everything I have said before so please do also refer to feedback I have given in the past.

Firstly I still believe that a significant increase in the size of Rowdeford School, in line with the proposal tabled at the November cabinet meeting, should be at the centre of any solution going forward. I believe significant growth of Rowdeford School would provide the opportunity for an outstanding provision that will deliver a fantastic legacy for the future of SEND in Wiltshire. The strategic position of the school, as evidenced by recent feedback, will provide an average reduction in the journey time for students. The available site would put award winning, outdoor learning at the heart of the curriculum; it is a well proven fact that this leads to improved mental health and well-being alongside opportunities for students with SEND to self-regulate their emotions and behaviours; the site is truly inspirational and provides a healthier way of life as well as an enriching educational experience. A large school would also provide the true economies of scale that are needed to allow creativity, space for additional services and a real opportunity to provide extraordinary outcomes in terms of education, health and care. Quality of provision and exceptional practice within this context would also allow for outstanding in-reach and out-reach opportunities to support mainstream as well as other specialist provision; it would also allow for innovative and strategic leadership of resource bases in the future.

I am delighted that it is now widely agreed that the new provision must also include post-16 facilities to cater for students with more profound, severe or complex needs, that are currently not being catered for by other providers. This is a very positive step forward in my opinion.

I am increasingly of the opinion that a school for 350 students will not be enough. For September 2019 there are already 350 students needing places across the three schools and this number is projected to grow over the next seven years. It is possible that the additional space required could be achieved without significant additional outlay on top of those costs already agreed by cabinet.

I would propose that the Local Authority continue with their plan for significant growth of Rowdeford School but also maintain the Larkrise and St Nicholas sites, reducing numbers on these two sites, to ensure that they meet DFE guidelines. This would result in.....

300-350 students based at Rowdeford School

50-75 students based on each of the other sites (Larkrise and St Nicholas)

The two smaller sites could be used for a variety of different options; to ensure that some parental choice exists the Rowdeford campus would meet the needs of the full range of students across the three current schools. Some ideas for use of the two smaller sites could be:

Primary age students – This would make it easier to meet the 45 minute journey time guidelines as well as parents having the choice of a more local school for their primary age children.

14+ curriculum – This would ensure that students from KS4 upwards had an element of choice (based on skill set) and were able to move nearer to their home communities as they transition to adulthood.

Complexity of need – This would allow the sites to specialise in terms of those students with more profound or complex needs. Alternatively one of the smaller sites could offer a 'sliding door' between mainstream and specialist schools providing transition that meets the needs of students both ways.

To avoid the escalating costs of duplicating administrative and leadership teams across the three sites it may be better to join all three schools together under the same umbrella. This would allow dynamic, strategic leadership across all three campuses and lead to economies of scale that would provide a truly exceptional wrap around educational experience for students with complex needs.

It would lead to holistic education, health and care provision that meets needs, provides a quality provision with outstanding outcomes and delivers value for money in the short term and long term.

I would be happy to expand on any of these ideas if necessary.

#### 6.4.24 06.05.2019 Grandparent (Larkrise School)

As a grand parent of a student at Larkrise school I am very concerned with the 1 school proposal. My grand daughter is thriving in her small school and enjoys walking to and from school every day. An important activity she will lose should this proposal continue. This will also add to the transportation costs. I cannot see how any child will be able to leave the Rowde site without even more transportation in place due to the unsafe and unsuitable pavements, roads and total lack of amenities to visit, this is such an important lesson for these children. They need educating to live and exist!

The confinement and isolation this big school (apparently the biggest Wiltshire would have) would cause is against everything the Community Care Act of 1990 was brought in to stop. It didn't work then and will not work now.

With global Autism diagnosis growing at an alarming rate, 1/59 on the last survey, i feel the need for special schools could out grow mainstream needs. Why is it that housing contractors are not being made to contribute, as they do for mainstream schools when they are building block housing? This needs to change.

I fully understand the cuts you are being made to uphold but with growing housing builds, lack of police force and other provisions, where is all the money going? We need it back to keep our towns running.

With no back up plan or money left what happens when this 1 site school fails!?

LOCATION - to maintain a 3 site plan, gaining sponsorship from local companies to aid annual running costs (as I am led to believe this is what the Council are unable to afford) Each school becoming it's own charity.

TRANSPORT - Keeping children in their own communities cuts transport costing, i feel the money saved on running costs will be out weighed by the added transportation needs.

COSTS - Large and state of the art is not needed, greener echo friendly ideas may be costly at first but pay off in the long run. Each school can make more money if green area is available to use for fetes etc, hydro pools can be rented out to disabled users (much needed) as halls for evening classes etc.

Trowbridge and surrounding areas have pulled together to support our special needs school beyond belief, the communities would also participate with finishing work if local, painting, cleaning, green areas after all that is what community is all about, working together. Looking out for each other, people, schools and business.

Thanking you

#### 6.4.25 06.05.2019 Parent (Larkrise)

I'd like to discuss my concerns regarding the possible school closures.

I am a parent of a child who currently attends Larkrise Special Needs in Trowbridge. From the beginning I have favoured and voiced my opinion for the 3 school option. Each school has wonderful features which suit the children that attend. Rowdeford especially, has wonderful outdoor space which should not be compromised by extensions to the schools to fit the requirements of a super school.

A super school does not suit everybody!!!

Children should have the choice to stay within their local community. Mainstream students are not expected to travel to primary schools, nor do they only have one option. They are expected to state 3 choices, why should our children not have the same principles.

I feel keeping the 3 schools is the best option for the children in question, this can be achievable by requesting more support from the community that the school is situated, and leaning more on the pta groups. This also means the schools don't loose the post 16 that's currently offered within the schools, and reduces the fears of transitioning between schools at different ages.

By keeping the schools within the towns and communities they are already in means they can offer goods to the public. Local bake sales, intergrating with other facilities such as nursing homes.

Larkrise also regularly visit and attend the shops, the local park, soft play centres, the cinema and more. They have weekly swimming lessons at the local pool, a weekly walk to the school to purchase fruits and snacks, and use the local farm for horse riding lessons. These are all valuable life lessons and experiences, these should not be forfeited.

Thanking you,  
Kayleigh Ramplin

#### 6.4.26 Friends of Larkrise School – results from Parent/Carer survey Dec 2018

1. Where do you live? Trowbridge 56%  
Warminster 14%  
Westbury14%



Melksham 4%  
BOA 4%  
Devizes 2%  
Other 6%

2. How does your child travel to and from school?  
Walk 16% Drive 18% WCC Transport 66%
3. Do you have access to a car? Yes 78% No 22%
4. Would you be able to drive to Rowde to transport your child to and from school?  
Yes 6% No 88% Not sure 6%  
  
If no, please state why not: The top 3 answers were:  
Other children at different schools, Work, No car/Don't drive
5. Would you be able to drive to Rowde to attend meetings or if your child was ill and needed to be collected?  
Yes 44% No 36% Not sure 20%
6. Do you have any other children currently attending another school in Wiltshire?  
Yes 68% No 32%
7. Does, or would, your child require a 1-2-1 Passenger Assistant if they currently use, or had to use Wiltshire Transport for medical reasons eg. epilepsy?  
Yes 22% No 54% Not sure 24%
8. Would you be able to get your child to a central drop off/collection point in the mornings and after school?  
Yes 14% No 68% Not sure 18%
9. Do you have concerns regarding a central drop off/collection point?  
Yes 86% No 10% Not sure 4%  
  
If yes, please state your concerns: The top answers were: safety, weather, noise, distance from home, waiting, meltdowns, other commitments.
10. Would your child cope with a larger scale 'Super School'?  
Yes 8% No 72% Not sure 20%
11. Do you agree with the Council's proposal?  
Yes 4% No 88% Not sure 8%
12. Do you recall being able to have your say?  
Yes 36% No 64%
13. If asked, would your child be able to give his/her opinion?  
Yes 14% No 76% Not sure 10%
14. If a new school was to be built would you prefer:  
Town setting 86% Rural setting 6% No preference 8%
15. If Larkrise was to close and a super school open in Rowde, would you send your child?  
Yes 16% No 60% Not sure 24%

If no, what would you prefer to do, i.e. home school, find a local resource base etc:

Top answers were: Home school, Resource Base, Other School, Mainstream

16. How strongly do you feel on a scale of 1 to 10 that parents should have a 'choice' where their child goes to school?  
10 – 94%    9 – 2%    8 – 2%    7 – 2%

#### 6.4.27 Friends of Larkrise School – results from Staff survey Dec 2018

1. What is your role at Larkrise?  
Teaching staff 33%    Support staff 50%    Admin team 4%    Other 13%
2. How long have you worked at Larkrise? Range from 1 to 25 years. Average 8.5 years.
3. Where do you live?  
Trowbridge 50%  
Warminster 8%  
Westbury 8%  
Melksham 8%  
BOA 4%  
Devizes 4%  
Other 18%
4. How do you travel to and from work? Drive 58%    Walk 30%    Cycle 12%
5. Do you have access to a car? Yes 83%    No 17%
6. Would you be able to drive to Rowde to work? Yes 70%    No 30%
7. Would it be possible for you to work in Rowde? Yes 66%    No 34%
8. Do you agree with the Council's proposal? Yes 8%    No 92%
9. Do you recall being able to have your say? Yes 42%    No 58%
10. Do you feel that the children you currently work with, if asked, would be able to give their opinion? Yes 20%    No 80%



## **SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (22 May 2019)**

### **APPENDIX 6: (ADDENDUM)**

#### **LETTERS AND EMAILS RECEIVED**

6.4.28      06.05.2019 Melissa Loveday

Hi Helen,

Thank you very much for your reply, especially on your day off. We, too, appreciate the professionalism you and your team have shown to our campaigners. For us, it's always been about criticising policy, not people, and we recognise you are only doing your job, in the same way we are only doing ours as parents and advocates of the disabled community.

I thought I would note a few things for clarification purposes. First, our group, which has run the Keep Special Schools Local campaign, is now called Wiltshire SEND Action. It is not just a combination of the Friends of Larkrise and the Friends of St Nicholas schools. Our membership is drawn from friends' groups, school staff, governors and parent/carers of SEND children all over Wiltshire. We represent the wider views of people who work with SEND pupils. For instance, I have spoken with a speech therapist and my GP, both of whom oppose the one-school at Rowdeford model; I have spoken with early years practitioners who oppose the one-school at Rowdeford model; our members include or can reference friends with children with SEND who have either been failed by the education system and are now home schooled, or whom have to be supported in school by a parent who was forced to give up work to become a voluntary TA in order for their child to access education. Many people in Wiltshire reject the one-school-fits-all concept at Rowdeford and we have received active support from the local press, our local MPs, local businesses and local councillors for our campaign. Wiltshire SEND Action is a group led by individuals who have years of experience, from early years to further education, as well as the passion and determination to ensure ALL children with SEND in Wiltshire receive an appropriate education. So it is not fair to say we are 'a few families', or the friends groups combined; we are a much bigger group than this, representing and reflecting the views of a much wider cross-section of Wiltshire. It is unfortunate that the WPCC has not been able to articulate the views of all of these key stakeholders, and this failure to take the widest possible view is why we felt compelled to take action.

The extended pre-publication consultation has not made it clear that Wiltshire Council is continuing to consult on the closure of the 3 schools and to replace them with a large school in Rowde; quite the opposite, parent/carers tell us that they thought their school was now safe due to the legal challenge that took place.

I also wanted to express that although we value community as part of quality provision and ensuring the best outcomes for students, we are clear that community means different things in different contexts. What works brilliantly for a group of ambulant, MLD pupils who can adapt relatively quickly between home and school, may be an insurmountable difficulty for a highly anxious SLD pupil for whom change needs to be kept to a minimum and familiarity with their environment is paramount, or one whose medical needs make a long journey from home perilous. We believe that it is key that this CHOICE remains, so that current and future families can decide what works best for their individual child's needs in order for them to flourish.

We would expect nothing less than to have our proposal, including Jan's presentation (and notes? Do you have these?), included as part of the consultation. As a fair amount of the extended consultation took place during school holidays when most of us become carers 24/7 with other children at home, we were only able to meet last week to nail down all of our ideas and articulate our vision for the future of special education. Our proposal takes on board these key features, which we can all agree, namely to keep provision in Chippenham, Trowbridge and Rowde by expanding all three schools, offering flexible suggestions on how to make this viable. We appreciate that Rowde has space for expansion, but also hope you will appreciate the increasing need for specialist provision in Chippenham and Trowbridge as they are rapidly expanding towns (note new Government projections say 45,600 new homes are now needed in Wiltshire by 2036, with most new homes needed for Chippenham; if you take away specialist provision from such a growing town, that is a lot of children having to be transported, which is costly, both financially and environmentally, and is only set to increase).

However, what we hope to discuss with you in greater detail on Thursday, is how to make our proposal viable and I hope we can have a frank discussion about what would work/wouldn't work.

We recognise that where the three-school model fell down before was its long-term running costs, not necessarily the initial capital investment needed to expand/rebuild the facilities. So, to mitigate this, we set out below some ideas we think could make the three-site model work, which we wanted to ensure are included as part of the official consultation:

- **Amend Section 106 to change the legal agreement between applicants seeking planning permission and Wiltshire Council to include a 'Special Schools Levy'**; this will ensure county-wide housing development mitigates against their impact on infrastructure by contributing a certain percentage towards the ongoing running costs of specialist provision in strategic areas, which should be ringfenced, and reflect the increase in need. We understand that currently CIL applied to planning permissions only contributes towards mainstream schools, not towards specialist provision; many towns have adopted their own Neighbourhood Plans, which incorporate an increase of CIL. Wiltshire Council must amend Section 106 to ensure ALL future planning permission incurs a Special Schools Levy, which is a clever and logical means for providing much-needed funding for special schools.
- The three special schools form a Multi-Academy Trust, managed by an executive head teacher; this would reduce costs to the LA, but it would also provide economies of scale: we would be able to have a centralised ICT team, one bursar, one catering provider, centralised transport (essentially, all non-frontline staff could be centralised); it would enable us to have more buying power and the ability to negotiate better deals
- Expanding Rowdeford to make it the administrative hub for a 'Centre of Excellence' run across the three strategic sites. Most importantly, this would allow for strategic vision across the three schools, with inreach/outreach training and pupil admissions all managed from a central hub, thus making much better use of resources and data to ensure appropriate places and better outcomes for all children.
- Expanding Rowdeford to potentially house some external healthcare services, such as OT, PT, wheelchair services and SALT, if specialist equipment/space could be included.
- As a last resort, retaining the existing buildings at St Nicholas and Larkrise, but scaling down the numbers towards DfE guidance, either as primary provision or for students with both physical and cognitive disabilities to allow them to be nearer to acute medical centres and improved health outcomes, with the potential of joining in activities held at the other two sites, so those with the most profound needs are not segregated from their peers

- Ensuring all children with an EHCP are on the correct banding and therefore funded appropriately for their needs; this may require more money from the HNB and should feed into the consultation with ISOS
- Ensuring funding for children with an EHCP is ringfenced for that child, and not used to plug funding gaps in mainstream schools; for instance, if the money is invested in specialist equipment that can then be used by SEND children in following years, the money continues to reap rewards for children with SEND.
- Creating eco-friendly buildings, for both new designs and adapted current buildings, using solar panels, ground-source heat pumps etc, which would not only save on annual running costs, but demonstrate Wiltshire Council's commitment to a Climate Emergency and mitigating against environmental impact. Possibly using electric mini-buses (which could be fundraised for) for shorter transport journeys.

We know not all of these ideas will be popular with everyone, but we feel these must be explored if it means keeping special schools local.

We look forward to meeting with you on Thursday to discuss them in more depth.

Many thanks,

Melissa Loveday

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## **SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (22 May 2019)**

### **APPENDIX 7:**

#### **ANALYSIS OF ONLINE COMMENTS IN PHASE 2**

66 responses were received (9 friends of family with child with SEND, 13 'Other' – including Clare Moody MEP and Trowbridge Town Council, 32 parent carers and 12 Professionals)

There were repeating themes within the comments, in order of quantity of repetition of themes, these were:

- Concern over longer distances for pupils to travel to Rowdeford (should the one school proposal still be on the table) – 25 responses included this
- A desire that children should be educated as close to their home/community as possible – 21 responses included this, and 12 responses asked that all existing provision be enlarged – That Rowdeford school should be expanded – 14 responses included this (although one person was worried that expanding the school would destroy its 'ethos')
- 12 comments gave direct objection to a 'mega school' and five voiced that more support should be given for children with SEND within mainstream provision
- Three responses voiced concern over a lack of focus on the south of the county and one organisation asked for all partners supporting the SEND community to be more joined up
- Three responses identified that parents would have a lack of choice if the one school proposal was continued
- There were two responses who voiced anger that a small group of parents were trying to delay the process and 'jeopardising the future of thousands of children in Wiltshire' – 'hold your nerve and proceed with this sensible project'

Alternative options put forward:

- Could St Nicholas serve a smaller range of need?
- Could there be two slightly smaller schools in the Chippenham and Trowbridge areas, but under one leadership, sharing staff?
- A site in Melksham or perhaps just outside of Trowbridge that is easier to get to than in the centre of town? I would also like to see creative use made of the schools that close, e.g. turn them into specialist centres for young people with special needs to help them get ready for independent living or learn and practise work skills in a special environment supported by local businesses.
- All 3 schools extended and come under one leadership. Larkrise to have a split site divided between primary and secondary years – same for St Nicholas. Schools share resources and therapists.
- Develop a school for autism only in West Wiltshire
- Use Ashton Street site to expand Larkrise

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## **SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (22 May 2019)**

### **APPENDIX 8:**

#### **FACE TO FACE MEETING NOTES FROM PHASE 2**

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## 8.1 Chippenham – 5 April 2019 (focusing on places in the north)

<b>Objective</b>	<b>To inform and progress the pre-publication consultation process regarding the proposal to increase Special School provision in North Wiltshire.</b> <b>To ensure that children, their parents, and young people are involved in discussions and decisions about their individual support and about local provision.</b>		
Date	05 April 2019	Location	Hardenhuish School
Time	10.30	Meeting Type	Face to face
Called by	Helen Jones	Facilitator	David Paice
Attendees	<b>Helen Jones</b> <a href="mailto:Helen.Jones@wiltshire.gov.uk">Helen.Jones@wiltshire.gov.uk</a> (Director Commissioning) <b>Judith Westcott</b> <a href="mailto:Judith.Westcott@wiltshire.gov.uk">Judith.Westcott@wiltshire.gov.uk</a> (Acting Head Commissioning & Joint Planning) <b>David Paice</b> <a href="mailto:David.Paice@wiltshire.gov.uk">David.Paice@wiltshire.gov.uk</a> (Interim Head of Special Schools Transformation) <b>Emily Wood</b> , <a href="mailto:emily.wood@wiltshire.gov.uk">emily.wood@wiltshire.gov.uk</a> (Communications & Developments Officer) - notes		
Apologies			

Agenda items	Discussion	Action	Responsible	Due Date
1	Introductions			
2	Update on where we are	Need for 220 places by 2026 – 50 for complex needs in the North. New building is proposed for 2023 to enable smooth transitions.		
		Free school in the south		
		The proposal to close the three schools was then debated		
3	Options appraisal explained	Ashton Street and Larkrise sites were debated and an explanation was given that both would provide very little to meet sufficiency needs.		
		The reason for Rowdeford School site being considered was explained with reference to the options appraisal tool.		
		Travel statistics were shared. It was questioned why children who currently travel to Rowdeford would have their journey times reduced if the one school at Rowdeford was pursued. Explanation given on rationalising routes can bring down average journey times. Continuation of care, PA turns to TAs and the opportunities to allow		



		staff to also piggyback journeys to assist with their commute to work.			
		Chippenham Abbeyfield site debated – more losers than winners in transport terms.			
		Lack of Post 16 provision is a concern. Poplar College is too small. Huge praise for the farm college at Dilton Marsh was shared. Coordination base could work. Helen stated that the new proposal will include Post 16 provision too. David encouraged all to submit their ideas to develop this aspect.	Submit ideas	All	6 May
4	Practical familiarisation of options appraisal tool – small groups	A parent put forward the option of the Law Courts in Chippenham as a potential new site to consider.	Review of site	David Paice to progress with full Council team using the options appraisal tool	6 May 2019
5	Next steps	Options appraisal grid and presentation used to be shared on the website	Share on website	Emily Wood	5 April
6	AOB				

## 8.2 Wilton – 1 May 2019 (for parent carers in the south)

### **SEND Provision Information session for parent carers in the South**

When: 1 May 2019

Where: Diocesan Education Centre, Wilton

Council officers present:

Judith Westcott (Acting Head Commissioning & Joint Planning)

David Paice (Interim Head of Special Schools Transformation)

Leanne Field (Lead Commissioner SEND)

Emily Wood (Communications & Developments Officer)

Intro from JW and setting the scene and reference to the [SEN strategy](#).

Looking to build quality, expertise and excellence throughout the whole of the system. How do we build this expertise and be less reliant on newly qualified teachers only receiving one weeks' worth of SEND training?

Notes and slides will be shared -

#### **What those present hope to get out of today's meeting:**

- Information on support available as daughter struggling with mainstream
- Child currently at Springfield South – planning for the future when he turns 13, strategy and what info he can get for next 3-5years

- Challenge of no provision in the south of county for SEMH, ASD
- Manufacture wheelchairs – business opportunity
- Where we are right now and what’s being taken forward for my child and those I support who haven’t been able to attend
- Info on what’s up and coming
- No secondary schools to support daughter
- Parent of 7year old son at start of journey is after more info
- ASD unit at school Greentrees, come to hear what the future will look like
- Looking for a school place for Sept as special schools are full in Wiltshire and Hampshire
- Son at Greentrees in sept – wants to hear about secondary provision
- Professional coming back into work with 13/15 year old, no support for three years. Interested in future
- Parish councillor – parents are upset as needs not being met
- John Walsh – back bench Wiltshire councillor – interest, and wants to help in any way he can, wants to gather info
- Parent with 8 year old in mainstream – coping, just – wanting to understand whats going to be there for secondary – LD, PD
- Wants info on secondary mainstream
- Doesn’t want parents to go through the same thing that she has gone through. List of 102 parents who are unhappy with the provision available in Salisbury
- Complex, no bucket to fall into – no “bucket” for him to fall into for secondary school
- Wants to hear and communicate a frustration of splitting north and south
- Lack of provision
- Lack of secondary school provision in the south of the county
- Has been through a nail-biting process, insufficient places and 7 months of no schooling as a result
- Information gathering to understand

**A bit of background:**

The council calculates that 220 additional special school places will be needed by 2026. Driven by housing developments and the army rebasing.

The intro of the Children and Families Act 2014 has seen a rise in the number in EHCPs being issued.

Currently 66k children and young people in the county, which is likely to rise in the future. In September 2019 there will be a 12% rise in the number of Special School places.

We know we need more provision.

Difficulties in system – challenges with KS2 and KS4 attainment data

At the end of children’s early years, they are expected to reach a “Good Level of Development” or GLD. Children with SEND in Wiltshire do reasonably well at achieving this, just above the national average. For children at the end of KS2, Wiltshire is in the top quartile for children with SEN support or an EHCP. However, we are sitting in bottom quartile for KS4 results – the same for both SEN support and CYP with EHCP’s. It’s not just a case of more provision needed, but ‘better’.

## **Finance**

Central government fund the council approximately £45million a year to support CYP with SEND – we spend approx. £49million. The government funding is based on a set of indices. We are the 7<sup>th</sup> worse funded in the country now.

To be clear money is not the driver.

Central government rarely issue funding for capital projects. Challenge to cabinet to provide more funding for SEND. This is what led to recent consultations.

However, we've recently (Feb 19) been successful in bidding for £12m to build a new 'free school' for ASD, SEMH for the south of the county – more detail below. We have a possible site, but this is still under negotiation – it will take some time to build, minimum of 2/3 years. It will provide places for 150 CYP. Reception – 18 years of age.

Challenge as to why this money is being spent on a school and not bases – JW advised the LA have no control over how the money is spent. The rule is we have to build a school with it.

Comment from Greentrees SENCO - units are not funded correctly, and this ends up coming out of the school budget – being asked to take more CYP on bandings that don't match. David reply: funding being looked at as part of the strategy.

JW – funding is a national issue and we are doing as much as we can

Schools have different funding structures for Enhanced Learning Provision (ELP) for secondary and Resource Bases (RB) for primary.

The council receives funding

- 1.) Early years
- 2.) Mainstream school – approx. £4k pot of money per student
- 3.) High Needs Budget

RB - £4k plus the £6k placement funding plus banding top-ups.

JW explained about the panel and the annual review gives the opportunity for the banding to be discussed and reviewed.

We recognise and appreciate that the wheels of government are slow – parents anger that cabinet members should be here – they should be listening to our concerns and anger.

Another parent contributed that she felt the process for parents to be supported with SEND is flaky. Lack of support offered by the school whilst the parent's wait for a diagnosis.

David ran through some of his slides – which will be shared with the group

Rowdeford are changing designation to include SLD

## **ELP and RBs**

Question was asked about whether CYP require an EHCP to access an ELP – the answer was yes.

ELPs have been running since 2011. ELP outcomes are not good and we recognise more work has to be done with this secondary school provision – JW highlighted the Hardenhuish model as an example of good practice. They have a larger number of ELP places, and this therefore runs more like an RB.

If we're going to do this right, we need to consolidate

Developing units in secondary schools, with specialist teachers feels like a positive and possible option, parents want us to recognise that this needs the right trained staff to make this work.

Talk about Springfield satellite, and how being placed on its site next to mainstream school allows them to dip in and out of the mainstream system.

What incentives are we offering to RBs and ELPs? potential money, all those that work in this area want the best for CYP with SEND.

Parental comment - feels like the council are desperate to save money, particularly for those parents who don't understand the system.

### **Free school**

Sarum Academy, Exeter House and Springfield will be putting in a joint bid to run the free school. We are hopeful that the school will be open from 2022, however this is subject to how quickly the DfE move.

We need to work out whether Springfield south will become part of the new free school. We will want further conversation with parent/carers regarding the design of the free school. It was explained that it will consist of small spaces within big to meet the needs of the CYP,

Question is the Springfield satellite able to become a base/unit for Sarum in the future.

Councillor - officers work for the council. And they are trying their best. He suggested that they reach out to their local councillors.

## 8.3 Trowbridge – 2 May 2019 (focusing on places in the north)

<b>Objective</b>	<b>To inform and progress the pre-publication consultation process regarding the proposal to increase Special School provision in North Wiltshire.</b> <b>To ensure that children, their parents, and young people are involved in discussions and decisions about their individual support and about local provision.</b>		
Date	02 May 2019	Location	County Hall
Time	6:30pm	Meeting Type	Face to face
Called by	Helen Jones	Facilitator	David Paice
Attendees	<b>Helen Jones</b> <a href="mailto:Helen.jones@wiltshire.gov.uk">Helen.jones@wiltshire.gov.uk</a> (Director - Commissioning) <b>Judith Westcott</b> <a href="mailto:Judith.Westcott@wiltshire.gov.uk">Judith.Westcott@wiltshire.gov.uk</a> (Acting Head Commissioning & Joint Planning) <b>David Paice</b> <a href="mailto:David.Paice@wiltshire.gov.uk">David.Paice@wiltshire.gov.uk</a> (Interim Head of Special Schools Transformation)		

	<p><b>Emily Wood</b>, <a href="mailto:emily.wood@wiltshire.gov.uk">emily.wood@wiltshire.gov.uk</a> (Communications &amp; Developments Officer) - notes</p> <p>Plus 48 others representing Rowdeford School, St Nicholas School, Larkrise School, Stepping Stones District Specialist Centre and the Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (Michelle Donelan MP and Andrew Murrison MP also in attendance)</p>
Apologies	

Agenda items	Discussion	Action	Responsible	Due Date
1	Introductions	(Key notes and action points to be recorded only.)		
2	Update on where we are	Need for 220 places by 2026 – 50 for complex needs in the North. Explanation of why the council had arrived at the Rowdeford one school solution and why other sites were not suitable to accommodate 350 children by using the options appraisal tool.		
3	Other options offered to date	<p>Law courts in Chippenham – cost and space restrictions. How many could this site accommodate?</p> <p>Multi-site option is being looked at. Single school with three sites could be split by age/designation. However, many schools = more running costs.</p>	Investigate capacity of Law Courts in Chippenham	David Paice 6 May
		Lack of Post 16 provision is a concern. It was stated that the new proposal will include Post 16 provision too, Cabinet have been alerted to this.	Cabinet report to include Post 16 provision	Helen Jones 14 May
4.	Travel statistics	<p>Transport stats shared include those that journey up from the south (concern that this will skew figures as when new school opens in south this number will reduce).</p> <p>Have transport figures been externally verified? No. David Paice welcomes external verification.</p>		

		Stats provide a picture only and the ability to compare like with like.			
5.	Additional options put forward for consideration	<p>Jan Winfield presented on behalf of Wiltshire SEND Action (WSA) a proposal to retain/grow sites in Trowbridge and Chippenham and maintain Rowdeford (extending its designation to include ASD and SLD), thus “deliver a fully integrated SEND service across multiple sites, strategically managed and offering local specialist training to nearby mainstream schools and resource bases”.</p> <p>Phil Cook (Larkrise Head) also asked that the 60-page proposal put forward in October 2017 be looked at, this may need to be tweaked.</p>	Review options with appraisal grid	David Paice to progress with full Council team using the options appraisal tool	6 May 2019
6.	Other comments made	<p>Concern that Jan’s presentation was only designed to be emotive (esp the last graphic). Children will be in their local community outside of school. Jan responded that there’s a concern that all children seen as ‘difficult’ shouldn’t be placed together – image was meant to ‘shock’.</p> <p>Parents request that provision isn’t concentrated in any one place – ‘Parents want choice’.</p> <p>Desire that all agree on the criteria used for the Options Appraisal.</p>	Work with Special Schools’ heads, WPCC and council specialists on agreeing Option Appraisal criteria.	David Paice	14 May
7.	Next steps	All options to be assessed via appraisal tool.		David Paice	14 May

## 8.4 Devizes – 3 May 2019 (focusing on places in the north)

<b>Objective</b>	<b>To inform and progress the pre-publication consultation process regarding the proposal to increase Special School provision in North Wiltshire.</b> <b>To ensure that children, their parents, and young people are involved in discussions and decisions about their individual support and about local provision.</b>		
Date	03 May 2019	Location	Devizes Sports Club
Time	11:00am	Meeting Type	Face to face
Called by	Judith Westcott	Facilitator	David Paice
Attendees	<b>Judith Westcott</b> <a href="mailto:Judith.Westcott@wiltshire.gov.uk">Judith.Westcott@wiltshire.gov.uk</a> (Acting Head Commissioning & Joint Planning) <b>David Paice</b> <a href="mailto:David.Paice@wiltshire.gov.uk">David.Paice@wiltshire.gov.uk</a> (Interim Head of Special Schools Transformation) <b>Emily Wood</b> , <a href="mailto:emily.wood@wiltshire.gov.uk">emily.wood@wiltshire.gov.uk</a> (Communications & Developments Officer) - notes <b>Cllr James Sheppard</b> <b>Cllr Jane Davies</b> Plus 23 others representing Rowdeford School, Wiltshire Parent Carer Council, Devizes Labour Party and Larkrise School		
Apologies			

Agenda items	Discussion	Action	Responsible	Due Date
1	Introductions			
2	Update on where we are	Need for 220 places by 2026 – 50 for complex needs in the North. Explanation of why the council had arrived at the Rowdeford one school solution and why other sites were not suitable to accommodate 350 children by using the options appraisal tool.		
3	Other options offered to date	During this extended period of pre-publication consultation, other options have been put forward, including: Chippenham Law Courts Patchwork approach of more than one site (various scenarios) Council encourages other options to be put on the table.	All	6 May
3	Options appraisal explained	Following observations and comments were raised on list of criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do the 'outcomes' include meeting children's 'entitlements'?</li> <li>'Outcomes' should be at the centre of everything.</li> <li>Equality is missing</li> </ul>		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post 16 needs to be added to 'outcomes'.</li> <li>• Staffing should come under 'Outcomes' not 'Quality' – staff morale has been hit since notice of closure was given, staff seen as demotivated.</li> <li>• In/out reach should be within 'local communities'.</li> </ul>			
		Lack of Post 16 provision is a concern. It was stated that the new proposal will include Post 16 provision too.			
4	Practical familiarisation of options appraisal tool – small groups	Attendees broke out into five groups to prioritise the criteria within the appraisal tool. Four groups engaged with this exercise. Each group came up with a different order. Lists were photographed for later reference.	Prioritisation exercise of appraisal criteria. Consolidate all results into final weighting list.	David Paice	
	Additional options to be considered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue with St Nicholas and Larkrise schools for primary provision, use Ashton St adjacent to Larkrise and the redundant Law Courts in Chippenham for Secondary. Keep Rowdeford as is.</li> <li>• What about the vacant land next to the train station in Trowbridge (previously used by Bowyers), could this be utilised?</li> <li>• Suggestion given that three 'school houses' be developed on the Rowdeford site, each accommodating 130 secondary aged pupils. (Lodge at the edge of the site is privately owned, for access this would need to be acquired).</li> </ul>	Review options with appraisal grid	David Paice to progress with full Council team using the options appraisal tool	6 May 2019 (?)
	Other comments made	One attendee contributed their thoughts saying that he understood why the one school in Rowdeford had been decided upon, £20m will only go so far and even if Larkrise and St Nicholas schools were to remain open, their numbers			



		<p>should reduce in line with DfE guidelines and therefore it was inevitable that children would have to move.</p> <p>Important that the Core Strategic Plan is considered. Developers have an obligation to contribute to community facilities through Section 106 funding. Huge commercial development on the edge of the M4, is there an opportunity there to boost the budget via this route?</p>		
5	Next steps	All options to be assessed via appraisal tool. Planners to be contacted to assess if additional funding could be sourced via Section 106.		David Paice 14 May (?)

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# SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (22 May 2019)

## APPENDIX 9:

### TRAVEL ANALYSIS

#### Contents

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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.

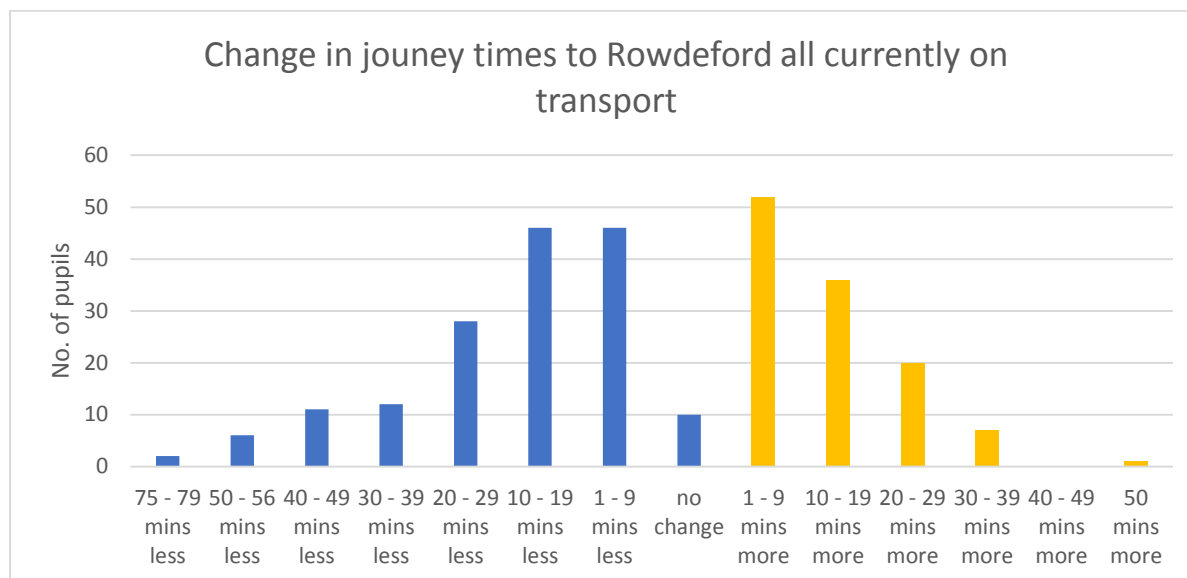
Proposed transport has been devised using the following assumptions:

- 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.

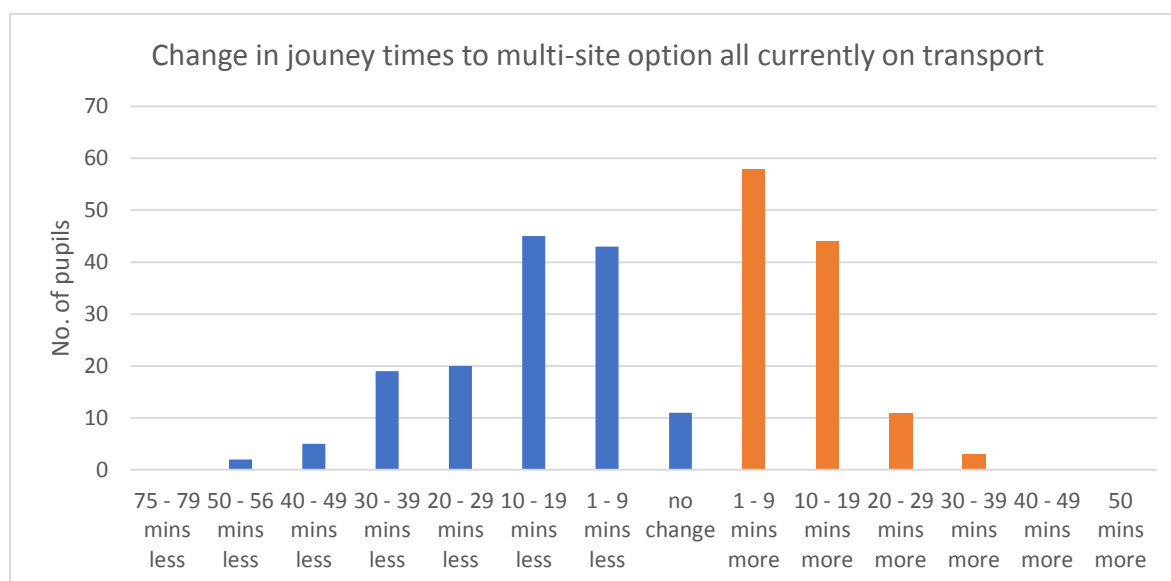
The table below provides a summary of the overall transport times when comparing current transport and proposed travel to the starting option that the team were asked to assess which is all pupils going to Rowdeford school (**table 1.11 at the end of this report** provides the detail):

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

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.

	<b>Current total commute time (minutes)</b>	<b>Current average commute time (minutes)</b>	<b>Proposed total commute time (minutes)</b>	<b>Proposed average commute time (minutes)</b>
<b>St Nicholas</b>	1503	15	2328	22
<b>Larkrise</b>	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
		<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,788,900</b>

*\*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
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>£2,099,000</b>	<b>£455,000</b>	<b>£2,554,000</b>

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:

<b>Current multi-site option</b>	<b>Annual transport cost</b>	<b>Annual PA cost</b>	<b>Total cost</b>
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
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>£2,016,000</b>	<b>£441,000</b>	<b>£2,457,000</b>

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.

	<b>Royal United, Bath (minutes)</b>	<b>District Hospital, Salisbury (minutes)</b>	<b>Great Western, Swindon (minutes)</b>
<b>St Nicholas</b>	28	57	25
<b>Larkrise</b>	31	51	45
<b>Rowdeford and new school</b>	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.

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## **SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (22 May 2019)**

### **APPENDIX 10:**

#### **MEDICAL RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION**

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## 10.1 Virgin Care response

**From:** Alison Burge (Wiltshire) [<mailto:Alison.Burge@virgincare.co.uk>]  
**Sent:** 07 March 2019 08:35  
**To:** Westcott, Judith <[Judith.Westcott@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:Judith.Westcott@wiltshire.gov.uk)>  
**Cc:** Val Scrase (Wiltshire) <[Val.Scrase@virgincare.co.uk](mailto:Val.Scrase@virgincare.co.uk)>  
**Subject:** VSCL Response to SS Proposal.

Dear Judith.

I have read the proposals with interest and have the following comments to make:

The proposals would provide an exciting opportunity for co service delivery of VSCL clinicians from across Specialist Services into the SS and further integrate our care pathways for children and YP with additional needs. We would very much envisage a one stop shop approach. The current model spread across a number of schools and resource bases makes this challenging and whilst we have had some success this has been limited to 1/2 schools and is inconsistent and inequitable.

For example our Children's Community nursing team allocate children and young people with life limiting needs according to geographical location. this means the child/young person may access any one of the Schools in the area meaning the team spend a significant amount of time travelling to the setting and liaising with a large number of educational providers. The new model would enable VSCL to allocate a CCN to each school. Training staff to undertake clinical skills is a large part of this role and currently is a significant commitment for both schools and the nursing team. Having a nurse allocated to the school would ensure training was tailored to the needs of the child's care plan and update training could be provided in a timely way should needs change. currently there is sometimes a delay for the child/young person returning to schools whilst the care plan is updated and staff re assessed and trained as competent.

There would also be consistency in terms of therapy and medical support for the schools which would provide an improved child centred approach.

I would envisage all VSCL clinicians being very visible within the schools and a significant number of clinics ensuring children/young people do not need to leave school to see a paediatrician or therapist.

VSCL like many NHS providers are experiencing significant challenges recruiting to some therapy posts. Paediatric clinicians enjoy working as part of a multi professional team and it is hoped that this model will attract high skilled practitioners to Wiltshire.

We would be able to centralise equipment and resources at the schools and children and YP would be treated in purpose built child friendly therapy rooms and clinic spaces.

Specialist Service clinicians would also like to offer increased groups/drop in clinics for parents to access for support to manage challenging behaviour, continence, sleep. The current model means we have not been able to provide equity for this in every school.

Having read the proposals, the team have no concerns regarding clinical support required to transport children and young people to school. VSCL already work closely with passenger transport to manage risk and provide training. In the last 5 years VSCL are not aware of any child having an adverse clinical event requiring hospitalisation whilst travelling to and from school.

I have also attached very rough estimations from nursing and therapy but obviously there is also a significant amount of time taken liaising with schools, updating care plans etc.

Hope this is useful

Best wishes

**Alison Burge**

**Head of Specialist Services**

**BANES and Wiltshire Children's Community Services**

**Virgin Care Services Limited**

[SPA 0300 247 0090](tel:03002470090)

## 10.2 Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) response

11 March 2019

Sent via email

[Judith.Westcott@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:Judith.Westcott@wiltshire.gov.uk)

Dear Judith,

Thank you for inviting Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group to provide some input into the Special Schools Consultation currently being undertaken by Wiltshire Council. We would be very keen to review the feedback provided by Wiltshire citizens and the implications that this may have on how we commission health services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities.

With regards to the CCG position on the provision of special school places in Wiltshire we already have some examples of clinics and therapies provided within the school setting, thereby reducing children's time out of education but also enabling them to be seen within a familiar environment and so maximising the potential from the child's interactions with the health professional. Clearly, the potential to offer more a more integrated health provision within our special schools is greater if fewer physical settings are operational, thereby reducing the number of sites that the services need to work across. From a purely health perspective this would need to be balanced against any increased travel requirements that may be put upon children and young people with particularly complex health needs, where one has to consider the management of clinical risk during transportation for example due to limited access to equipment and resource implications as a result of needing 2:1 supervision on longer journeys.

We are pleased to have the opportunity to share some of the practical considerations which we feel need to be considered in the development of future plans on behalf of some of our children with complex health needs and welcome the opportunity to engage in joint commissioning as appropriate.

Sincerely,



**Linda Prosser**  
**Interim Deputy Chief Executive (Wiltshire)**  
**BANES, Swindon and Wiltshire**



## 10.4 Oxford Heath CAMHS feedback

Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) work with young people with mental health problems. These young people may also have special educational needs including ASD and learning disabilities. LD CAMHS sits within CAMHS and works specifically with those children with mental health problems and moderate to severe LD. It is the service within CAMHS most involved with those young people who attend a special school.

As you aware children attending special schools often experience additional neurodevelopmental disabilities (ADHD), specific learning difficulties, complex communication difficulties and an array of physical disabilities and physical health problems. At the same time their support needs are greater, placing additional stresses on families, whilst for some they also live within families who come with their own complex histories. Research tells us that children with learning disabilities are 6 times likely to experience mental health difficulties when compared to peers. They are an especially vulnerable group.

The success of our work in CAMHS and LD CAMHS in supporting young people with mental health difficulties – from proactive early help through to managing crisis and risk – is dependent on working alongside families and with our colleagues in both education and social care. It is often the case that we need to work through and with those who know a young person well (both to aid assessment and intervention) and need to come to where a young person spends most of their time for our involvement to make sense to the child or adolescent and for our work to be effective. When assessing difficulties or planning interventions we need to take into consideration all additional needs. This requires close liaison with other professionals including teachers. This allows our work to be carefully tailored so that intervention is more likely to be successful and doesn't elevate risk.

Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people is everyone's business and more recently schools have been identified as having a far greater role. Support for mental health and wellbeing should be no different for children with special educational needs and particularly those in special schools. The re-design/ re-conceptualisation of special schools in Wiltshire presents an opportunity to build on good work already in place and further embed good mental health policy and practice.

We would encourage consideration to be given to the following and would welcome the opportunity to contribute further to thinking in these areas:

- A CAMHS In reach model has been developed in Wiltshire College and 11 mainstream schools and 1 EBD School across Wiltshire. A CAMHS practitioner (with specific knowledge / skills / training in MH needs of YP with LD) within this new school would be hugely helpful.
- In relation to managing challenging behaviour in YP with LD and / or ASD, best practice policy and guidelines there are numerous good practice guidelines (eg NICE, the challenging behaviour foundation, BILD etc) which emphasises the use of Positive Behaviour Support across all settings. The NICE guidelines on service delivery for those with learning disabilities and behaviours which challenge (2018) and The Challenging Behaviour Foundation's recent report 'Reducing Restrictive Intervention of Children and Young People' (2019) are all relevant to the support of children with LD, ASD and / or mental health needs in schools. We would ask that this be thought about when designing new buildings (e.g. how calming spaces can be built in, how safety can be considered in the last restrictive ways and time out / restraint rooms minimised), training of (new) staff and the ethos of approach to managing children with complex needs.

- Policy and practice which leads to greater collaboration across professional groups and agencies needs to be developed in recognition that children with a learning disability and/ or autism as well as mental health problems which can often be expressed through challenging behaviours are rarely helped by one professional alone. With this shift in provision, the development of policy within this which places greater emphasis on joined up working and develops the frameworks to achieve this would be useful.
- Greater number of placements and combining of staff teams provides an opportunity to revisit staff training in order to improve and enable best practice in relation to mental health in front line staff. From identifying and supporting mental health needs in this group of children early, through to managing risk alongside CAMHS and social care colleagues. That is having a working knowledge and ability to use Positive Behavioural Support, attachment and trauma informed practice.
- Careful thinking about building design which supports mental wellbeing and recognises the additional challenges which come with for example sensory processing difficulties (noise, light, temperature, space). A building design which supports safety and the ability to keep children and young people safe but doesn't facilitate restrictive interventions. As well as the incorporation of appropriate space for multiagency meetings, specialist clinics and individual therapies. It is important for workers to be able to come to children with special needs rather than asking them to travel. This in turn facilitates collaborative working.
- Supporting successful transition from current schools to the new school is going to need a lot of thought. The transition will inevitably increase anxiety in a group of children who are often already anxious.

12/3/19

**Sam Shrubsole**

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**Management Secretary – Swindon, Wiltshire and Bath North East Somerset**

(Working days – Monday, Tuesday and Friday)

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## 10.3 Medical advice regarding Transport

### **Meeting the needs of students with additional health needs - a report from the SEND Transport coordinator**

When the student requires transport, I work collaboratively with the parents, health, school, Social Care, the SEND Leader Worker and PTU to enable the most suitable transport provision is put in place. This collaborative working continues for the whole of the time that the student is accessing transport.

When the school placement has been agreed and it becomes apparent that transport will be required; we begin to gather information to gain an understanding of the students' needs on the vehicle. At this stage if a student has medical needs we are provided with a detailed Medical Health Plan by either the community nursing team or one of the specialist epilepsy nurses, to enable the students' medical needs are met whilst they are travelling on the vehicle. If the health complexities of the student are high, I facilitate a meeting to include all vested parties, to gain a full understanding of the student's needs. This would inform the type of vehicle required, the support needed whilst on the vehicle, what staff training is needed and transition requirements on and off the vehicle. At this time, it may be necessary for the Specialist Safety Officer to visit the student to agree the most suitable seating or wheelchair restraints to enable the safe travel on the vehicle. This may also involve guidance from a member of the Occupational Health Team.

Prior to the commencement of transport, it also may be necessary to facilitate a meet and greet for the Passenger Assistant who will be travelling on the vehicle with the student, family and school staff. This enables the opportunity for the student and family to build trusting relationships to support the safe journey between home and school.

For the students with very high needs Risk Assessments are compiled and shared with all vested parties. These Risk Assessments are subject to regular review through continual monitoring.

### **Medical Plan for Children/Young Person on School Transport**

Currently Virgin care provide medical plans for children who require 1 or more of the following:

- Buccal Midazolam for seizures
- Oxygen Therapy
- Oral Suction

We provide face to face and online training for all Personal Assistants who are signed off for each specific child/young person as per their individual care plan. These are re done annually or more frequently if their medical needs change during this time.

If following a Risk Assessment the medical needs of the child /young person are deemed by Health and Education to require further support than is currently provided by Passenger Assistants individual plans will be supported by Virgin care.

An example case would be George (not his real name). George has extremely complex needs as he has a genetic condition affecting his respiratory muscles meaning he is fully dependant on a ventilator to help him with his breathing. George needs to travel carrying specialist equipment to support his needs and specially trained staff to support him, he is probably our most complex child on transport. Following many multiagency meetings and time with George and his parents, it was agreed that he would require individual transport and two specialist trained staff provided by health to meet his needs on transport. It was agreed that two fully trained staff would reduce risk substantially if one member of staff became incapacitated. Having individual transport enabled the flexibility if his needs should suddenly change on

route, whilst maintaining his dignity if the staff travelling with him should be required to give medical intervention whilst on his journey. We did several versions of the risk assessments, thinking through what would happen in different situations e.g. if we had to turn back, if mum and dad weren't there when we got home and particularly if the ventilator failed. Full consideration has been given to the route travelled to minimise the journey time and the parking arrangements in school to enable his needs can be met fully before travelling. However, George would ideally like the opportunity to travel with one of his peers, so not only is this journey being monitored to ensure that it is meeting his needs but also with the consideration that at some stage in the future a suitable companion may be found to meet his wider needs too.

Heidi Hunter – SEND Transport Coordinator

## **SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (22 May 2019)**

### **APPENDIX 11:**

#### **POST 16**

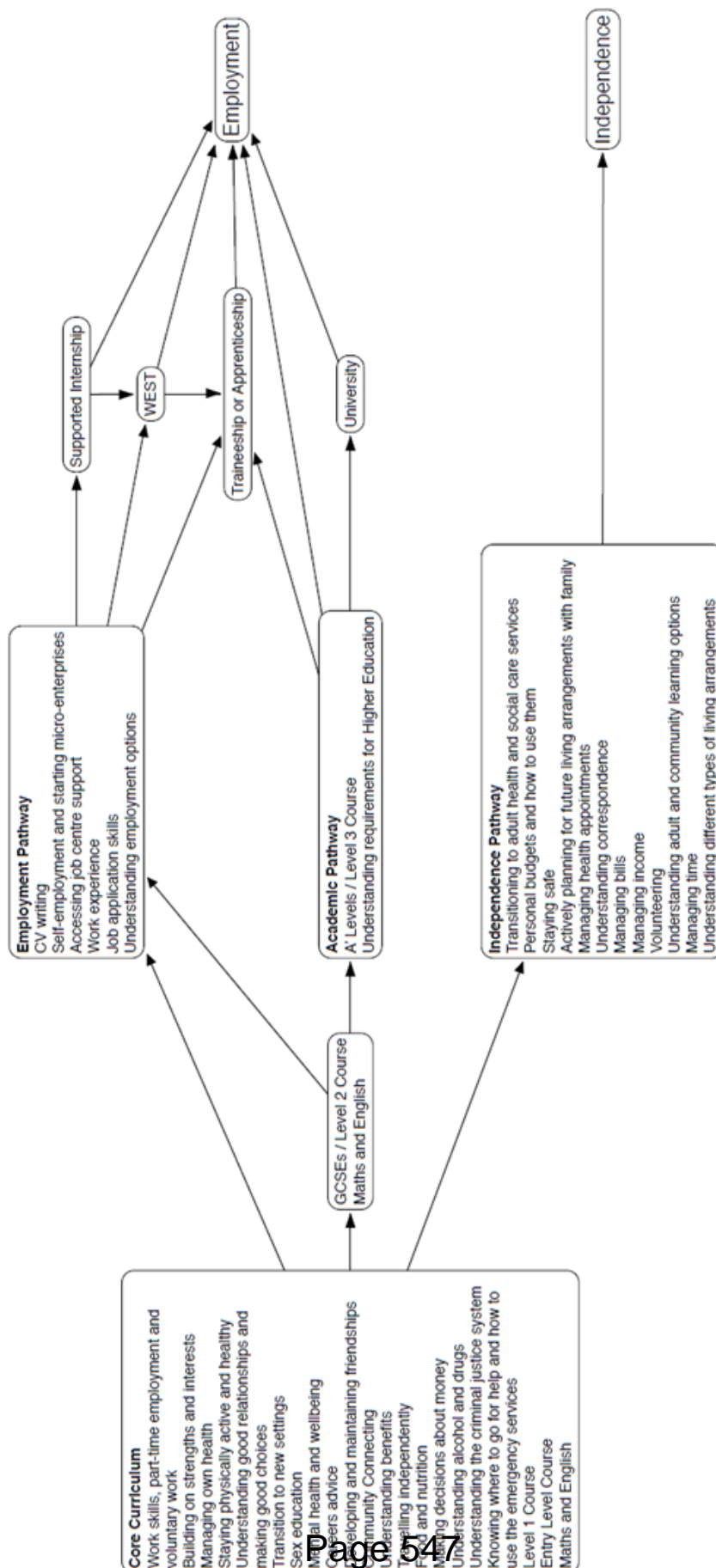
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## 11.1 Post 16 Options

Independence	Employment	University
Transitioning to adult health and social care services	Apprenticeships	A' Levels / Level 3 Course
Personal budgets and how to use them	Traineeships	Understanding requirements for Higher Education
Staying safe	Wiltshire Employment Support Team (WEST)	
Actively planning for future living arrangements with family	Supported Internships - working interviews	
Managing health appointments	CV writing	
Understanding correspondence	Self-employment and starting micro-enterprises	
Managing bills	Accessing job centre support	
Managing income	Work experience	
Volunteering	Job application skills	
Understanding adult and community learning options	Understanding employment options	
Managing time		
Understanding different types of living arrangements	GCSEs / Level 2 Course	
<p>Work skills, part-time employment and voluntary work            Building on strengths and interests            Managing own health            Staying physically active and healthy            Understanding good relationships and making good choices            Transition to new settings            Sex education            Mental health and wellbeing            Careers advice            Developing and maintaining friendships            Community Connecting            Understanding benefits            Travelling independently            Food and nutrition            Making decisions about money            Understanding alcohol and drugs            Understanding the criminal justice system            Knowing where to go for help and how to use the emergency services            Level 1 Courses            Entry Level Courses</p>		

## 11.2 Preparation for Adulthood – Post 16 Curriculum Pathways



## 11.3 Post 16 Special Schools Options

Post 16 provision should have a clear focus on transition and preparing young people for adulthood and transition to adult life. A factor that would support this would be to create a transition team, creating a specialist group within the existing team of SEND lead workers. This team would have a particular focus on supporting young people to move beyond education in terms of employment, independent living, becoming a part of the community and managing their own health. The specialist team would engage with social care and health colleagues and would support young people, parents and carers to do the same. This staffing resource could also be trained to work more effectively with parents and carers to build their confidence to raise aspirations and encourage thinking about what the future might look like for their young people. The team would ensure that outcomes are personalised and focused on the young person's aspirations, supporting as independent a life as possible, and that they are transferable to the real world.

### **Option 1 - Post 16 special school on same site as pre-16 special school**

The post 16 provision would be based on the same site as the new pre-16 special school and would provide education for learners with severe and complex learning difficulties. The focus would be on preparing for adulthood (employment, independent living, becoming a part of the local community and managing own health). **See bold type below for the curriculum**

The school could potentially provide a sixth form option for young people with moderate learning difficulties who would prefer to continue to progress with national curriculum options rather than moving to a local college to do a foundation programme. There could be the potential for short-term (interim) transition work with learners if they have chosen to move to another provider for their post 16 education.

Local residential provision could also be provided on-site.

#### Pros

- Parents and carers have stated that they would like a sixth form option for young people
- With local residential provision on-site, there would be no need to place in expensive, out-of-county provision where the council has little influence over cost or quality
- Social care and health teams could be based in the one place with easy access to support all learners
- Visiting teams and agencies would have easier access to all learners and less need to travel

#### Cons

- Travel for many learners would be an issue commuting between the school, employment and independent living venues
- Many learners would not be within their own local communities, which would cause difficulties in terms of developing independence skills in relevant settings
- Making links with employers across the county would be a challenge
- Developing community and service links within a learner's own community would be challenging
- It would not use the current wide range of providers and opportunities in the community and it is unlikely the school could replicate all the diversity currently available.



## **Option 2 - Post 16 special school based in transition hubs across the county**

The post 16 provision would be based across three areas of the county (Trowbridge, Chippenham and Salisbury). Each area would have a transition hub as a base for learners. The staff team would work with a range of providers to create personalised provision and support for young people across a range of providers. This would make use of the framework of alternative providers, in addition to the local colleges and local independent specialist providers.

The focus would be on Preparing for Adulthood (employment, independent living, health and community).

Packages of curriculum and support would be brokered by the special school. Learners would be supported to access, or transition to local colleges of further education where appropriate. There would be a focus on employer engagement, work experience, work placements and working interviews.

**See bold type below for curriculum.**

This provision could also ensure proactive links to social care and health teams. These teams could be based, and work out of the local post 16 transition hubs.

### Pros

- There would be less travel for young people, and would offer learners the opportunity to be trained to travel in relevant settings within their own communities and to start building their adult life locally
- There would potentially be cost savings for the council travel budget as young people would not be travelling long distances across the county and would be more likely to be trained to travel independently at an earlier stage
- Independence and life skills would be developed in a learner's own area and community - also offering the opportunity to develop social networks and friendships locally
- Work experience and placements would take place in the learner's own local area, giving more opportunity to build relationships with potential future employers
- Parents and carers of learners currently attending out of county placements have highlighted the difficulties for their young people in developing social contact locally - this might encourage more parents and carers to look positively at local provision options

### Cons

- There would need to be clarity around the expectations from social care and health colleagues in terms of their contribution to the provision and outcomes
- Relationships with providers and packages of provision and support would need to be well managed - this would involve strategic management of contracts and costs as well as developing a good understanding of need and gaps in provision - there is likely to be a need for one person with county-wide strategic responsibility and three operational staff - one at each hub
- There would need to be a clear communication strategy, involving all stakeholders
- Learners, parents and carers would need to have confidence in the provision, so there would need to be considerable work in terms of information and marketing to ensure a good understanding of what provision for different individuals might look like

### **Option 3 - A combination of options 1 and 2**

The post 16 special school would be based on multiple sites to offer a range of creative options for provision. Options 1 and 2 above would both be possible and would also include Exeter House provision

In addition learners could access core curriculum, such as English and Maths on the main special school site and the hubs for all other provision to allow for preparation for adulthood within relevant local communities.

#### Pros

- Core curriculum teaching on one site would mean lower costs and travel for teaching staff for these areas
- Parents and carers have stated that they would like a sixth form option for young people - there might be more confidence in provision if it was clear that all provision linked together and was overseen by the one body
- Preparation for adulthood learning could take place in relevant communities

#### Cons

- There would be capital costs over four sites
- There would be staffing costs over four sites

### **Option 4 - An existing post 16 provider takes on post 16 special school provision**

The post 16 special school is tendered out and a new or existing provider would provide the post 16 special school as part of their provision. Learners choosing to access this provision would be able to choose between what the provider currently offers (if they currently offer something) and the new special school provision that they would provide. The council would create the specification for the special school provision. This could be an outcomes-based commissioning exercise. The client group would be learners with severe and complex learning difficulties and there would be an option for residential provision. The expectation would be that learners could access provision within their own communities. The key outcomes for this provision would be the Preparation for Adulthood outcomes of employment, independent living, being an active member of the community and managing own health. **Curriculum requirements would be as shown in bold type below.**

#### Pros

- Providers could identify creative options for delivering post 16 special school provision that have not yet been considered

#### Cons

- There would potentially be less choice and control of provision for learners, parents and carers
- The council currently contracts with local providers so that costs are low and equitable - this works because there is developing market of providers and therefore providers have to compete to attract learners - there is potential with this option for one provider to saturate and control the market and then subsequently to raise their costs
- It could potentially be more challenging for the council to influence quality of provision

### **Option 5 - There is minimum post 16 provision on site with a coordinated offer led by the LA or the special school, but based on the school site.**

Post 16 provision would have a clear focus on transition and preparing young people for adulthood and transition to adult life. A factor that would support this would be to create a transition team, within the existing team of SEND lead workers. This team would have a particular focus on supporting young people to move beyond education in terms of employment, independent living, becoming a part of the community and managing their own health. The specialist team would engage with social care and health colleagues and would support young people, parents and carers to do the same. This staffing resource could also be trained to work more effectively with parents and carers to build their confidence to raise aspirations and encourage thinking about what the future might look like for their young people. The team would ensure that outcomes are personalised and focused on the young person's aspirations, supporting as independent a life as possible, and that they are transferable to the real world.

There is a good quality, wide-ranging post 16 local offer within Wiltshire which is available across the county and is able to meet the majority of needs and outcomes of learners with SEND. The council continues to build and expand provision using the dedicated team to work with providers to ensure quality and to develop curriculum. In addition to local colleges in all areas, the council has good working relationships with local specialist independent providers and providers of alternative education. Contractual arrangements are in place with these providers to support the monitoring of quality and to ensure that costs are equitable and fair when compared to those of local colleges. Learners would benefit from the special school and existing or new local post 16 providers. The current situation could be greatly improved with staffing resource to work with providers to create individual provision for learners. This could be one person with county-wide strategic responsibility and three operational staff - one for each area, in effect the creation of a virtual school, which could either come under the umbrella of the special school, or be directly managed by the council.

#### **Pros**

- With staffing resource, as outlined above, this option could be similar to option 2, but significantly more cost-effective
- Transition and the development of independence skills would be supported and encouraged in local communities
- The market would continue to develop - with competition between providers - enabling the council to work proactively with providers to keep costs down and to influence quality of provision
- There would be significant choice for learners and a team available to help them monitor and adapt goals as they engaged with the choice of provision.
- Having the post 16 team both attached, but additional to the school would encourage transition and adaption to adult life

#### **Cons**

- There would need to be some capital costs for post 16 provision at the school location, but in all other locations hubs would be based with existing providers
- Quality monitoring and cost management can be dependent on relationships between the council and providers
- Relationships with providers, and packages of provision and support would need to be well managed - this would involve strategic management of contracts and costs as well as developing a good understanding of need and gaps in provision

There would be a focus on voluntary and paid work with opportunities for work experience, work placements and working interviews. Learners would build on strengths and interests highlighted in their personal/vocational profile. They would create CVs and be offered opportunities to develop the skills they need when applying and interviewing for jobs. The school would offer supported internships for learners who are able to access these. There would also be clear routes to traineeships and apprenticeships and how to access support from the job centre. The council Wiltshire Employment Support Team (WEST) and Community Connecting services would provide curriculum and support.

For learners not able to access employment, the curriculum would focus on living as independently as possible, accessing and becoming part of the local community and managing health. Learners would be encouraged to develop an understanding of what opportunities are available beyond school, such as: adult education and community learning; different types of living arrangements; social and community facilities; transition arrangements to adult social care and health teams; benefits and personal budgets; and how to find help and support.

Where possible learners would be trained to travel independently to school and to the local community places they will transition on to.

## SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (22 May 2019)

### APPENDIX 12:

#### SITE FEASIBILITY STUDIES

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## 12.1 Feasibility Building Design & Scoping (Executive Summary):

### 12.1.1 Introduction

Wiltshire Council has outlined an overall strategy to consolidate three existing special schools in the north of the county, and develop a new circa 350 place SEND Centre of Excellence, by 2023. The school will cater for students with a range of needs, with 70% of pupils with PMLD/SLD. A feasibility study has been undertaken to consider and assess the viability of the existing Rowdeford School and the adjacent land for the provision of a new circa 350 place special school.

The proposed site is situated on land adjacent to the Rowdeford School, on the A342 St Edith's Marsh, half a mile north of the village of Rowde, in Wiltshire. The site is set on arable agricultural land, with open countryside views to the north, woodland to the east & west, and the existing Rowdeford School to the south.

In late 2018, a team comprising Architects, Town & Country Planners, Ecologists, Transport Consultants, Archaeology & Heritage Consultants, Ecologists and Cost Advisors were appointed to work with the School Project Team to assess the feasibility of developing a 350 place school on the Rowdeford site and the conclusion which is supported by the Council's Planning, Heritage and Highways Officers is that there are no significant obstacles that would otherwise prevent planning permission being obtained to build a new Special School at Rowdeford. That isn't to say that obtaining planning permission won't be a formality. There will still be some challenges to overcome, however the planning risks have all been rated as being medium to low. There are no high risks.

### 12.1.2 Building and Form

#### Project Brief

The brief for the project on which the feasibility study was based was:

- To provide a 350-place school for primary, secondary and post 16 aged pupils with special educational needs.
- To provide a school with provision for pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD), Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), global delay and Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) with associated medical needs and syndromes.
- To ensure that the school provides separate zones for pupils aged 4 – 11, 11 – 16 and post 16.
- Facilities for Hydrotherapy and other Therapies is required.
- To consider a landscaping scheme that is sympathetic to the site.
- Vehicular access to the site is to be carefully considered taking into account the pupil needs.
- The existing temporary accommodation at Rowdeford is to be replaced with permanent buildings.

The overarching philosophy is a clear vision that the new school will be a SEND Centre of Excellence and this will be achieved in the following way:

#### Designing for SEND

The design approach guidelines provided within Building Bulletin 102, which promote inclusive design for SEND schools, have been adopted when considering the requirements for the special school and the feasibility of the site. The design principles considered are outlined below.

#### Access

- A simple clear layout that is easily understood by all users
- Accessible circulation routes that are wide enough for people using mobility equipment
- Ergonomic details that allow everyone to use them (e.g. door handle size, positioning, colour, etc)
- Means of escape that considers the needs of the user
- Minimised travel distances where possible

### **Space**

- Adequate provision to enable safe vehicular movement
- Adequate clearances around furniture and equipment to allow users
- Provision for additional learning and support spaces
- Storage provision for mobility equipment and specialised teaching equipment

### **Sensory Awareness**

- Appropriate levels of glare-free controllable lighting
- Good quality acoustics, considering the needs of those with sensory impairments and/or communication and interaction needs
- Appropriate levels of stimuli to create a safe and calming environment that avoids sensory overload and anxiety
- Engaging sensory elements that carefully consider the use colour, light, sound, texture and aroma therapy.

### **Enhancing Learning Environment**

- Attractive school environments to promote a sense of belonging and self-worth
- Considered environments that allow children and teachers to be able to communicate clearly
- Accessible workstations with adequate space for learning aids and support staff
- Varied furniture, fittings and equipment that support a wide range of learning and teaching styles

### **Flexibility and Adaptability**

- Rationalising spaces so that their functions can change
- Access to different sized spaces to suit different needs
- Ability to adjust the learning environment locally to support a variety of learning needs (e.g. adjustable lighting)
- Flexible furniture that allows spaces to be rearranged to support different activities or changing needs
- Positioning structural and service elements to support adaptability

### **Health and Well-being**

- Offer suitable thermal comfort, particularly to those who are unable to communicate their needs

- Suitable ventilation to avoid discomfort without introducing draughts
- Measures to minimise disturbance from sudden or background noise
- Accessible and conveniently placed personal care facilities that are sensitively integrated
- Specialist medical and therapy facilities
- Suitable hygiene and infection control measures that offer ease of cleaning and maintenance

### **Safety and Security**

- Good sight lines for passive supervision, particularly where inappropriate behaviour can occur or where activities involve risk
- Zoning to reflect different functions or users
- Minimising the risk of harm, without restricting the development of life skills
- Measures to prevent unauthorised access and exit, without appearing institutional.
- Protect vulnerable children and young people who may be unaware of particular dangers

### **Sustainability**

- Social: having a fully inclusive and cohesive school community, with a positive relationship with the wider community and other services accessing the site
- Economic: achieving value for money based on the whole-life cost of the building
- Environmental: minimising any negative environmental impact and making good use of the site's micro-climate and biodiversity, with efficient use of energy and resources, ensuring the users' needs are not compromised

### **Building Layout**

- Reception/admin and spaces used by visiting staff/parents close to the main entrance
- Large spaces that are likely to be used by the community to be in easy reach but separated from teaching spaces
- Shared medical and therapy rooms that are easy to access for all age groups
- Small group rooms and stores that are close to teaching spaces
- WC areas in small clusters that are evenly distributed to limit travel distances
- Outdoor spaces that are easily reached
- Courtyards/outdoor positioned to provide calm, quiet and protected spaces, with adequate sunlight

### **School within a School Approach**

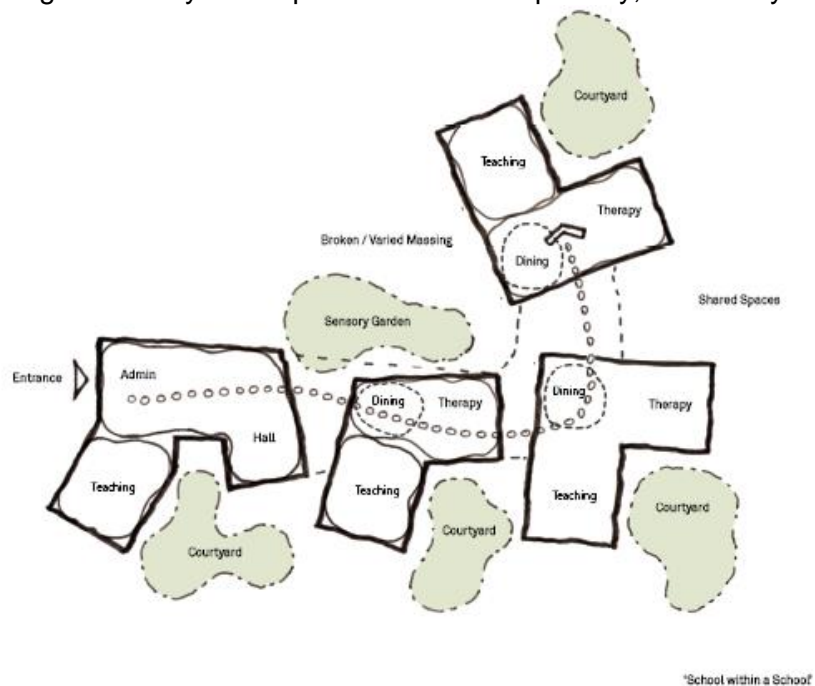
To minimise the scale and impact created by the consolidation of the three special schools, the feasibility study has considered and developed a "School within a School Strategy" which proposes a community of small and intimate teaching clusters offering a range of specialist



teaching spaces, therapeutic support and quiet dining. Each teaching cluster will be laid out to offer generous circulation whilst maximising natural daylighting and ventilation to create an airy feel.

The design will enable children and young people to establish an inner school identity that is secure and familiar and it enables the school the flexibility to manage the range of students needs by their stage of development as opposed to their age, allowing students to achieve their full potential and to make the most of their intellectual ability, focus and skills. The adoption of this strategy is intended to alleviate the concerns of a “super school” whilst offering an exemplar educational environment.

Footprint Architects have tested the site constraints and council’s aspirations for an SEND Centre of Excellence, based on the requirements of Building Bulletin 104. The strategy proposes a community of small and intimate learning clusters offering a range of specialist teaching spaces, therapeutic support and quiet dining, as well as direct access to external breakout space and outdoor learning. The study developed has allowed a primary, secondary and post-16 provision with individual play areas and some shared accommodation, including therapy, administration and a cafe/shop, along with adequate parking and a safe pupil drop off. This study has demonstrated that the site has the capacity to accommodate a circa 350 place special school.



## External Breakout Space

A strong connection to the outside will be a key design principle for this project. Current thoughts are that the new building will be single storey allowing each teaching space to have its own external breakout space accessed directly from the classroom. This fully accessible space will allow students the opportunity for outdoor learning and play in a protected setting, with good lines of sight into the classrooms and adequate sunlight.

Initial design themes/concepts to further inform the brief and the design going forward are shown below:

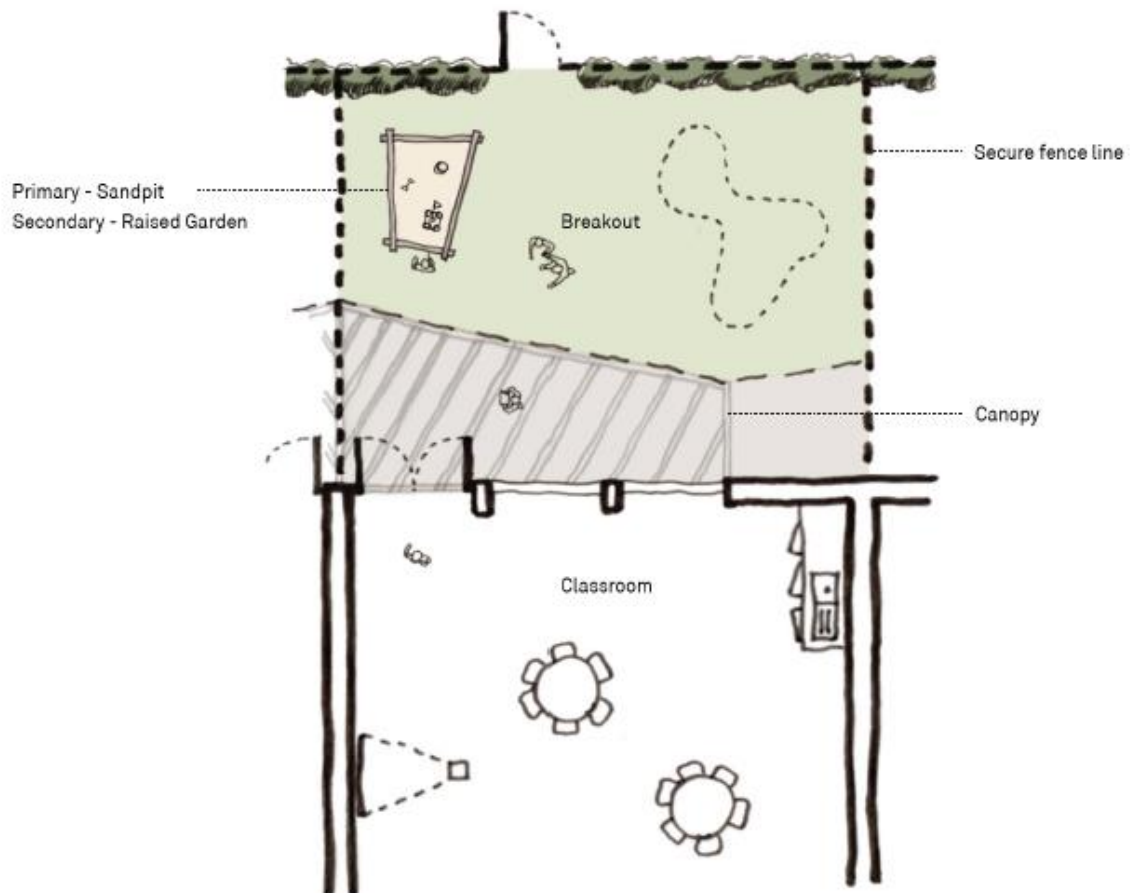


Fig.9: Typical Breakout Space

### Sensory Courtyard

The new school will provide multiple opportunities for outdoor learning and play. This could include the provision of a sensory garden or courtyard that will be equally welcoming for the local community to enjoy offering a fully accessible environment with calm, quiet and protected spaces as well as shaded covered areas for outdoor learning throughout the year. The garden will offer the opportunity for engagement with the wider community through the growing of plants and other outdoor events.



Fig.12: Sensory Garden Aspiration



Fig.10 Slessor Gardens, Dundee Waterfront



Fig.11 The Willows Primary & Special School



### Attractive Circulation

Circulation space within the new school will require as much consideration as the teaching and support spaces. These spaces will have a light and airy feel and will be large enough for pupils using mobility equipment. The circulation will be attractive creating a sense of belonging with engaging sensory elements that carefully consider the use of colour, natural daylight, sound and texture. Zoned adaptable break out spaces will be provided for areas such as soft play, library resources or intimate dining.

Concepts/themes for further consideration are shown below:



Fig.14 The Cedar School



Fig.15 Officer Specialist School

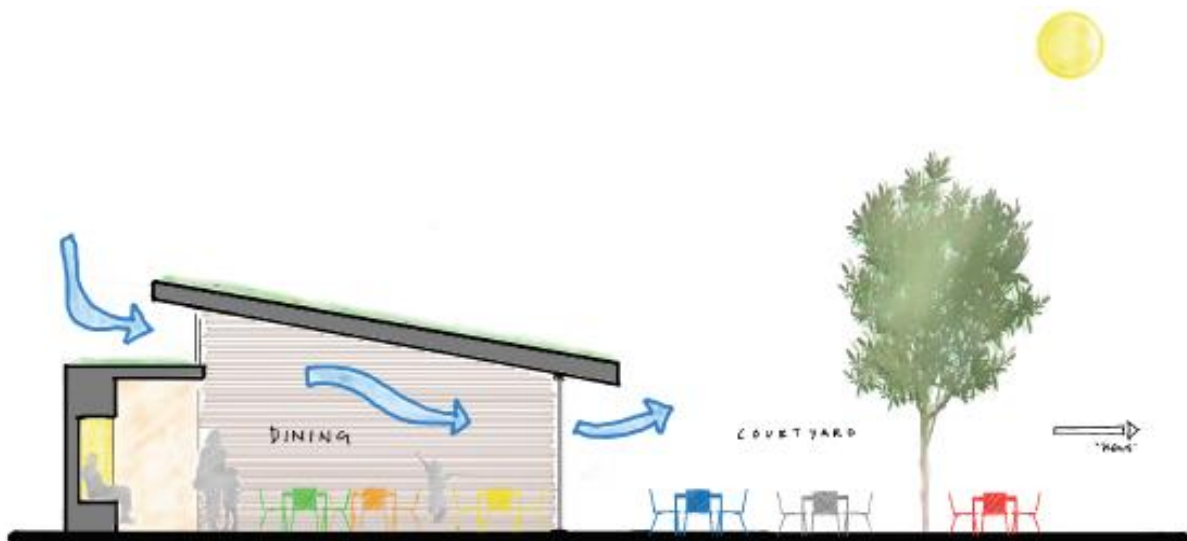


Fig.17: Typical Internal Breakout Space

## Site Analysis

A site analysis study has indicated opportunities and constraints with the Rowdeford site, and these are discussed in detail in the feasibility report.



Fig 49- Site Analysis Diagram

## Design Appraisal

An initial design appraisal has been developed in response to the brief and the opportunities and constraints identified in the site analysis study. The layout and massing of the proposed school is based on a single storey offering a sensitive design approach that reflects the scale and form of the surrounding context. This also enables maximum accessibility and the opportunity for direct access to external breakout/play spaces from each classroom. The varied and fragmented massing has been developed around a series of courtyards that reflect the community character of the existing school, ensuring that it is not over dominant or adversely impacts upon the setting of the listed building and mature trees. This in turn provides the "School within a School" Community feel to the site with a series of smaller, welcoming buildings that are appropriate for students with SEND.



Fig 50- Proposed Site Adjacencies

In summary, from an Architecture/Build point of view, the feasibility report shows that the Rowdeford site including the adjacent council owned land can accommodate a 350-place school.

### 12.1.3 Environmental and Planning Constraints

Johns Associates have led the development of the site appraisal regarding environmental and planning constraints, including ecology, archaeology, heritage, transport/access, hydrology, community, noise and landscape. Johns Associates have identified the following constraints and categorised the following risks to development, none of which are categorised as high risk.

#### Medium Risks:

- Planning: the site is outside of the Rowde settlement boundary and is prominent in local views north and from the AONB. However, development would be considered an extension to the existing Rowdeford School.
- Land Quality: potential loss of good quality agricultural land.
- Heritage: Potential impact upon the Grade II listed Rowdeford House, listed lodge and associated features.
- Community: Community opposition and political sensitivity. However, Rowdeford School currently has strong and proactive relationship with the local community.
- Archaeology: Potential for buried archaeology.
- Hydrology: Position of Flood Zone 2 & 3 within site boundary.
- Ecology: Potential impact upon European Protected Species, Local Wildlife Sites, hedgerows and mature trees.
- Traffic: Capacity of site entrance and potential operational impacts on traffic flow.

#### Low Risks:

- Air Quality: Potential impact of construction dust upon neighbouring residents/school.
- Noise: Construction and operational impact upon neighbouring residents and the existing Rowdeford School.

Note that further consultation, surveys and assessments will be required at the next stage to further appraise the constraints and identify any mitigation measures required.

### 12.1.4 Master Programme

The special school feasibility report contains a draft master programme for the project which will be reviewed and updated as the project proceeds. Key dates from the current master programme are summarised in the table below:

<b>RIBA Work Stage</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>
RIBA Stage 0 – Strategic Definition (the current stage)	05.12.18	26.07.19
RIBA Stage 1 – Preparation & Brief	29.07.19	11.12.19
RIBA Stage 2 - Concept Design	14.12.19	28.02.20
RIBA Stage 3 – Developed Design	02.03.20	17.07.20
RIBA Stage 4 - Technical Design (including pricing & award of contract)	20.07.20	23.04.21
RIBA Stage 5 – Construction Phase	26.04.21	21.04.23
RIBA Stage 6 – Handover & Close Out	24.04.23	22.05.23
RIBA Stage 7 – In Use (Getting the school ready for operational use)	22.05.23	03.07.23

### 12.1.5 Financial

A feasibility cost appraisal based on the initial design response has been carried out identifying a forecast project cost of **£25,902,263.00** inclusive of construction costs, fees, equipment and furniture and contingencies.

Description	Predicted Cost		
	Best case	Worst case	Anticipated
<b>Construction Works Costs:</b>			
New build works	£16,421,400	£16,421,400	£16,421,400
Refurbishment of existing school accommodation	£1,995,000	£1,995,000	£1,995,000
External works	£1,285,900	£1,285,900	£1,285,900
Demolitions & asbestos	£135,000	£135,000	£135,000
<i>Construction Works Sub-total</i>	<i>£19,837,300</i>	<i>£19,837,300</i>	<i>£19,837,300</i>
<b>Non-Works:</b>			
Fees	£1,930,863	£1,930,863	£1,930,863
Fixtures, Fittings, Equipment (including ICT equipment)	£1,000,000	£1,000,000	£1,000,000
<i>Non-Works sub-total</i>	<i>£2,930,863</i>	<i>£2,930,863</i>	<i>£2,930,863</i>
<b>Risks (contingency pot)</b>			
Statutory External Factors		£2,388,000	£1,742,000
Non-Statutory External Factors		£385,600	£235,600
Project Definition		£1,300,000	£660,000
Design & Technology		£1,068,750	£678,750
Contractual		£2,523,750	£1,997,500
Site Conditions		£614,250	£309,250
Financial & Commercial		£22,500	£22,500
<i>Contingency sub-total</i>		<i>£8,302,850</i>	<i>£5,645,600</i>
<b>Risk that can be backed off to contractor</b>			- £2,511,500
<b>Total Forecast Project Cost</b>	<b>£22,768,163</b>	<b>£31,071,013</b>	<b>£25,902,263</b>

#### Cost Notes:

- The new build cost allowance has been benchmarked against new build costs for special schools with a floor area of circa 6,736 sqm and includes for a hydrotherapy pool. As such the £16.4m cost is realistic.
- The refurbishment costs allowance is based on an area of 2,400 sqm and assumes a “medium” level of refurbishment i.e. not a total strip out and start again. Within the refurbishment costs is an allowance for a lift in the existing Rowdeford House to make the building fully accessible and so meet the outline project brief that 70% of pupils at the school are expected to be non-ambulant.
- The external works allowance includes for the creation of new hard and soft play areas, as well as a substantial increase in parking provision to suit a 350-place school. The allowance also includes for drainage works and perimeter fencing.
- It is assumed that a lot of equipment from the schools that are to close will be able to be re-used in the new school, but that invariably new equipment including ICT equipment such as “smart boards”, pc’s etc will be required, hence an allowance based on c£2.8k per pupil has been factored into the cost plan for this.

- There are a number of temporary buildings serving the current Rowdeford school and the assumption is that there will be removed as part of the works. There is also an assumption that asbestos might be present in the existing school buildings that will need to be removed.
- The project is only at the outline feasibility stage and as such the brief is still to be developed and the design has not been established. Consequently, the reader is presented with three scenarios. The best-case scenario of c£22M assumes no risks will be encountered and as such is unlikely. The worst-case scenario of c£31M assumes accommodates significant risks that we currently feel can be appropriately mitigated for. Hence the likely cost at this feasibility stage is estimated at c£25M.
- As the project proceeds through the various RIBA work stages (Briefing Stage, Concept Design Stage, Detailed Design Stage), the contingency sum will be reviewed with the intent being that at the construction stage of the project. A rigorous change control procedure will be implemented to ensure that we maximise value for money and reduce costs where possible.
- At the end of each stage of the project, the project cost plan will be reviewed to ensure that the overall the project remains within budget before proceeding to the next stage of the project.

Following the conclusion of this piece of work the estates team were also asked to suggest costing for build for 400 pupils. An initial assessment would suggest that this could be afforded at £32m, but further detail will need to be taken forward to clarify this.

## 12.2 Planning Considerations – Rowdeford site

To address the heritage risks, a Heritage Appraisal study has been undertaken and consultations have taken place with the council's conservation officer to ensure effective early engagement. A full copy of the study is included with the Feasibility Report including the view of the council's conservation officer which is supportive of the development of a special school on the Rowdeford Site. Whilst clearly there are constraints associated with the listed nature of the site, there are also opportunities from a heritage perspective not least the continued upkeep of Rowdeford House and the surrounding landscape. The conservation officer indicates that there are positive parallels with the development of Tedworth House near Tidworth for Help for Heroes and the future proposals for the Rowdeford site. Further work will be required to inform a planning decision from a heritage point of view, but whereas the heritage risk was originally high, it now poses a medium risk which is manageable.

To address the concerns of the Highways Officer, a very detailed Transport Assessment has been carried out including road/traffic surveys and data has been obtained from Rowdeford School as to how current staff and pupil get to school and where they travel from. The Councils' Transport Team has also provided similar data for the other schools that are planned to close to enable a detailed assessment to be made on the impact on the local roads of a 350-place school at Rowdeford. The conclusion is that a right turn lane is not required, a view which has been confirmed by the Highways Officer following his review of the Transport Assessment, a meeting with him to run through the assessment and a meeting on site with him to witness traffic at Rowdeford at the start of the school day. A copy of the Transport Assessment including the supportive views of the Highways Officer can be found in the Feasibility Report. The Highways Officer does require improvement works to be carried out to the entrance to the school site to improve visibility for health and safety reasons and has suggested that the footpath outside the school be improved by way of vegetation clearance works as well as general widening and replacement kerbing works from the school entrance upto the existing 30mph sign on the outskirts of the village so as to provide better pedestrian footpath links to Rowde. The extent of the highway works has not been fully defined yet and as such a financial



allowance has been made in the project risk register. Despite this and as with Heritage, whereas the transport risk was originally high, it now poses a medium risk to the project which is manageable albeit it could have a cost pressure on the budget depending on the extent of the final works which will only become apparent during the planning pre-application process.

The Transport Assessment considered road safety and whilst the speed limit in around 2010 was reduced along the section of road outside the proposed school from 60mph to 50mph which is deemed to be acceptable, it is thought that the 30mph speed limit through the village should be extended to beyond the school entrance in the interests of road safety. Wiltshire Council Highways has advised that in parallel with the planning application process for the new school, an application for a TRO (Traffic Regulation Order) to reduce the speed limit from 50mph to 30mph could be made, however they have advised that there is no absolute guarantee that the TRO would be approved. This matter will be considered further by the School Project Team as the project proceeds.

Another potential significant risk at the start of the process was linked to Ecology and whilst the site is not covered by any statutory designations, there are two local Wildlife Sites adjacent to the site boundaries. The proposed site is also within 2km of the Roundway Down and Covert Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSI). In order to mitigate the ecology risks, and following a consultation with the County Ecologist, an Extended Phase One habitat survey of the site has been carried out. Again, the full results can be found in the Feasibility Report. There is the potential for there being a number of protected wildlife species on the site including Bats, Amphibians (including Great Crested Newts), Badgers, Dormouse, Birds (Barn Owls have been recorded on the site) and Reptiles – these are all manageable from a development point of view, though it is recommended that further survey work is planned to be carried out almost immediately to avoid the risk of delays to the project. What is meant by this is that depending on the species of wildlife, surveys can only be carried out in certain times of the year and if these periods are missed, there is a risk that the project might have to be put on hold until the next survey season comes around. That said, the risks associated with Ecology have been assessed as being medium and are manageable.

The Feasibility Report has also considered other environmental factors that could impact on the ability to secure planning to develop the Rowdeford site and the conclusion is that these risks are all low or medium and again are all manageable. These other environmental factors are:

Air Quality; Community; Archaeology; Land Quality; Landscape; Noise & Hydrology

The feasibility report includes a risk table which is extracted below for information. This would be incorporated into a project wide risk register on approval to proceed to the next stage of the project (RIBA Stage One – Preparation and Brief).

#### **Project Feasibility Planning Risk Factors**

<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Sources of Potential Departure from Policy</b>	<b>Mitigation as outlined</b>	<b>Project Feasibility Risk Category</b>
Planning Policy	The proposal site lies outside the settlement boundary of Rowde. The development would be considered an extension to the existing Rowdeford School, this is material in	Address policies and guidance stated within this report	MEDIUM

Discipline	Sources of Potential Departure from Policy	Mitigation as outlined	Project Feasibility Risk Category
	any planning consideration and could justify departure from policy. The site has a number of planning constraints, heritage, highways, landscape, ecology and flooding. In consultation with Wiltshire Council and by virtue of reports instructed for this feasibility, the policies can be addressed providing that appropriate mitigation is designed into any proposal with achievable timescales for delivery.		
Air Quality	Construction dust and particulate impact on adjacent school and nearby properties	Construction Management Plan Dust	LOW
Community	Community opposition to principle of new special school on this site. Political sensitivity.	Early stage consultation Community engagement	MEDIUM
Ecology	European Protected Species Hedgerow protection Mature Tree Protection	Further survey work to be carry out within optimal timescales informing necessary mitigation for the following species:	MEDIUM
	Local Wildlife Sites	Bats – Potential roosts /foraging and commuting. Records on main school site Amphibians (including Great Crested Newts) – Ponds off site within 500 metres Badgers - Two Setts found along the western boundary (one main and one outlier) Dormice – Potential on site and record of species within 2km radius of the site	

Discipline	Sources of Potential Departure from Policy	Mitigation as outlined	Project Feasibility Risk Category
		Birds – Barn Owls recorded on site (WSBRC) Reptiles – some potential Mitigation to be imbedded within any development proposal. Protection of hedgerows and mature trees through sensitive design and fencing during construction	
Heritage	Impact on setting of Grade II Listed Rowdeford House Impact on setting of Grade II Listed Lodge and Gate piers Opportunities for re-use of existing listed building. Direct impacts.	Full settings assessment including a study area walk over to inform the detailed development of the proposals, in order to ensure that the development does not affect the settings and harm the significance of the heritage assets. Enabling re-use of a heritage asset and securing its future Consultation with Heritage England (HE) Design and siting sensitive to setting of heritage assets	MEDIUM
Archaeology	Potential for buried archaeology	Desk Based Assessment (DBA) Further fieldwork evaluation in the form of a geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation.	MEDIUM
Land Quality	Potential loss of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land (BMV)	Soil testing on site to confirm whether site is to be categorised (BMV)	MEDIUM
Landscape	Impact on countryside to the north. Views from the AONB into the development site.	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Site design Advance/integrated scheme planting	MEDIUM
Noise	Construction impacts on existing school and adjacent residents Operational noise from school development	Construction Environmental Management Plan  Consultation with adjacent residents	LOW

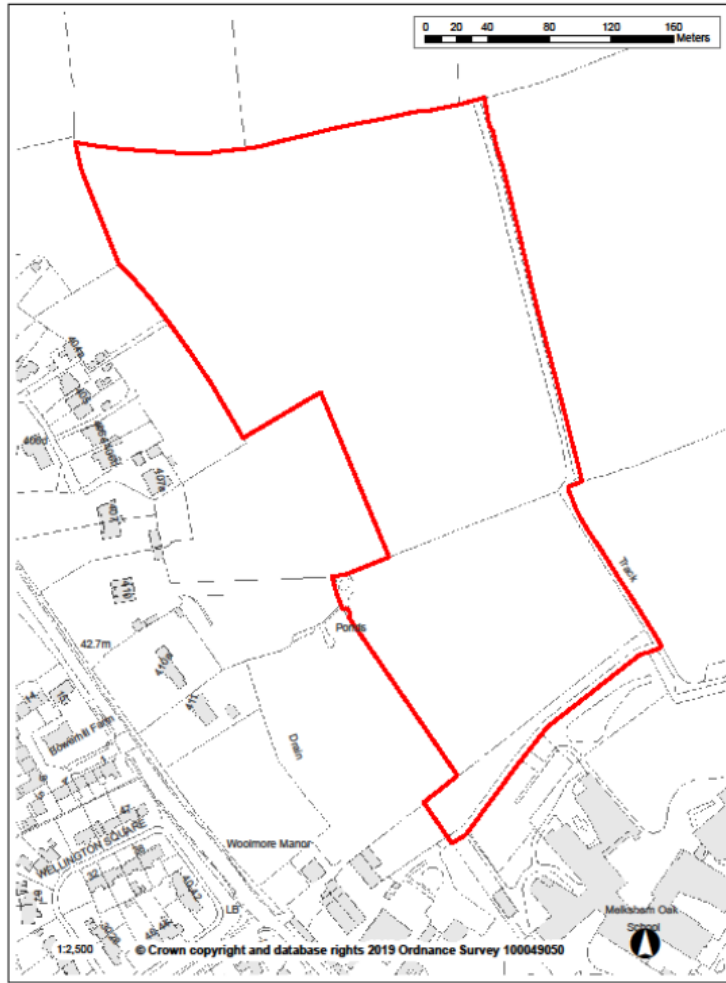
<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Sources of Potential Departure from Policy</b>	<b>Mitigation as outlined</b>	<b>Project Feasibility Risk Category</b>
Traffic/Access	Capacity of site entrance Operational impacts on traffic flow Potential construction traffic impacts	Continued consultation with Local Highway Authority Potential legal agreement for off-site highway mitigation Full Transport Assessment and travel plan The proposal would be seen as an extension to an existing facility.	MEDIUM
Hydrology	Part of the site in Flood Zone	Flood Risk Assessment (FRA)	MEDIUM

### 12.3 Review of Melksham sites

There are just two potential sites in Melksham identified as council owned and of sufficient size to accommodate a new special school (based on the Department of Education's 'Area guidelines for SEND and alternative provision including Special Schools, alternative provision, specially resourced provision and units' (Buildings Bulletin 104 December 2015)

The first site is Land at Woolmore Farm, Bowerhill SN12 6QZ

Location Plan – Site Extent Subject to Survey (Not to Scale)



The site area (7.90ha) is larger than required to position a new Special School. However, the site has the following constraints which make it not suitable for the development of a new special school:

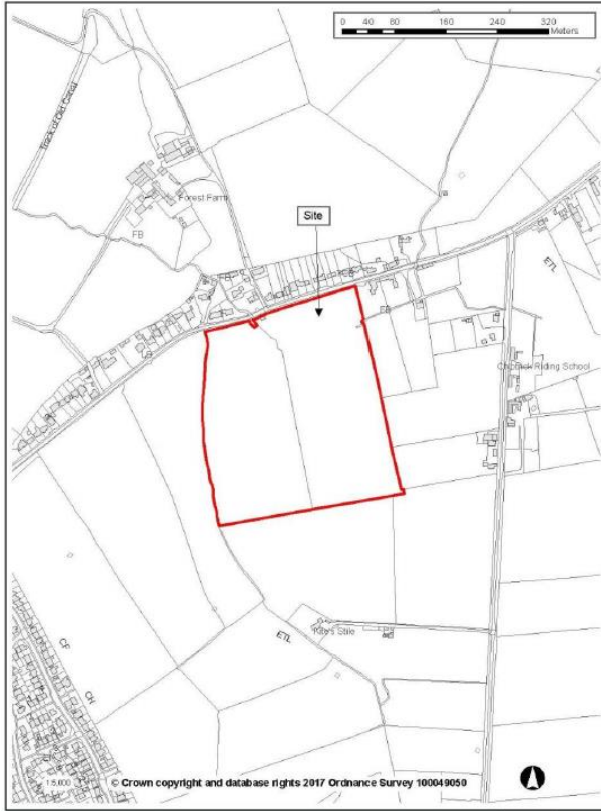
1. Planning Permission 17/01699/FUL was granted on 28 April 2017 for a change in the use of this site from agricultural land to public open space.
2. Planning Application W/07/09007/WCC for the 'Construction of a replacement George Ward School for 1350 pupils including associated playing fields, site access and parking areas and off-site highways works' was subject to the attached Section 106 Agreement. Paragraph 3.1 of Schedule 2 states: *'The County Council shall ensure that the Fields are kept in agricultural use until such time as the County Council and the District Council agree in writing that they consider*

*the Fields are no longer capable of viable economic use and upon such agreement the County Council shall forthwith dedicate the Fields as Public Open Space in perpetuity'.*

3. The current access to this site is via Woolmore Farm (which has been sold by Wiltshire Council) is for maintenance of the public open space only.
4. The planning consent for the adjacent residential development was subject to a 'Compensatory Offsite Ecology Contribution' which related in part to this site.
5. If access is sought from the adjacent residential development land, once the new residential distributor road has been built, it would be subject to negotiation with the owners of that land. Similarly, negotiated agreements regarding drainage and utilities may also be required.
6. A Conservation Appraisal would be required to assess the impact on the adjoining Woolmore Manor, which is a listed building.

Consideration was also given to land at Forest Farm (Woodrow Road SN12 7RE); this was discounted by the Planning Officer as being suitable for provision of a new school (without prejudice to consideration of a formal planning application) due to the results of a pre-application enquiry.

Location Plan – Site Extent Subject to Survey (Not to Scale)



Pre-Planning Application Advice summary:

- The site is outside the settlement boundary defined in the Wiltshire Core Strategy and there is effectively a presumption against development; in contrast, the National Planning Policy Framework attaches 'great weight' to the need to create new schools.
- Most the site is within Environment Agency Flood Zones 2 and 3. A sequential test will be required; this will not permit development should other sites be available with a lower flood risk.
- The Highways Engineer considers the site to be unsuitable to accommodate a school for 350 pupils.
- The Conservation Officer objects due to proximity to listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets.
- A proportionate archaeological assessment will probably be required.
- An ecological survey will be required.

26 February 2019

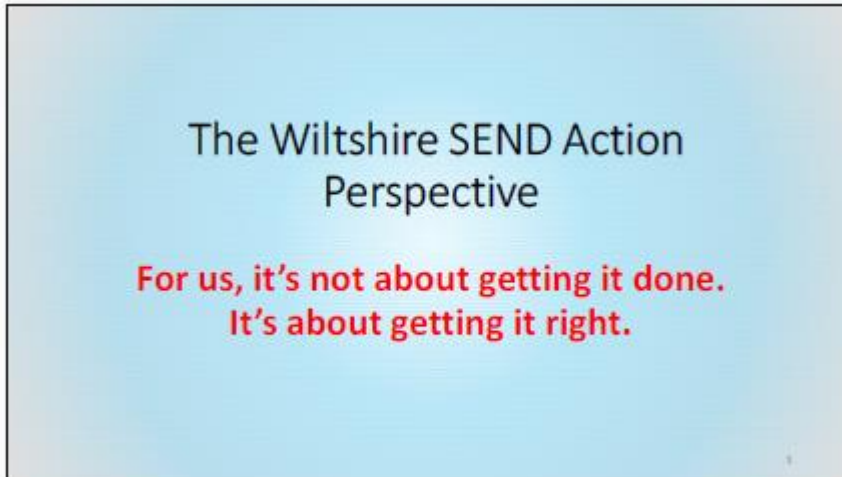
**Rupert Williams, Strategic Asset & Facilities Management**

Housing & Commercial Development, Wiltshire Council, Trowbridge BA14 8JN

## SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (22 May 2019)

APPENDIX 13: The Wiltshire SEND Action Proposal presented at 2 May face to face meeting at County Hall.

### Slide 1:



### Intro

Good evening. Well, here we are again. Easter holidays forgotten already and we're back in the fray, trying to find the best solution for our children - and our sanity! Thank you to Wiltshire Council officers for their presentation. We do appreciate the complexity of the problem before us: in a nutshell, not enough money to do too big a job! However, we will do the best we can, all of us, to find the best way forward.

Let's see if we can begin with a set of criteria we can agree on. The key criteria for the local authority, as we have just seen, are:

### Slide 2:



I think we can agree that these are important criteria. However, there are significant omissions here. The criteria we would like to see met are:

**Location**  
**Size**  
**Choice**  
**Quality of Provision**



**Slide 3:**

### Inclusion and Social Integration

- **All children and young people:**
- Are known and accepted
- Are empowered, safe, happy and confident to use local facilities
- Have friends they see out of school
- Are valued and value others in their own community
- Enable others to be tolerant and understanding of difference

**Slide 4:**

### Location:

- **Local and community based**
- **Accessible**
- **In strategic towns: Trowbridge and Chippenham (areas of greatest growth in North)**
- **Minimal use of transport**

**Slide 5:**

### Size:

- **Child friendly scale**
- **Multiple sites, not one single school**
- **No single site over 200 places**



**Slide 6:**

Choice

- All sites must offer widest possible range of designations and meet all Equality Duty legislation
- Both towns must offer both primary and secondary
- Flexible placements between mainstream – resource base – special school
- Post 16 choices

**Slide 7:**

Quality of provision

- Strategic use of current buildings/remodeling/new build to keep costs down
- Quality of in-reach/outreach training
- maximise improved outcomes for wider range of SEND pupils
- Capitalise on specialist resources already in place

**Quality of provision**

- **Strategic use of current buildings/remodeling/new build to keep costs down**
- **Quality of in-reach/outreach training** more important than showpiece buildings
- This will **maximise improved outcomes for wider range of SEND pupils** than new buildings
- **Capitalise on specialist resources already in place** in Trow/Chipp (eg hydro pools, PMLD facilities, established network of local support staff) Don't throw the baby out with the bath water! Only build new where we NEED new!

## The Solutions:

### Slide 8:

Like it or not:

**We're going to need considerably bigger..... Budgets!**



### **Pic of Celia Imrie from The Calendar Girls, with the word 'budgets' masking her buns...**

As Helen Mirren famously (nearly) said, 'We're going to need considerably bigger bu...dgets' The crisis in SEND provision is not just a Wiltshire problem. Local authorities all over the country are wrestling with the problem of how to manage within the constraints of already over-spent High Needs Block funding. There is to be a countrywide National Crisis march at the end of this month. Now is not the time for short-term thinking. This crisis has been brewing for years. If we are going to undertake a major overhaul of provision within the county, we cannot reach for sticking plaster, knee-jerk solutions. We must be ambitious for our children. Parents in the south of the county are as unhappy as we are about the lack of provision for some designations and, although we can do little about the small number of children who will always need very specialized – and therefore expensive – out of county placements, we CAN do something about tackling the woeful lack of places for the rapidly rising number of children and young people with ASD. Planning for a few more places is not enough! We need to build in capacity – room to grow! The same goes for the dilemma of providing Post 16 routes. With the development of its 0 – 25 Agenda, Wiltshire was leading the pack! But provision again, is lagging behind. What DO we offer to young people beyond the age of 16? 18? 20? It's a hazy horizon over which they currently disappear without trace. If central government were happy to endorse EHCP plans for education provision up to the age of 25, then they must fund them too. And local authorities must play their part. When the goal posts move, EVERYBODY must move!

### Slide 9:

**Bottom line:  
for us, it's not about getting it done.  
It's about getting it right.**

So, our solutions to the current crisis are not just about keeping to Wiltshire Council's time frame of everything sorted by September, come what may! Parents across the county have had letters drop onto their doormats this week from the consultancy group ISOS, whom the LA have commissioned to look into the best use of the HNB funding. Their remit seems to be wider ranging than our present review, but does not seem to feed into the current round of consultations regarding the future of special schools. Why not? If they are going to be looking at the bigger picture, over a longer term, shouldn't our current situation form a part of that bigger review? From a parent's perspective, it feels rather like the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing.

**Bottom line: for us, it's not about getting it done. It's about getting it right.**

Here are our suggestions:

**Slide 10:**

In Trowbridge:

- Retain the current Larkrise School
- Expand the school into the Ashton Street site
- Include a sixth form centre, training rooms forest school and sensory garden
- Re-model? Re-build on new site?
- Consider co-location?
- Could deliver 150+ places

**In Trowbridge:**

- **Retain the current Larkrise School buildings**, but remove the mobile units to restore the outdoor space we have lost.
- **Expand the school into the Ashton Street site** across the road. Plans for this were well advanced in 2013/14: none of the problems outlined in your presentation seemed to be insurmountable then. When the Ashton St Centre was in daily use traffic congestion did not seem to present a problem. In fact today, any congestion around the site has been caused by WC's own actions in breaking their agreement and removing access for Larkrise staff to park there.

**Slide 11:**

Earlier Ashton Street plans: 2013/14



### Earlier Ashton St plan

- Plans drawn up at the time showed space enough for **up to 150 places, including a sixth form centre, training rooms, a forest school and sensory garden.** Beginning to sound a bit like a Centre of Excellence? We think so. It's an obvious solution staring us in the face and it is perverse to try to pretend otherwise.
- **Re-model? Or re-build?** We have been informed that a re-modelling of the current Ashton St buildings is also possible. Perhaps not as desirable, but if compromises have to be made, perhaps a combination of re-modelling and new build? This would have the added advantage of making places available very quickly to meet need right now and up until 2023, to allow for phased transfer of pupils at a manageable pace. This is an option which has definitely NOT been explored in detail!
- **New site or co-location? West Ashton Road** would make an excellent site as Trowbridge grows. It might feel quite 'rural' now, but once the planned housing in that area is completed, a school would be right at its heart – and still a walkable distance to the town centre, with all its curriculum opportunities. Or what about co-location with an existing or new primary school? At a time when local authorities nationally are expanding provision, co-locating services and integrating SEND children into local communities, Wiltshire seems to be resolutely marching in the opposite direction!
- Conservatively, this solution **could deliver 150+ places** for both primary and secondary pupils plus sixth form, with the current range of designations, including PMLD.

### Slide 12:

In Chippenham:

- **Retain St Nicholas School, re-model and expand**
- **Re-locate to a new site in Chippenham**
- **Consider co-location?**
- **Could deliver 140 places**

### In Chippenham:

- **Retain St Nicholas School and expand or re-locate** A similar solution could be found for St Nicholas School, by retaining Poplar College as sixth form provision and re-locating the current school to a site large enough to accommodate 140 pupils – or by retaining the current buildings, re-modelling and expanding onto nearby land.
- **Consider co-location?** Here is an exciting opportunity to look at the possibility of co-locating part of the school onto land adjoining an existing school such as Hardenhuish, as with the successful partnering of Poplar College with Wiltshire College, thus creating the possibility of flexible provision for both mainstream and SEND children. Primary provision could be retained at the current St Nicholas site, with secondary provision co-located at Hardenhuish.
- This solution could **deliver 140 places** for both primary and secondary pupils plus sixth form, with the current range of designations, including PMLD.



**Slide 13:**

In Rowde:

- **Rowdeford School offers choice and aspiration**
- **Space to expand**
- **Could deliver 130+ places**

13

**In Rowde:**

- **Rowdeford School offers choice and aspiration** Rowdeford School is a unique site, well suited to its current purpose as a rural secondary school for children with MLD. If this designation was expanded to include ASD and SLD where appropriate, the focus of this school could range from the ambitious academic route for high functioning young people, with already established links into Lackham College and on to higher education, to a range of vocational pathways within the rural/land based industries easily accessed at this site. This would offer real choice for parents and children at every level.
- Keeping Rowdeford at its current PAN would enable it to retain its current curriculum and the unique 'magic' the school is rightly prized for.
- **Administrative Centre and external services** Land previously earmarked for the super school could enable administrative and some external services to be centralized, thus achieving economies of scale. Passenger Transport could re-locate here, or a Training Centre built. External health services such as Occupational Health, Speech and Language services etc could all be co-located here so that they can work together to provide a properly integrated service to all three special school sites, reducing costs by reducing the need for haphazard visits and therapists criss-crossing the county. Centralizing services, rather than children, makes much more sense than transporting every child with SEND in North and West Wiltshire across the county twice a day! And this new build would not necessarily have to impact the SEND budget!
- **Executive management.** Rowdeford would make an excellent central place from which an executive management team could work. It would have equal proximity to both satellite sites and would ensure that, with Heads of School taking care of the day to day management at each site, the Executive Head would be able to drive the vision, plan for the future and ensure quality provision in every aspect of the curriculum. Planned admissions would be centralized here, ensuring that every child is placed in the most appropriate environment. A training team could be established here, planning and delivering high quality training to all mainstream schools, resource bases and the special schools themselves, with opportunities for local staff to spend time working with the training team on a rolling basis, then cascading the training out locally, to keep costs down.
- **Space to expand** If the expected rise in ASD continues, there will be space at Rowdeford to expand in the future, if needed.
- This solution could **deliver 130+ places** for secondary age children with MLD, ASD and SLD.

In essence then, we are proposing

**Slide 14:**

NOT a one size fits all super school, but...

- **A fully integrated SEND Service across multiple sites**
- **Strategically managed and offering LOCAL, SPECIALIST training to nearby mainstream schools and resource bases**
- **Suited to a large rural county with ever-expanding strategic towns.**

14

So let's see..... how does this fit with Wiltshire Council criteria?

**Slide 15:**

Sufficient Provision

**This model offers 400+ places with space to expand in the future and to flex the provision from year to year.**

15

**Slide 16:**

Value for Money

- **Keeps the best of what currently works and renews/replaces that which doesn't**
- **Delivers outstanding training opportunities**
- **Achieves economies of scale**
- **Reduces transport costs**

16

**Delivers outstanding training opportunities** for all schools in all strategic towns with considerably reduced staff travel time and costs.

**Slide 17:**

Quality

- **New build on a smaller scale**
- **More desirable to SEND families**
- **Strategic management will enable quality assurance**
- **Town locations will always attract high quality staff**
- **Offers choice**

- **New build on a smaller scale** in both Trowbridge and Chippenham will be much **more desirable to SEND families** within the locality than a large super school miles away from home.
- **Strategic management will enable quality assurance** at each site: ‘the right provision, in the right place, at the right time’
- **Town locations**, with a wide variety of property available, **will always attract high quality staff** at every level: from teachers to classroom assistants, drivers and MDSAs. In a special school the quality of ALL the staff is key to each child’s learning and progress.

**Slide 18:**

Outcomes

- **Already existing excellent relationships are maintained and enhanced**
- **Children are secure in familiar, small scale environments**
- **Parental anxiety is reduced**
- **Children are energized and focus on their learning**
- **A healthier way of life for the maximum number of children**

- The **excellent** and long-standing **relationships** already existing in the current schools **are maintained and enhanced** by the new opportunities for flexible learning in stimulating and exciting spaces
- **Children are secure in familiar, small scale environments** where each child is known personally to every member of staff.
- **Parental anxiety is reduced** as parents are secure in the knowledge that, should a crisis arise, their child – and a local hospital - is never very far away.
- **Children are energized and** have more time to **focus on their learning** when they are not spending long periods each day travelling in cramped mini buses. Walking or wheeling to a local school is **a healthier way of life for the maximum number of children** possible and is a step towards the Climate Emergency measures WC have only just signed up to.

And what about our criteria?

**Slide 19:**

Location

- Multiple sites offering...
- Local, community based provision
- Socially inclusive and cohesive
- Close to home, public transport and A&E
- **No compromise!**

- Whilst some children will always have to travel to school if they live in rural areas, or to access a very specialized facility, the majority live in, or close to a strategic town. It makes every sense to keep children close to the communities they live in or visit regularly – to shop, to access leisure facilities and local services and to visit family and friends. It makes even MORE sense if those children are likely to live their whole lives in the same community. Our children learn slowly, over time, to feel secure in a familiar environment. They are the very LAST people we should be shunting from one place to another every few years and expecting them to adjust to the new without complaint.
- If you remove all the children and young people with SEND from their communities – how do those communities learn to live with them when they are suddenly returned several years later? This is NOT inclusion! Our children are known in their local communities because they spend time every day in the shops, museums, parks etc. as part of their curriculum. These arguments have been rehearsed with Wiltshire Council officers again and again – and STILL location does not feature in their list of criteria. There is no compromise on this: children with SEND need to learn by **being** and **doing** in their **own** community.

**Slide 20:**

Size:

- Small scale, manageable sites
- Fewer, less overwhelming buildings
- Every child known to every adult

- Every major study that has ever been done proves time and again that children with SEND do not thrive in large, busy schools on big, complex sites. At 350+ Wiltshire's formerly proposed super school would, by some margin, be the biggest in the



country! Dividing it up into 'pods' would not make it less overwhelming to a child whose anxieties are raised merely by the presence of large numbers of people all moving in different directions at the end of playtime. There is a reason why ALL other special schools in the country are SMALL!

**Slide 21:**

Choice:

- **Ensures parental choice**
- **Offers flexibility**
- **Meets all PSED and EIA legal requirements**

- Maintaining sites in multiple locations gives parents – and schools themselves – choice about the right provision for their children. The opportunity to 'move up' to a bigger, or more demanding school at secondary age may be an excellent opportunity for some children. It will be unattainable for others. All children and young people have the right to be self-determining and to make their own choices in life. Why would children with SEND be any different?
- Not just quality, but EQUALITY of opportunity and choice is maintained for children with SEND, as Equality Impact Duty requires by law.

**Slide 22:**

Quality of Provision:

- **Quality of teaching and learning more important than buildings**
- **Directs better training across all SEND environments**
- **Maximises opportunities for sharing ideas and strategies to enhance learning**
- **Dynamic strategic management encourages ambitious ideas**

- For parents, the quality of teaching and learning is more important than a shiny new building, so we envisage a re-balancing of the way the capital spend is used. More money spent on training facilities to ensure that ALL children with SEND benefit from the specialist knowledge of our SEND teaching staff. If this is locally provided, it will reach further and benefit more children. Easier to arrange a one hour training session for local TAs, teachers or resource base staff who can all get to the local special school quickly and easily than to use up half a day travelling to get to the super school and back.
- Local provision enables much more networking and cross-fertilisation of ideas than a remote school could achieve.

- Remodelling and some new build would help to retain and recruit the best staff, if there were also opportunities for this kind of interaction.

**Final slide 23:**



**Inclusion – not Segregation!**

**We need a fully integrated SEND Service across multiple sites, strategically managed and offering LOCAL, SPECIALIST training.**

**Our children deserve nothing less.**

18

It's an emotive picture, I know; calculated to shock. You may be familiar with Stoke Park, halfway down the M32 on the way into Bristol. It stands forlornly on its hill, ramparts braced against the world – and every attempt to turn it into a des res community of luxury apartments has failed. It still looks every inch the institution it always was. And it is as potent a symbol now as it was when they finally closed it down and stopped pretending that shutting up people with mental health conditions, like learning difficulties, SEMH and Autism, in big institutions was a good idea.

We don't claim to have all the answers. We can't manage your budget for you. We don't know what land you own or what planning rules you have to follow. That's your job. We're just here doing ours. Being parents. Loving our children and fighting – as we have since the day each one of them was born – for their right to be treated equally. To have what other children have: a decent education in a local school. We owe it to them to give them that. And so do you.

Thankyou for listening.

## SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (22 May 2019)

### APPENDIX 14:

#### OPTION APPRAISAL

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## 14.1 Slides used in face-to-face meetings held in Chippenham, Trowbridge and Devizes

Wiltshire Council  
Where everybody matters



**SPECIAL SCHOOLS**  
**Brighter futures**  
OPTIONS APPRAISAL

The slide features a circular diagram with a sunburst background. The diagram is divided into four quadrants: 'Identify the need', 'Identify the provision', 'Identify the location', and 'Identify the funding'. The center of the diagram contains the text: '1-15: Identify the need, identify the provision, identify the location, identify the funding'. The background of the slide shows a blurred image of a person in a wheelchair and some papers.

Slide 1

Wiltshire Council  
Where everybody matters

## APPROACH

-  **Sufficient provision**  
An additional 220 places are needed of which 50 are for complex needs in the North. These should be in line with the Department for Education (DfE) requirements.
-  **Value for money**  
We need to get the best special school buildings for our money.
-  **Quality**  
Great design helps harness the creative energy and passions of the pupils, teachers and support staff.
-  **Outcomes**  
Thriving pupils and staff feel a sense of ownership and belonging to their school. This helps build good relationships, inspires outstanding learning and teaching and a healthy lifestyle.

The slide features a photograph of a smiling young boy with blonde hair and a blue and white shirt, standing in front of a bookshelf. Below the text, there are three colored bars: red, teal, and yellow.

Slide 2



### THE SITES - NORTH



DOWNLAND



LARKRISE



ST NICHOLAS



ROWDEFORD



SPRINGFIELDS

Local Authority maintained



Slide 3

### Sufficient provision

- We need at least 220 new special school places in Wiltshire by 2026
  - 123 in the North, of which 50 will be for complex needs
- Reduce overcrowding (in line with DfE guidance)
- Impact on timeline

Slide 5

## SUFFICIENT PROVISION

Slide 4



### 350+ PLACES



LARKRISE

Currently 98  
Should only have 22



ST NICHOLAS

Currently 81  
Should only have 21



ROWDEFORD

Currently 130  
Have plenty of space  
for 350



Slide 6



Wiltshire Council  
Where everybody matters

**VALUE**  
for money for our pupils

Slide 7

Wiltshire Council  
Where everybody matters

**Value**

- Cost effective buildings
- Maximise potential for reuse of existing buildings
- Reduction in running and maintenance costs
- Reduction in management costs
- More in-county specialist provision

Slide 8

Wiltshire Council  
Where everybody matters

**£20+ MILLION**



LARKRISE



ST NICHOLAS



ROWDEFORD

Two small schools for 100 pupils are **£5 million** more expensive than a big school for 200

Remodelling existing buildings can bring value.



Slide 9

Wiltshire Council  
Where everybody matters

**QUALITY**

CREATIVE ENERGY AND PASSION

Slide 10

**Wiltshire Council**  
Where everybody matters

## Quality

- Partnerships
- Transport - time and cost (public transport links)
- Considerate Constructors Scheme
- Community Engagement
- Facilities and resources
- Medical and health support
- Co-production and support from families
- Staffing, recruitment and retention

Slide 11

**Wiltshire Council**  
Where everybody matters

## Outcomes

- Teaching and curriculum
- Pupil voice and influence
- Outreach/engagement with other schools
- In-reach/engagement with other schools
- 14 + pathways

Slide 13

**Wiltshire Council**  
Where everybody matters

# OUTCOMES

THRIVING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Slide 12

**Wiltshire Council**  
Where everybody matters

## St Nicholas

The site doesn't meet DfE's minimum recommended areas because of the site constraints, and on the assumption that no additional land is available for the school to expand.

**Sufficient**

**Value**

**Quality**

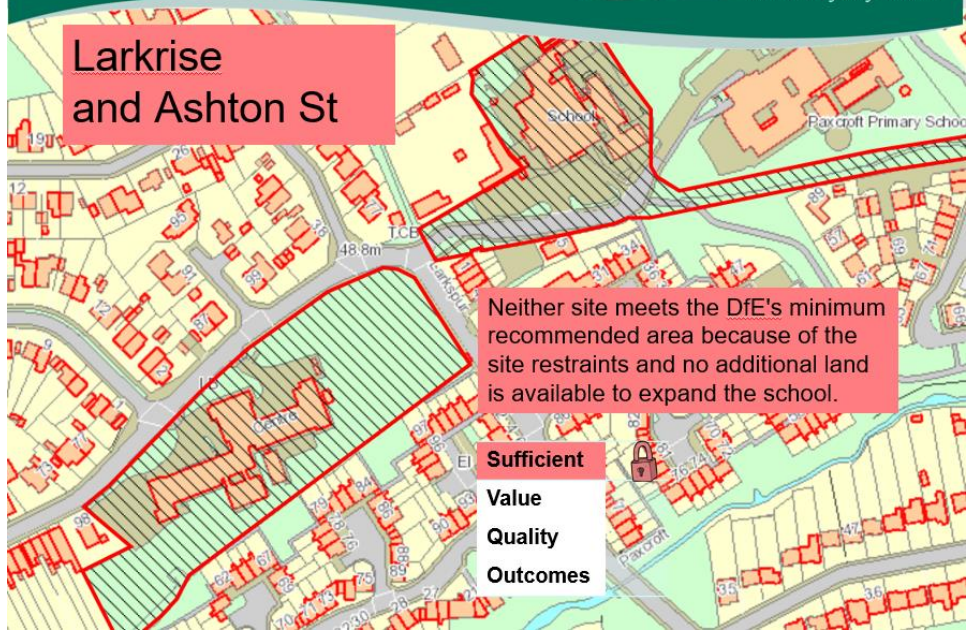
**Outcomes**

Labels on map: Allot Gdns, 94m, Schools, Vic, Hardenhush Park, Sheldon, Broomfield, Oaklands, The Oaks, The Cre, St Nicholas, Wedmore, Path, Pw, Schools, Vic, Hardenhush Park, Sheldon, Broomfield, Oaklands, The Oaks, The Cre, St Nicholas, Wedmore, Path, Pw, Schools, Vic.

Slide 14



Larkrise and Ashton St



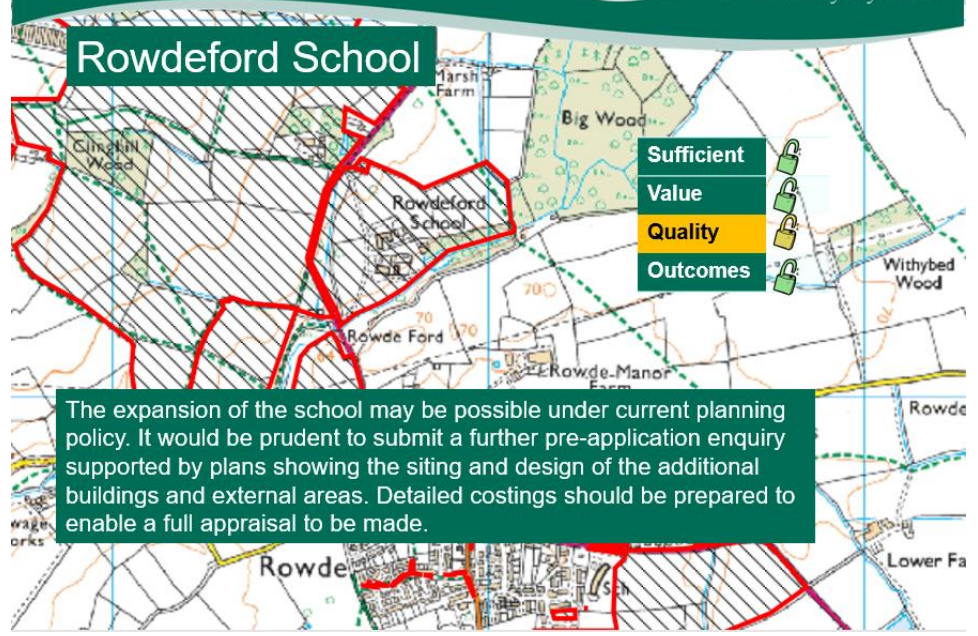
Neither site meets the DfE's minimum recommended area because of the site restraints and no additional land is available to expand the school.

Sufficient  
Value  
Quality  
Outcomes

Page 589

Slide 15

Rowdeford School



Sufficient  
Value  
Quality  
Outcomes

The expansion of the school may be possible under current planning policy. It would be prudent to submit a further pre-application enquiry supported by plans showing the siting and design of the additional buildings and external areas. Detailed costings should be prepared to enable a full appraisal to be made.

Slide 16

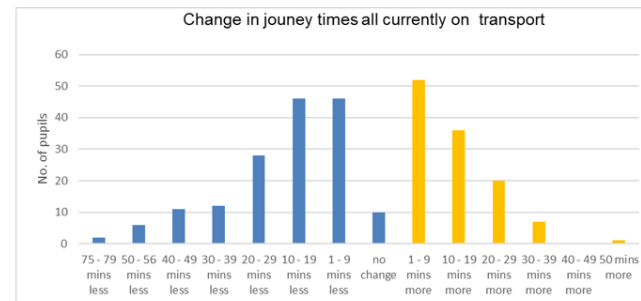
Rowdeford School:  
Average pupil travel times reduced

School	Current routes average journey time per passenger (minutes)	Proposed route averages 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

Slide 17

Rowdeford School:

Some children will have a longer travel time, although most will be between 1 and 9 minutes more..



Slide 18

## Rowdeford School: Less students travelling over 60 minutes

### As-Is

- Larkrise: 11 routes total 188 miles – 11 Students over 60 mins
- St Nicks – 13 routes total 204.3 miles – 4 Students over 60 mins
- Rowdeford – 27 routes total 629.2 miles – 30 students over 60 mins
- Combined total 51 routes total 1021.5 miles – 45 students over 60 mins

### Proposed

- Combined into Rowdeford
- 59 routes: 1043.4 miles – 2 Students over 60 mins

Slide 19



Slide 20



# Abbeyfield: 11 students travelling over 60 minutes

## As-Is

- Larkrise: 11 routes total 188 miles – 11 Students over 60 mins
- St Nicks – 13 routes total 204.3 miles – 4 Students over 60 mins
- Rowdeford – 27 routes total 629.2 miles – 30 students over 60 mins
- Combined total 51 routes total 1021.5 miles – 45 students over 60 mins

## Proposed

- Combined into Abbeyfield
- 64 routes: 1344.2 miles – 11 students over 60 mins



Slide 21

**Wiltshire Council**  
Where everybody matters

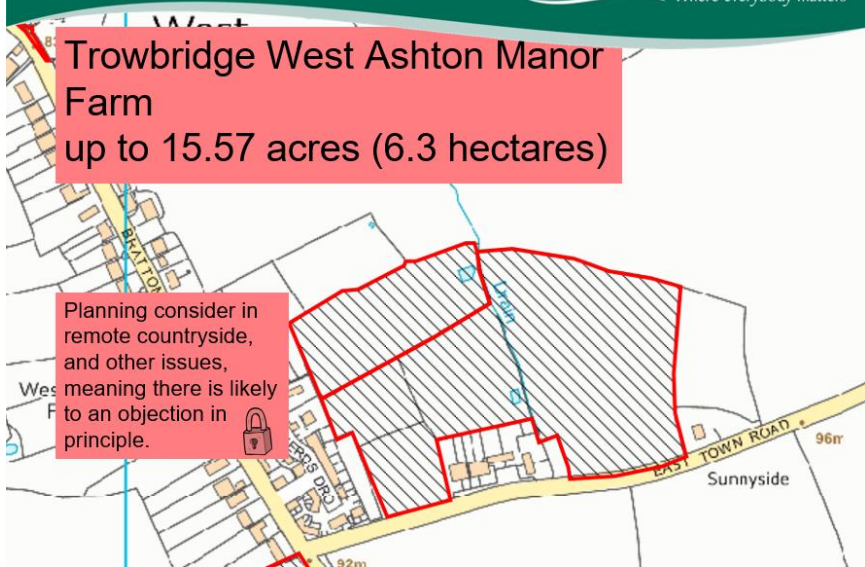
**Rowde Primary**

The Planning Officer considers this site to potentially be one of the better options – however it is outside the settlement boundary and is likely to require a right turning lane.

Slide 22

Trowbridge West Ashton Manor Farm  
up to 15.57 acres (6.3 hectares)

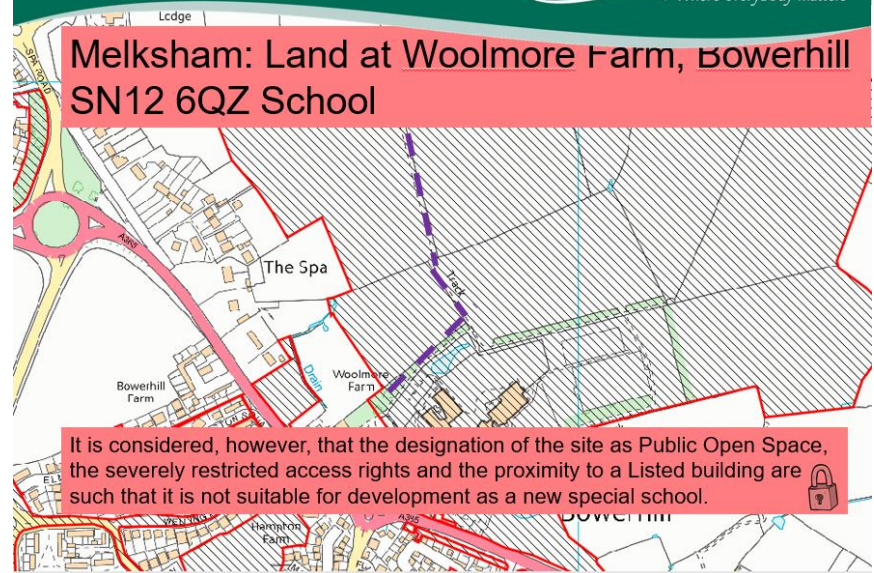
Planning consider in remote countryside, and other issues, meaning there is likely to an objection in principle.



Slide 23

Melksham: Land at Woolmore Farm, Bowerhill  
SN12 6QZ School

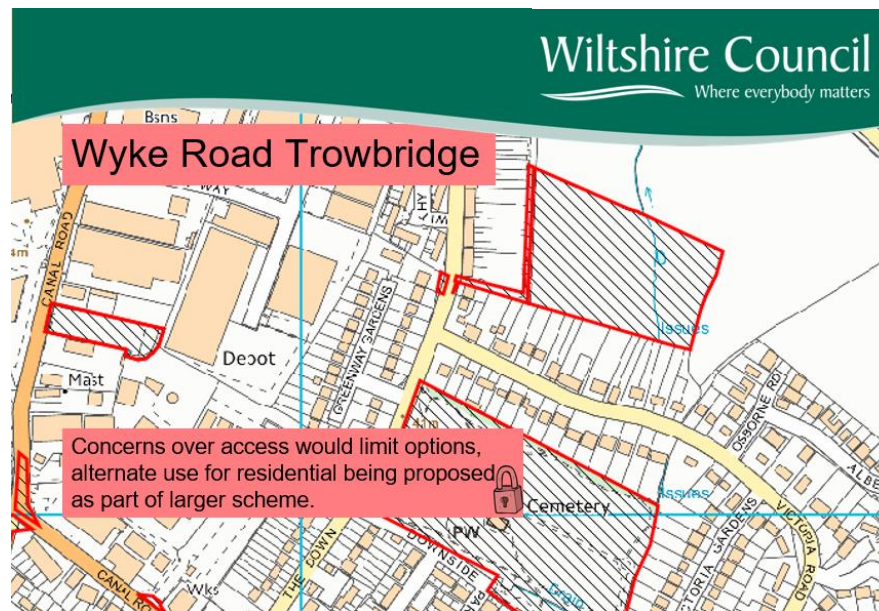
It is considered, however, that the designation of the site as Public Open Space, the severely restricted access rights and the proximity to a Listed building are such that it is not suitable for development as a new special school.



Slide 24




Wyke Road Trowbridge

Concerns over access would limit options, alternate use for residential being proposed as part of larger scheme.






Slide 25



Scoring criteria											
Positive 			Neutral 			Negative 					
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	
Sufficient provision			At least 50 more places for those with complex needs, built on time and to DfE guidelines. Expansion possible for a further 100.			At least 50 more places for those with complex needs, built on time and to DfE guidelines. Expansion possible for a further 75.			Not built on time and/or not to DfE guidelines with little scope for expansion.		
Value for money			Cost effective buildings - getting a great bang for our SEND buck.			The price of construction is higher than we'd like but in line with benchmarks.			Expensive and not delivering on quality.		
Quality			Transport for all is less than 45 minutes and delivers an outstanding quality experience for the pupils.			Transport for more than 98% is less than 60 minutes and for 100% is less than 75 minutes. A good quality experience.			Transport for more than 2% is over 60 minutes.		
Outcomes			Outstanding 14 + pathways services equip young people with the knowledge and skills they need to live independently (in their community), secure a place at a good university, start an apprenticeship, or find their first job.			Good 14 + pathways - developing independence in preparation for adult life			Transition to adulthood and 14+ pathways are limited.		

Slide 26

Scoring criteria										
Positive 			Neutral 			Negative 				
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Sufficient provision										
Value for money										
Quality										
Outcomes										
We need at least 220 new special school places in Wiltshire by 2026 123 in the North, of which 50 will be for complex needs Reduce overcrowding (in line with DfE guidance) Impact on timeline										
Cost effective buildings Maximise potential for reuse of existing buildings Reduction in running and maintenance costs Reduction in management costs More in-county specialist provision										
Partnerships Transport - time and cost (public transport links) Considerate Constructors Scheme Community Engagement Facilities and resources Medical and health support Co-production and support from families Staffing, recruitment and retention										
Teaching and curriculum Pupil voice and influence Outreach/engagement with other schools In-reach/engagement with other schools 14 + pathways										

Slide 27

## 14.2 Options appraisal May 2019

### Executive summary

#### What's the problem we are looking at?

Wiltshire Council is considering a range of options that have been put forward during the extended pre-publication consultation to enhance provision of special schools in the North.

The Vision for Special Education in Wiltshire document sets out a bold investment in two new centres of excellence in the County, a new centre in the North and Exeter House, Salisbury, in the South.

The Council is seeking to explore and test the range of potential delivery models and how these will best secure the Council's offer of SEND excellence.

#### What's the purpose of this report?

This report provides information about the historical thinking and debate that lead to the proposal for a single site option at Rowdeford and affords a perspective and approach to consider fresh options that have come forward as part of the ongoing and now extended pre-publication consultation. This report examines 15 options for the future delivery model and the extent to which these are a best fit to meet the Council's strategic priorities for SEND going forward.

These are:

1. Do Nothing
2. Expand Larkrise
3. Expand St Nicholas
4. Develop Ashton Street
5. Expand Rowdeford as a new school
6. Develop Abbeyfield
7. Develop Rowde primary
8. Develop Trowbridge West Ashton Manor Farm
9. Develop Melksham Land at Woolmore Farm
10. Develop Wyke Road Trowbridge
11. Develop Chippenham Magistrates Court (suggested by a parent)
12. Develop Rowdeford as a new school with primary satellite provision in Larkrise and St Nicholas (suggested by parents)

13. Expand St Nicholas and Larkrise and maintain Rowdeford school (suggested by Wiltshire SEND Action Group)
14. Expand Rowdeford, Larkrise and St Nicholas on site and with new sites, keeping separate leadership teams, but creating an overarching board with the 4 MATs
15. Expand Rowdeford as a new school with St Nicholas as a satellite as part of a phased approach

#### Objectives and scope

The report aims to clarify the options appraisal methodology and how applying it against the 15 options gives a score.

All options are evaluated against 4 main criteria:

1. Sufficient provision – a minimum of 220 additional places are needed of which 50 are for complex needs in the North. These should be in line with the Department for Education (DfE) requirements. The council is looking at the best way of securing 400 places in the north of Wiltshire, with the potential to expand to a further 100 places should the need arise.
2. Value for money – The Council needs to get the best special school buildings for its money and use revenue appropriately to meet need.
3. Quality - Great design helps harness the creative energy and passions of the pupils, teachers and support staff.
4. Outcomes - Thriving pupils and staff feel a sense of ownership and belonging to their school. This helps build good relationships, inspires outstanding learning and teaching and a healthy lifestyle.

All four criteria carried the same weight – 25% of the overall score. However, each option needed to “unlock” before moving to the next in sequence. So, if there was not sufficient provision then it would not be possible to proceed to review the option for value for money. The report considers the barriers and issues associated with each potential option.

## Key findings/recommendations




The key findings/recommendations are as follows:

The 15 options fall broadly into single site solutions, two sites, three sites and five site solutions.

Revenue costs increase with the number of sites.

Capital costs decrease with the use of retained infrastructure as compared to full new builds.

The option that scored the highest overall

Scoring criteria										
Positive 				Neutral 				Negative 		
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0

(7.07 out of 10) was single site provision at Rowdeford.

Capital cost £32M

Revenue cost £10.2M

## Introduction

Wiltshire Council is seeking to ensure that its delivery model for SEND is developed to provide at least 220 additional places of which 50 are for complex needs in the North. These should be in line with the Department for Education (DfE) requirements.

## Drivers for change

There are a range of drivers which suggest the need for a strategic review of the Council's position in the North. These drivers are as follows:

- Improving the choice in provision of the right places and the development of the right organisations.
- Sustainability and capacity building - building system excellence not just more places in the system.
- Value for money – the desire for economy (of scale), effectiveness & efficiency. The more savings in all areas means that more of the funding that is currently spent can be redirected into teaching and learning.
- Drive to secure better quality and services. The Council is seeking to achieve a step change in success rates and outcomes. Staffing development in addition to recruitment

and retention will be integral to the system and maximising of the possibilities.

- Higher quality standards are being demanded which requires greater investment in the quality and content of services in terms of how it supports individuals to gain appropriate real-life skills and support them into independent living.
- Development of cutting-edge ideas, research informed knowledge and skills and the sharing and development of those skills and capacities within and beyond the main special schools.

## New issues since the proposals presented in November 2018

### From the consultation

- There is limited demand for school-based nursery provision (we have good District Specialist Centres)
- There is significant interest in school based and coordinated use of other providers at post 14 in the new provision
- There is significant interest in the new provision being a maintained school rather than an academy
- The use of more than one location continues to be favoured over the one location (55% did not like the one school proposal, 45% supported the one school proposal). In February 2019, the Council decided to return to pre-consultation to avoid a breakdown of the relationship with the St Nicholas and Larkrise Friends groups. Through the consultation sessions respondents have suggested that they believe this plan leads to:
  - Lack of choice
  - Unequal approach to education for children with SEND
  - A lack of specific intent to fulfil statutory educational obligations
- There is a significant interest in having residential provision within the plan.

### Other emerging and new factors

- Early growth in EHCPs.** Over the last few years we have seen a growth in number of pupils with EHCPs and pressures on budgets. As noted above this has clearly been instrumental in driving this project.



However, in 2019 we have seen a significant increase in placements for pupils with MLD in the Jan/Feb 2019 placement plans. This seems to be driven by on-going concerns including reduced confidence in mainstream secondary schools/ELP and continued poor attainment and progress for young people with SEND at Key Stage 4. As a result, we have seen an increased request for special school places for children with SEND during this consultation. As a result, the Director of Education & Skills, has engaged external consultants (ISOS) to take forward an independent review leading to a plan to change approaches and spending. The time line for this project will lead to new plans being implemented from mid-2019 onwards, but these will take a while to directly impact on performance and outcomes for children/young people and subsequently demand on special school places.

- **Housing Infrastructure Fund.** In March 2019, a new application was made through the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) for Chippenham. This plan would lead to the potential for 7500 new homes in




Chippenham. This is in addition to the growth already established and taken into account in local area plans in 2017 when original projections of SEND place demand were established. Following the same calculations that identified the need for 50 new places for children/young people with complex needs, it can be predicted that, if successful, between 2021 and 2043 at least 45 additional special school places would be needed, of which, 18 would be needed for children/young people with complex needs.

Should the application be successful both Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) could support the building of new schools in Chippenham.

In taking forward this option appraisal it will be important to bear in mind how the views from the consultation and new factors impact on the relevance and capacity of the options reviewed.

#### Developing Success Criteria

To effectively consider the range of potential delivery models and to evaluate whether or not these would deliver the benefits that the Council is seeking, success criteria have been developed.

Wiltshire Council Where everybody matters										
Scoring criteria										
Positive 				Neutral 			Negative 			
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Sufficient provision										
We need at least 220 new special school places in Wiltshire by 2026 123 in the North, of which 50 will be for complex needs Reduce overcrowding (in line with DfE guidance) Impact on timeline										
Value for money										
Cost effective buildings Maximise potential for reuse of existing buildings Reduction in running and maintenance costs Reduction in management costs More in-county specialist provision										
Quality										
Partnerships Transport - time and cost (public transport links) Considerate Constructors Scheme Community Engagement Facilities and resources Medical and health support Co-production and support from families Staffing, recruitment and retention										
Outcomes										
Teaching and curriculum Pupil voice and influence Outreach/engagement with other schools In-reach/engagement with other schools 14 + pathways										



**Sufficient provision**

Does the model have the scope to deliver?

- We need **at least** 220 new special school places in Wiltshire by 2026
- **At least** 123 in the North, of which 50 will be for complex needs and the remainder for ASD/SEMH
- Reduce overcrowding (in line with DfE guidance)
- Achieve with an acceptable timeline

**Value for money**

Does the model have the potential to deliver savings that can be used to reinvest in enhanced teaching and learning and provide a sustainable financial future?

- Cost effective buildings
- Maximising contracted health services
- Maximize potential for reuse of existing buildings
- Reduction in running and maintenance costs
- Reduction in management costs
- More in-county specialist provision

**Quality**

Does the model lead to the development of a self-sustaining, self-improving system? Does the model lead to enhanced community engagement and inclusion that is meaningful, lived and enabled by the system?

- Partnerships
- Transport - time and cost (public transport links)
- Considerate Constructors Scheme
- Community Engagement
- Facilities and resources
- Medical and health support
- Co-production and support from families
- Staffing, recruitment and retention

**Outcomes**

Does the option foster outstanding SEND services that maximize independence and inclusion? Are children and young people equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to flourish in and where possible in adulthood, live independently (in their community), undertake further training and




development, access relevant work experience, start an apprenticeship, or find their first job?

- Teaching and curriculum
- Pupil voice and influence
- Outreach/engagement with other schools
- In-reach/engagement with other schools
- 14 + pathways

**Applying the criteria**

An assessment scorecard has been developed to enable detailed proposals to be assessed against the success criteria. This assessment enables a review of potential options against the goals of the Council.

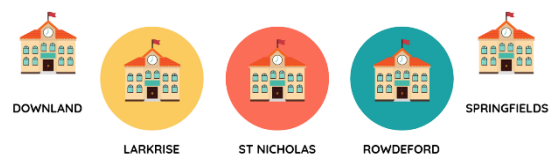
Special school heads, the Executive Director of WPCC, officers within the Council, consultees and the lead consultant for the project all engaged in developing the process. The options were scored by a number of officers, two headteachers (it should be noted that this was not undertaken by the headteachers of Larkrise or St Nicholas although it was sent to them) and a representative of WPCC.

Scoring criteria										
Positive 				Neutral 				Negative 		
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0

**Review of potential delivery models**

This section considers the range of potential delivery models and their relative strengths and weaknesses, including their applicability to Wiltshire Special Education Needs and Disability Strategy for Children and Young People aged 0-25; with a specific focus is on the 3 Local Authority Maintained special schools in the North.

**THE SITES - NORTH**



### Option 1 – Do Nothing

#### Overview

Whilst there are acknowledged strengths in the current provision, the status quo is not an option as it does not achieve the required expansion of 50 complex places in the North.

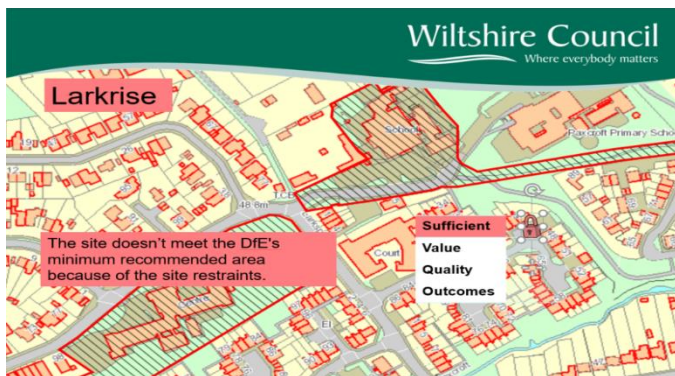
### Option 2 – Expand Larkrise

#### Overview

The site doesn't meet DfE's minimum recommended areas because of the site constraints.

#### Key elements

The diagram below shows the sites and issues:



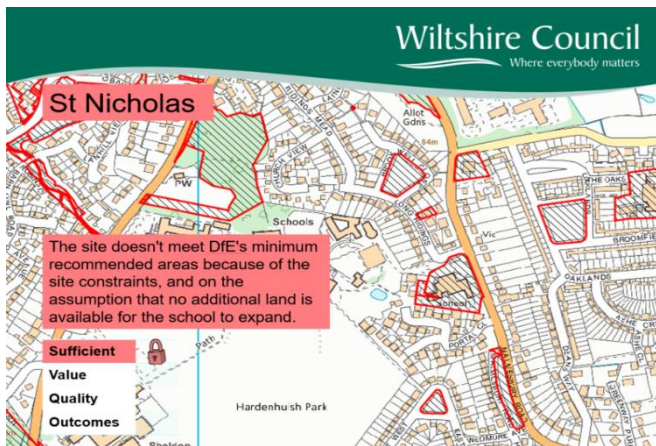
### Option 3 – Expand St Nicholas

#### Overview

The site doesn't meet DfE's minimum recommended areas because of the site constraints, and on the assumption that no additional land is available for the school to expand.

#### Key elements

The diagram below shows the site and issues:



### Option 4 – Develop Ashton Street

#### Overview

The site doesn't meet DfE's minimum recommended areas because of the site constraints.

#### Key elements

The diagram below shows the sites and issues:



The combined use of these two sites will also not meet site requirements.

### Option 5 – Expand Rowdeford

#### Overview

The expansion of the school should be possible under current planning policy. Primary and secondary with sixth form provision. Expansion of Rowdeford to accommodate 200 extra places made up of secondary and primary aged young people from Larkrise and St Nicholas as well as new students. The main Rowdeford campus is remodelled to accommodate non-ambulate pupils. Residential catered for with a separate business case.

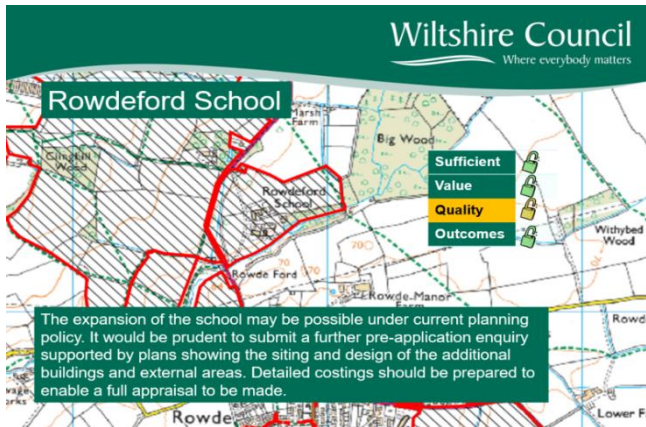
Assessments under the "Quality" criteria would be based on embracing the rural location, bringing professionals together, economies of scale and improvements in travel times.

Representatives from Rowdeford Charitable Trust particularly proposed using a house model, i.e. three separate buildings at Rowdeford under one SLT.



**Key elements**

The diagram below shows the sites and issues:



**Score (out of 10)**

7.07

**Capital build cost (estimate)**

£32m

**Annual revenue cost (estimate)**

£10.2M

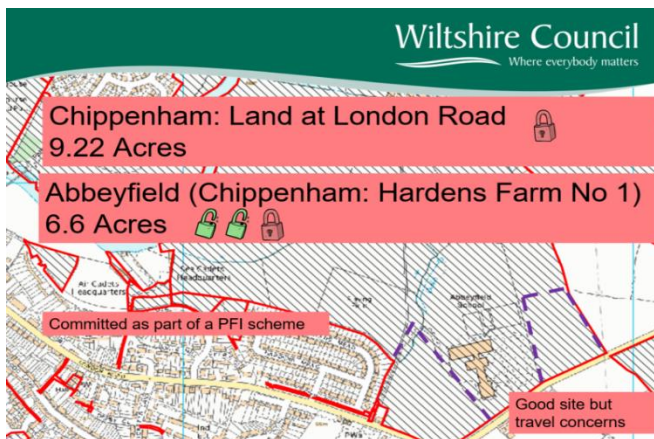
**Option 6 – Develop Abbeyfield**

**Overview**

One site is committed as part of a PFI scheme. The other is a good site but there are travel concerns.

**Key elements**

The diagram below shows the sites and issues:



**Score (out of 10)**

6.32

**Capital build cost (estimate)**

£40m

**Annual revenue cost (estimate)**

£10.2M

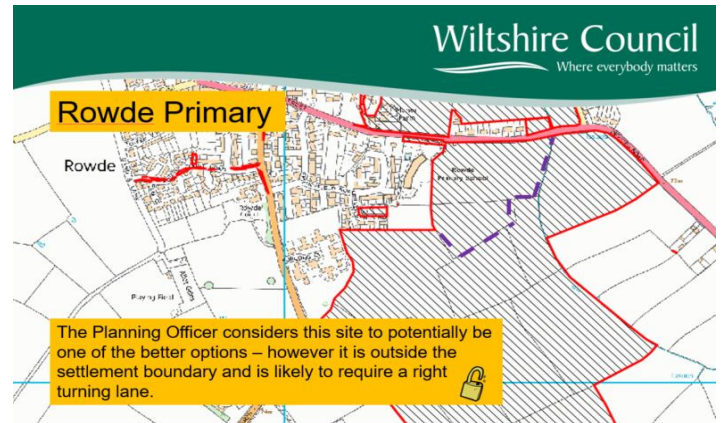
**Option 7 – Develop Rowde primary**

**Overview**

The Planning Officer considers this site to potentially be one of the better options – however it is outside the settlement boundary and is likely to require a right turning lane.

**Key elements**

The diagram below shows the sites and issues:



**Score (out of 10)**

n/a

**Capital build cost (estimate)**

£40m

**Annual revenue cost (estimate)**

£10.2M

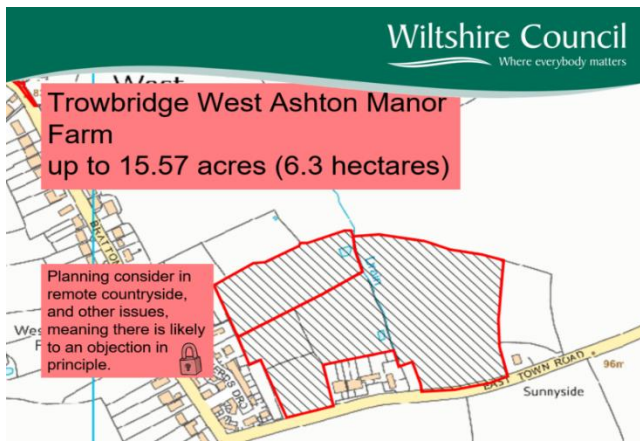
**Option 8 – Develop Trowbridge West Ashton Manor Farm**

**Overview**

Planning consider this to be in remote countryside, and other issues, meaning there is likely to an objection in principle.

**Key elements**

The diagram below shows the site and issues:



**Score (out of 10)**

na

**Capital build cost (estimate)**

£40m

**Annual revenue cost (estimate)**

£10.2M

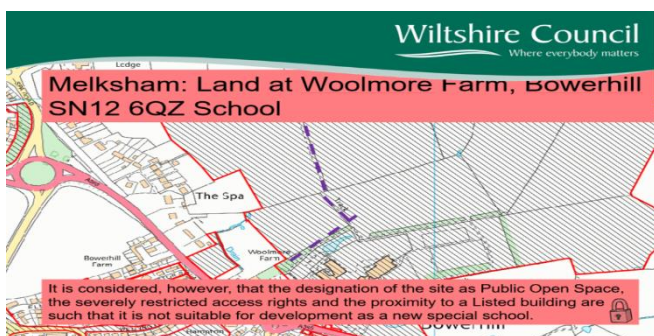
**Option 9 – Develop Melksham Land at Woolmore Farm**

**Overview**

It is considered that the designation of the site as Public Open Space, the severely restricted access rights and the proximity to a listed building make it not suitable for development as a new special school.

**Key elements**

The diagram below summarises this option:



**Score (out of 10)**

na

**Capital build cost (estimate)**

£40m

**Annual revenue cost (estimate)**

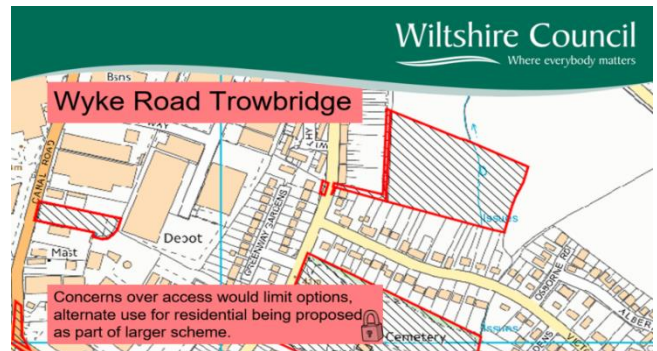
£10.2M

**Option 10 – Develop Wyke Road Trowbridge Overview**

Concerns over access would limit options, alternate use for residential being proposed as part of larger scheme.

**Key elements**

The diagram below summarises this option:



**Score (out of 10)**

na

**Capital build cost (estimate)**

£40m

**Annual revenue cost (estimate)**

£10.2M

**Option 11 – Develop Chippenham Magistrates Court**

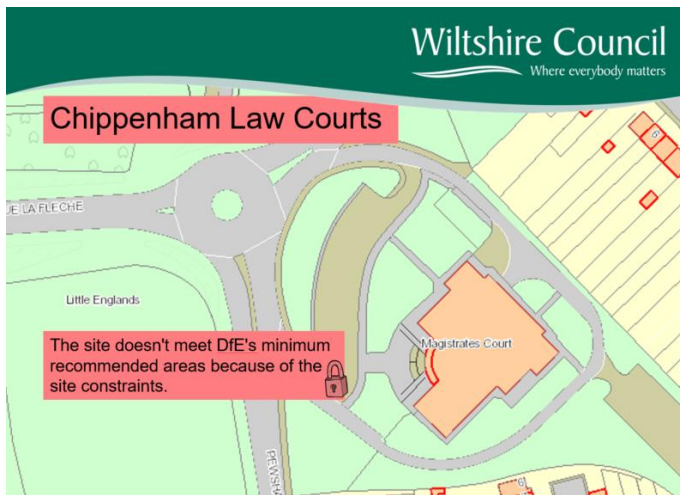
**Overview**

The site doesn't meet DfE's minimum recommended areas for a 350-place school, but could be used for a smaller school, however it would increase costs due to site purchase.

**Key elements**

The diagram below shows the sites and issues:





**Score (out of 10)**

na

**Capital build cost (estimate)**

£40m

**Annual revenue cost (estimate)**

£10.2M

The next set of options are based on multiple sites, potentially under one executive senior leadership team (SLT).

Multiple sites would potentially attract some level of spilt site allowance to support costs such as site-specific reception, administration and safeguarding. (This can range from £50 – £97,000 per site per year). There would be a reduction in the available specialist staff on any one site and there would continue to be pressure on the revenue budget. In the Quality section assessment there will be benefits of proximity to families' closest town location.

**Option 12 – Develop Rowdeford with primary satellite provision in Larkrise and St Nicholas**

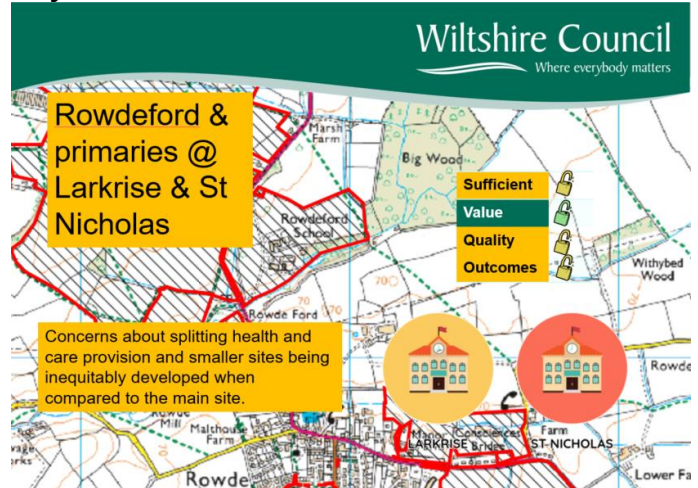
**Overview**

This option was submitted by the Friends of Larkrise and St Nicholas representatives in the Jan-March 2019 consultation. Primary and secondary with sixth form provision at Rowdeford. Expansion of Rowdeford to accommodate 100 complex places made up of secondary aged young people from Larkrise and St Nicholas. The main Rowdeford campus remodelled to accommodate

non-ambulate pupils. Residential catered for with a separate business case.

Larkrise and St Nicholas cap numbers at 50 each making overcrowding less of an issue. Only primary pupils being taken in.

**Key elements**



There would be an executive head over all three sites and this would be established as one school.

Primary only transport would require journey times of 45 minutes or less. This adds a considerable annual revenue cost.

**Score (out of 10)**

5.99

**Capital build cost (estimate)**

£22m

**Annual revenue cost (estimate)**

£10.9M

**Option 13 - Extend St Nicholas and Larkrise onto new sites and maintain Rowdeford**

This plan was put forward by the Wiltshire SEND Action Group:

- Leave Rowdeford as is
- Extend or replace St Nicholas on to a, as yet undecided, second site
- Extend Larkrise onto the Ashton Street site

**Overview**

Creating a minimum of 400 places over 5 sites. In terms of DfE standards the combined Larkrise site could offer 43 places, St Nicholas 21 and could use Abbeyfield to a significantly higher number. This

would place the majority of places in Chippenham. It would attract split site allowance. It would retain provision in three locations. This would be more expensive revenue wise and would not allow specialism to be rationalised in one place.

school option is not possible for replacement of school places.

### Key elements



### Score (out of 10)

5.49

### Capital build cost (estimate)

£28m

### Annual revenue cost (estimate)

£12.5M

Option 14 - Expand Rowdeford, Larkrise and St Nicholas on site and with new sites, keeping separate leadership teams, but creating an overarching board with the 4 MATs

#### Overview

This includes elements of the proposals submitted by a combined group of 5 special schools supported by 4 Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) in October 2017:

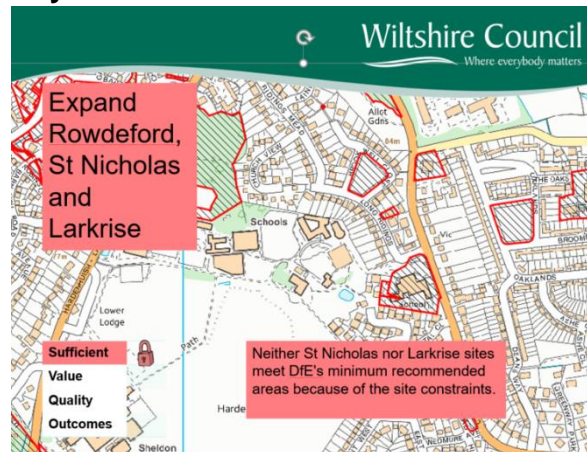
Redesign the Larkrise site and/or add in the Ashton St site

Redesign St Nicholas or use a free school application to develop on a new site

Add new classrooms to Rowdeford and add post 16

In terms of sufficiency this would not meet DfE standards for Larkrise and St Nicholas and would need to use new sites similar to option 13. The free

### Key elements



### Score (out of 10)

na

### Capital build cost (estimate)

£22M

### Annual revenue cost (estimate)

£10.9M

Option 15 – Utilising the Rowdeford site and maintaining St Nicholas as part of one split site school to meet immediate need and review the Chippenham site when the potential growth in Chippenham is known

#### Overview

Primary and secondary with sixth form provision at Rowdeford. Expansion of Rowdeford to accommodate 400 complex places made up of secondary aged young people from Larkrise and St Nicholas, secondary from Rowdeford, primary Larkrise and new primary pupils. The main Rowdeford campus is remodelled to further accommodate non-ambulant pupils. Residential catered for with a separate business case.

Larkrise is closed when the new school opens, and St Nicholas becomes part of a new school on split sites managed by one executive. The St Nicholas site would be for 60 primary age pupils with

complex needs. (there are currently 42 primary pupils with complex needs at St Nicholas school).

If the HIF application is not successful a review can then be made as to whether the school is retained permanently or closed, and pupils join the Rowdeford school. If successful either the current site could be kept, or a new school built utilising the financial capacity with Section 106 and CIL to develop school capacity. At this point (potentially 2-5 years from now) there may also be another free school round which could also facilitate the funding of a school.

Capital funding would not be dissimilar to proposal 5, but as noted would need additional capital. While losing some of the benefits of one on site school it would also offer a choice of two school buildings and two different sorts of communities – one rural one urban.

### Key elements



### Score (out of 10)

6.39

### Capital build cost (estimate)

£33M




### Annual revenue cost (estimate)

£10.4M

### 14.3 Description of 21 indices used in Option Appraisal process

#### Sufficient provision




Of the right type and scope. The right places and the development of the right organisations

		Positive 	Neutral 	Negative 	
		10 9 8 7	6 5 4 3	2 1 0	
1	Sufficient flexible provision to provide for the changing needs of SEND pupils now and in the future.	400 places with expansion for a further 100.	400 places with expansion for a further 75.	400 places with expansion for a further 50.	10%
2	Reduce overcrowding (in line with DfE guidance - BB104)	In line with BB104 Substantial reduction in overcrowding at Larkrise and St Nichols	In line with BB104 Reduction in overcrowding at Larkrise and St Nichols	Not in line with BB104 No reduction in overcrowding	10%
3	Impact on timeline	Sufficient new provision is opened before 2023 and comfortably accommodates growth for 2021.	Sufficient new provision is opened by 2023	Delay to opening of sufficient new provision by 2023	5%






## Value for money




Sustainability and capacity building. Building system excellence not just more places in the system. Economy (of scale), effectiveness & efficiency. The more savings in all areas means that more of the funding that is currently spent can be redirected into teaching and learning.




		Positive 	Neutral 	Negative 	
		10    9    8    7	6    5    4    3	2    1    0	
4	Cost effective buildings that are fit for purpose	Whilst securing great quality the gross internal floor areas (GIFA) capital build cost per m2 is minimised (<£2.5K/m2); average cost per pupil place <£65K. And use of remodelling savings is maximised	Capital (GIFA) build cost per m2 is competitive (£2.5-£3K/m2) ; average cost per pupil place <£75K. And good use of remodelling to save on build costs	Capital build costs are high (>£3K/m2) ; average cost per pupil place >£75K.when benchmarked externally.	6%
5	Maximise potential for reuse of existing buildings	Remodelling of existing building affords significant savings	Remodelling of existing building affords some savings	Remodelling is not an option or affords no savings	4%
6	The spend on this project is proportionate to the council's wide ranging responsibilities and provides the best value for money in reaching wider outcomes.	Significant but proportionate funds are prioritised for this vulnerable group as a future investment	Spend is proportionate in line with council's priorities	Insufficient/excessive costs are identified in proportion to the council's overall responsibilities.	5%
7	Offers savings with reduction in management costs including DSG and CCG contracts. Offers savings with reduction in running and maintenance costs	Costs are significantly reduced at the school. There is clear potential to maximise and reduce contractual spend. The approach to the reprovision offers potential for reductions in spend across the system. Good design makes schools much cheaper to run and maintain.	Management costs are reduced. There is some potential to maximise and reduce contractual spend. The approach to the reprovision offers some potential for reductions in spend across the system. Running and maintenance costs are reduced.	Management costs stay the same or are increased. There is limited or no potential to maximise and reduce contractual spend. The approach to the reprovision offers limited or no potential for reductions in spend across the system. Running and maintenance costs stay the same or are increased	6%

8	Decrease spend on expensive out of county and independent providers	Number of out of county and ISS places is substantially reduced	Number of out of county and ISS places is reduced	Number of out of county and ISS places stays the same or is increased	4%
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## Quality




		Positive 	Neutral 	Negative 	
		10 9 8 7	6 5 4 3	2 1 0	
9	<b>Partnerships &amp; collaborations</b> - an approach leading to the development of a self-sustaining, self-improving system; rooted in social inclusion and equality.	A vibrant partnership of special schools, mainstream schools and colleges, local health and wellbeing providers and local businesses all working together to support children, young people and their families to thrive and be healthy and resilient.	A good partnership of special schools, mainstream schools and colleges, local health and wellbeing providers all working together to support children, young people and their families.	A nascent partnership of special schools, mainstream schools, local health and wellbeing providers.	5%
10	<b>Transport</b> - time and cost (public transport links)	Transport for all is less than 45 minutes and delivers an outstanding quality experience for the pupils. Great access to school for parents using public transport.	Transport for more than 98% is less than 60 minutes and for 100% is less than 75 minutes. A good quality experience. Good access to school for parents using public transport.	Transport for more than 2% is over 60 minutes. Access to school for parents on public transport is limited.	3%
11	<b>Community Engagement</b> - inclusion that is meaningful, lived and enabled by the system.	Student differences are embraced and celebrated creating communities where everyone feels valued and accepted. Local Parent/Carer support groups eg WPCC have a very strong voice.	Student differences are embraced and celebrated creating communities where everyone feels valued and accepted. Local Parent/Carer support groups eg WPCC have a strong voice.	Segregation of students by ability.	4%




		Positive 	Neutral 	Negative 	
		10 9 8 7	6 5 4 3	2 1 0	
12	<b>Facilities and resources</b> Including community access for resources and facilities and also how pupils can access offsite facilities and resources.	Outstanding design helps harness the creative energy and passions of the pupils, teachers and support staff. Pupils and staff feel a sense of ownership and belonging to their school, prompting positive social interaction, outstanding teaching and learning, and a healthy lifestyle.	Great design helps harness the creative energy and passions of the pupils, teachers and support staff. Pupils and staff feel a sense of ownership and belonging to their school, prompting positive social interaction, outstanding teaching and learning, and a healthy lifestyle.	Designs are not perceived to be good nor do they instill a sense of ownership and belonging by pupils and staff.	3%
13	<b>Choice</b>	More than 90% of parents and carers genuinely feel they have a choice when choosing a school. More than 80% of parents and carers got their first choice of school for their children.	More than 75% of parents and carers genuinely feel they have a choice when choosing a school. More than 70% of parents and carers got their first choice of school for their children.	Less than 75% of parents and carers genuinely feel they have a choice when choosing a school. Less than 70% of parents and carers got their first choice of school for their children.	2%
14	<b>Medical and health support</b>	"Hub" and "spoke" buildings facilitate <u>outstanding</u> integrated multi-professional timely medical and health support.	"Hub" and "spoke" buildings facilitate <u>good</u> integrated multi-professional timely medical and health support.	Integrated multi-professional timely medical and health support is not enhanced.	3%
15	<b>Co-production</b> and support from families	Outstanding family and community partnerships (particularly where students live and will live in the future) are leveraged.	Good family and community partnerships are leveraged	Community partnerships are not leveraged	1%

		Positive 				Neutral 				Negative 			
		10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	
16	<b>Staffing</b> , recruitment and retention	The award winning new buildings attract new teaching and wellbeing talent. Outstanding professional development is tailored and staff-driven.				New buildings attract teaching and wellbeing talent. Good professional development is tailored and staff-driven.				New buildings do not attract teaching and wellbeing talent.			4%

Outcomes

		Positive 				Neutral 				Negative 			
		10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	
17	<b>Teaching and curriculum</b> Preparing children and young people with life skills for the future in their community.	World class inclusive education practiced across Wiltshire schools, settings and colleges, with individualised student supports through outstanding EHCP and SEN support programmes. SEND students (with the exception of PMLD and those with significant cognitive disabilities) at the Special schools and Wiltshire mainstream schools <u>significantly outperform</u> the national average in both English and Maths at all Key Stages. Outstanding achievement against measures detailed in EHCP.				Inclusive education practiced across Wiltshire schools, settings and colleges, with individualised student supports through outstanding EHCP and SEN support programmes. SEND students (with the exception of PMLD and those with significant cognitive disabilities) at the Special schools and Wiltshire mainstream schools outperform the national average in both English and Maths at all Key Stages. Good achievement against measures detailed in EHCP.				Teaching and learning is not consistently impacted by best practice inclusive education.			8%

		Positive 	Neutral 	Negative 		
		10 9 8 7	6 5 4 3	2 1 0		
18	<p><b>Equality within a system of excellence.</b> Pupil Voice and influence</p>	<p>Outstanding engagement of SEND children and young people re transformed estate eg: •School councils •Involving pupils in recruitment and selection •Involving pupils in teaching and learning •Involving governors with pupil voice •National Takeover Day •Children's Mayor Programme</p>	<p>Good engagement of SEND children and young people re transformed estate eg: •School councils •Involving pupils in recruitment and selection •Involving pupils in teaching and learning •Involving governors with pupil voice •National Takeover Day •Children's Mayor Programme</p>	<p>Limited engagement of SEND children and young people.</p>	3%	
19	<p><b>Outreach/engagement with other schools</b> Development of cutting edge ideas, research informed knowledge and skills and the sharing and development of those skills and capacities within and beyond</p>	<p>Outstanding outreach to mainstream schools from the new provision to support the inclusion and improved outcomes of SEND pupils.</p>	<p>Good outreach to mainstream schools from the new provision to support the inclusion and improved outcomes of SEND pupils.</p>	<p>Limited outreach to mainstream schools from the new provision to support the inclusion and improved outcomes of SEND pupils.</p>	3%	
20	<p><b>Inreach/engagement with other schools</b> Development of cutting edge ideas, research informed knowledge and skills and the sharing and development of those skills and capacities within and beyond.</p>	<p>Outstanding in-reach offers SEND pupils, based in mainstream, opportunities to learn at a centre of excellence.</p>	<p>Good in-reach offers SEND pupils, based in mainstream, opportunities to learn at a centre of excellence.</p>	<p>Limited in-reach for SEND pupils, based in mainstream, to learn at a centre of excellence.</p>	3%	

		Positive 	Neutral 	Negative 		
		10 9 8 7	6 5 4 3	2 1 0		
21	14 + pathways	<p>Outstanding "Transition to Adulthood" services - maximising independence and inclusion in preparation for adult life. Equipping young people with the knowledge and skills they need to flourish in adult life and where possible live independently (in their community), undertake further training and development, access relevant work experience, start an apprenticeship, or find their first job.</p>	<p>Good "Transition to Adulthood" services - maximising independence in preparation for adult life</p>	<p>Transition to Adulthood services are not yet "good".</p>	8%	

## 14.4 Summary of average scores for each plan

		Average score (out of 10)
	<u>1 site solutions</u>	
Plan 2	Plan 2: Single site - Rowdeford 400 (Close all three schools and open as one new school on the Rowdeford site)	7.07
Plan 3	Plan 3: Single site - Abbeyfield 400 (Close all three schools and open as one new site adjacent to Abbeyfield school in Chippenham)	6.32
	<u>2 site solutions</u>	
Plan 4	Plan 4: 2 sites under single leadership - Rowdeford 350, Larkrise/ St Nicholas 50 (Close all three schools and open one new one predominantly based at Rowdeford with a satellite at either Larkrise or St Nicholas)	6.39
Plan 5	Plan 5: 2 sites under single leadership - Rowdeford 350, New School 50 (Close all three schools and open one new one predominantly based at Rowdeford with a satellite a new site)	6.69
	<u>3 site solutions</u>	
Plan 6	Plan 6: 3 sites - Rowdeford 300 & Larkrise 50 & St Nicholas 50 (Close all three schools and open one new one predominantly based at Rowdeford with a satellite at Larkrise and St Nicholas)	5.99
Plan 7	Plan 7: 3 sites - Rowdeford 300 & New School A 50 & New School B 50 (Close all three schools and open one new one predominantly based at Rowdeford with a satellite at two new sites)	6.04
	<u>5 site solution</u>	
Plan 8	Plan 8: 5 sites - Rowdeford 200, St Nicholas 50, Larkrise 50, New School A 50, New School B 50 (Close all three schools and open one new one predominantly based at Rowdeford with a satellite at Larkrise and St Nicholas and two others – one in Chippenham and one in Trowbridge)	5.49

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## Appendix 15 - Full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

An EQIA Screening has identified that this proposal/policy/project requires a full EQIA. This means there is a risk of significant adverse impact on service users/ residents including 'vulnerable groups' and/or and those from certain protected characteristics. An EQIA shows how you have and intend to ensure equalities issues are taken into account in:

1. making key decisions e.g. there are 3 cost saving proposals and you need to agree one
2. implementing an agreed decision e.g. you have agreed the proposals and need take on board the needs of those affected and reduce any negative impact where possible
3. reviewing the outcome of the decision e.g. reviewing the actual impact on people and whether it was successful in achieving savings

This document is a way of recording processes and is a key part of our obligation to show 'due regard'. The document can be updated and shared with decision makers throughout the project to inform which approaches/ ideas etc. are taken forward, how it is implemented and to review its success.

**Please append all related:**

- **EQIA screenings**
- **Full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)**
- **Equality Impact Assessment Quality Assurance Checklist**
- **Proposals- budget/ practice/ policy**

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<b>Officers Involved in completing screening</b>	
Officer completing Equality Impact Assessment:	Judith Westcott
Head of Service or Operational Director authorising Equality Impact Assessment:	Ian Gibbons and Helen Jones
Date Equality Impact Assessment completed:	11 May 2019

<b>1. Proposal being Assessed</b>	
Title of Budget Option/ Report:	Special Schools development programme
Service Area and Directorate:	Children's Commissioning, Commissioning

Budget Option:	
Budget Reference:	
Date proposal to be considered at Cabinet (if known):	22 May 2019
Is this a new proposal?	This is a presentation of a proposal that has been developed over the last three years and has had previous equalities impact assessment (November 2017 and November 2018)
If linked to previous years give details:	Cabinet November 2017, cabinet Report 2018
On whom will the policy / decision impact?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service users <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other public-sector organisations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Voluntary / community groups / trade unions <input type="checkbox"/> Others (none)
Brief description of policy / decision to be screened:	<p>Following the agreed consultation between January and March 2019 the Cabinet will be asked to:</p> <p>The recommendation is made that the Cabinet:</p> <p>Having completed pre-publication consultation it is recommended that the Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approves the establishment of a new maintained special school with a single leadership team for the existing St Nicholas, Rowdeford and Larkrise schools as soon as possible and no later than 1 September 2021</li> <li>• Approves the closure of St Nicholas, Rowdeford and Larkrise school as a related proposal on the 31 August 2021</li> <li>• Approves expansion on the existing Rowdeford site to accommodate up to 400 pupils as part of the new special school by September 2023</li> <li>• Notes that, in the event of Cabinet approving the proposals that a final decision by Cabinet would be required following representations.</li> <li>• Authorises the Executive Director of Children's Services, after consultation with the Cabinet member for Children, Education and Skills, the Director of Legal, Electoral and Registration Services and Chief Finance Officer/Section 151 Officer to take all necessary steps to implement Cabinets decision.</li> </ul>

That this is achieved by:

- Subject to consent of the Secretary of State, approving the issue of a statutory notice and 4-week representation period on the proposal to discontinue St Nicholas, Larkrise and Rowdeford as three separate Special Schools with effect from no later than the 31 August 2021. The notice also to refer to the opening of one new special school from September 2021 under the Opening and Closing Maintained Schools Guidance November 2018
- Approving that the Council would present a proposal to the School's Adjudicator to open a new maintained special school, subject to conclusions of the representation process.
- Approving the use of the statutory processes, (under the 'Making Significant Changes (Prescribed Alterations) to Maintained Schools' Guidance November 2018, to transfer to the Rowdeford site the provision at St Nicholas and Larkrise. This statutory process would take place no later than 12 months before the opening of the new provision. This would result in the closure of the St Nicholas and Larkrise sites at an appropriate time after the new provision is built
- Approving that the new school will have primary, secondary and Post 16 provision on the Rowdeford site (early years not to be included due to sufficiency)
- Noting and approving the proposal for a parallel programme of work to create a cross county approach to Post 16 special education and transition to independent living.

## 2. Reasoning behind the Proposal

Please see the papers that were presented to cabinet link:

<http://moderngov.wiltshire.council/documents/g11670/Public%20reports%20pack%2027th-Nov-2018%2009.30%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>

The linked documents describe the reasoning and information which was used to put forward proposals on the 27<sup>th</sup> of November 2018 and the current 22 of May 2019 to cabinet following three years of debate, deliberation and consultation. There have been three stages of consultation leading to this point

- In November 2017, wide consultation was taken forward with stakeholders about the role, significance and quality of SEND services, with a specific focus on the role of special schools.
- In the summer of 2018 a further consultation was taken forward with stakeholders in schools (parent/carers, staff and governors) as well as an online consultation looking specifically at the qualities of schools that were important going forward.
- In January/March 2019 specific consultation was taken forward on a pre-statutory phase for opening a new school and closing the three current schools.

This third phase included an extended period of time following a challenge through judicial review which is was felt was best responded to by changing the third phase from statutory to pre-statutory consultation. This decision was made to:

- Improve the relationship with parent/carers who were particularly concerned about the proposals and had submitted the legal challenge
- Minimise the costs for both the Local Authority and the parent/carer group
- Ensure that officer time was focused on developing the project as oppose to legal processes

The second consultation suggested that the majority of respondents (71%) felt that all three schools should be kept open despite the inherent challenges to quality, space and finance. This did not agree with the assessment of the council which unanimously agreed in cabinet of the 27<sup>th</sup> of November that there was compelling information and reasoning to support specific consultation on closing all three schools and opening one new larger school that could offer the very best in resources, quality, financial efficacy and furthermore outreach to the wider population of children and young people with SEND.

This created two areas of significant risk:

- Reputational damage - Where the council decides not in favour of the consultation responses there is the possibility of reputation damage where the public identifies that the council is not listening to their views.
- Legal challenge – Where stakeholders believe that there is sufficient evidence to show that the council:
  - Has not reached a reasonable decision from the information available
  - Has not used the appropriate information
  - Has not followed procedure appropriately

Please see the November 2018 EIA for further details.

This current EIA is now considering the impact of the decisions, as opposed to consultation on proposals, the impacts are more directly in the community that Wilshire Council serves. Key areas of concerns are identified below.

In the third consultation in 2019 the balance of opinion has changed with 45% supporting the proposal and 55% against. Over 2400 online respondents and 145 face to face engagements took place during the first half of the consultation. In the second half of this consultation 94 face to face engagements took place with 27 emails and 66 online responses. In this part of the consultation consultees were encouraged not to repeat comments made in January - February, but to use this time to present new approaches and to understand the appraisal process. The issues raised are explored in the cabinet report of March 2019 and should be seen as part of this EIA. Key issues are summarised below.

### Results from the screening

Specify which protected characteristics (and groups within) were identified in the screening as at risk of adverse impact

Age	Disability	Race	Religion or belief	Gender
Children and young people are within scope of the proposal from birth to age 25, but specifically school age children/ young people	The proposals will impact on all children and young people with SEND who are educated or will be in a special school in the north of the county and their families. Approximately 12.5% of children have an EHCP or have a SEN Support plan	Services and schools, and access to services and schools are not restricted to or by race and ethnicity.	Services and schools and access to services and schools are not restricted to or by religion or belief	Services and schools and access to services and schools are not restricted by gender
Maternity or pregnancy	Transgender	Sexual Orientation	Marriage or Civil Partnership	Socio-economics/ at risk groups
There is no direct relationship to maternity or pregnancy. However, any decisions made about staff will need to take into account	Neutral impact	Neutral impact	Neutral impact	There is a higher incidence of SEND amongst children and young people who are in receipt of free school meals therefore both the benefits and risks will impact on this group.

appropriate guidance regarding staff currently pregnant or on maternity leave.				The role of parent/carer is for many parent/carers a stressful one and the decision may increase pressures on families with children with SEND
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### 3. Making Informed Decisions – Useful Data

The data is given in the cabinet reports and the scrutiny task groups reports.

#### Data Gathering - Summary

If not clearly identified above briefly summarise how different groups will be affected by the proposal(s)

Profile:	Are any groups disproportionately impacted by the changes (who, how and why):
Age profile: See Appendix 16 for further detail.	Are any age groups disproportionately impacted by the changes (who, how and why): Age groups are not disproportionately impacted, but this a proposal which is focused on children and young people.
Disability profile: See Appendix 16 for further detail.	<p>Are disabled people or those with certain disabilities disproportionately impacted by the changes (how and why):</p> <p>This proposal is focused on children/young people with SEND and the plans are designed to improve school provision and wellbeing for children/young people in special and mainstream schools.</p> <p>However as noted above we recognise that there are potential negative impacts for some children</p> <p>Key concerns are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some children will have a longer journey.</li> <li>• Some children/young people with significant medical needs may be at risk on a longer journey – Conversations were had with the SEND transport team, the transport team and Virgin Care to assess risk. Their responses are presented and assessed in the March 2019 report.</li> <li>• That choice will be reduced</li> </ul> <p>Currently pupils have a choice of:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being part of a mainstream school</li> <li>• Attending a resource base or Enhanced Learning provision in mainstream school (Wiltshire has significantly more resource base provision than other counties and is currently increasing local provision through this approach)</li> <li>• Attending a special school</li> </ul> <p>Special schools and resource bases offer support for different SEND designations. With Schools for children/young people with ASD, SEMH, complex needs and MLD. Many counties no longer have special school provision for students with MLD and Wiltshire will be retaining this provision.</p> <p>The combined one site school would offer comprehensive choice and by having a wide range of skilled staff on one site would be able to offer significant variety and differentiation for each pupil. The multi-site option would offer variety of locations, but less diversity of specialist support and curriculum as it would not be possible to replicate all provision on all sites within the space and budget available.</p> <p>The site at Rowdeford offers a wide ranging rural location for a school with large playing fields and access to outdoor learning. The Larkrise and St Nicholas sites currently have limited outdoor space, but are in town locations giving quicker access to shops and other town based facilities.</p> <p>Significant concerns have been raised about transport both in terms of length of journey and how far away some parents are from their children while they are at school if the one site option is taken forward. In terms of equalities impact it should be noted that currently those children living in the eastern and middle regions in Wiltshire already travel significant distances to school. 45 pupils currently travel over an hour to school.</p> <p>The proposed one site model (one site at Rowdeford) and the multi-site option ( a site at Rowdeford for primary and secondary, a site at Larkrise and St Nicholas for primary) have both been looked at to create a model where no child/young person travels more that the guidance proposes for primary and secondary pupils. Both options will cost more than current travel, the one site 430k more, the multi-site 765k more.</p>
Race profile:	<p>Are any ethnic groups disproportionately impacted by the changes (how and why): Ethnic groups are not disproportionately impacted</p>
Religion or belief profile:	<p>Are any faith groups disproportionately impacted by the changes (how and why): Faith groups are not disproportionately impacted</p>
Gender profile:	<p>Are male/female residents disproportionately impacted by the changes (how and why):</p>

	There are no specific impacts related to gender
Maternity or pregnancy:	Are pregnant women or breastfeeding mothers disproportionately impacted by the changes (how and why): There should be stronger links with maternal health services through the centre of excellence
Transgender profile:	Are transgender residents disproportionately impacted by the changes (how and why): Transgender residents are not disproportionately impacted
Sexual Orientation profile:	Are heterosexual/ gay/ lesbian/ bisexual residents disproportionately impacted by the changes (how and why): Heterosexual/ gay/ lesbian/ bisexual residents are not disproportionately impacted
Marriage or Civil Partnership:	Are people who are married or who have entered into a civil partnership disproportionately impacted by the changes (how and why): People who are married or who have entered into a civil partnership are not disproportionately impacted
Socio-economics/ at risk groups profile:	Are any groups disproportionately impacted by the changes (how and why): Those on minimal wages and lower income may be affected where the travel time is costlier. It is also acknowledged that families with children with SEND may need one or both of the parent/carers to not engage in fulltime work in order to support and care for their child. Thus, any changes should take into account the additional financial strain and impact on the wellbeing of the families.
Multiple characteristics: (e.g. males with a learning disability) See Appendix 16 for further detail.	Are there any groups which may be impacted in a cumulative way due to multiple protected characteristics? Children with disabilities are a key focus of the proposed Special School project.  Please see the attached excel sheet for appreciation of how the socio-economic, disability and age characteristic may interact. A detailed review of the impact on those with protected characteristics has been taken from the perspective of a senior executive in the local authority, an external consultant and the lead of WPCC, a key parent representation group in Wiltshire.



## 4. Making Informed Decisions – Stakeholder Consultation/Engagement

Views from Stakeholder Consultation/ Engagement:

### The Consultation Methodology

Following the issue of the notice Wiltshire Council, in partnership with Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC) began consultation. This included:

- Meetings run by Wiltshire council for:
  - Parent/carers with children/young people attending the three schools in each of the schools
  - Staff and governors of the three schools
  - The Voice and Influence Team offered the three schools support to enable pupils to give their views as part of the consultation (this was taken up by Rowdeford)
- An Online survey (See Appendix 2) accompanied by:
  - The Proposal document
  - The Vision document
  - A video of Cllr Mayes in conversation with Stuart Hall from WPCC discussing key issues within the proposals
- Surgeries run by WPCC for parent/carers across the county including parent/carers of younger children currently attending district specialist centres (Nursery settings for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities – SEND)
- An email address where all longer comments and concerns could be sent
- Officers meeting with representatives of the Friends of Larkrise and St Nicholas
- Additional meeting for parents in Melksham
- An opportunity for parents to see Exeter House school to envisage what a new school might look like

Links to the online documentation and consultation options were shared with<sup>1</sup>:

- All neighbouring Local Authorities
- Local Authorities other than Wiltshire maintaining or funding children's EHCPs who attend one of the special schools
- Local Area boards and parish councils
- The Voluntary Sector Forum
- Provider stakeholders e.g. Virgin Care and Oxford Health,
- Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC)
- All parents/carers of children/young people with an EHCP

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<sup>1</sup> These are the main consultees, wider engagements were also included

- All Wiltshire schools via Right Choice and via direct email
- Special schools in neighbouring counties
- District Specialist Centres and the Portage Service
- All registered early years and childcare provision in Wiltshire
- Wiltshire ambulance and air ambulance services
- Hospitals (RUH, SFT, GWH)
- Post 16 education providers

The consultation was held over a 7½ weeks. A summary of the meetings is below:

Meeting hosted by	Where	Audience	When	Time
Council officers	St Nicolas	Staff and governors	21 Jan	1530-1700
Council officers	St Nicolas	Parents and carers	21 Jan	1700-1800
Council officers	St Nicolas	Staff and governors	12 Feb	1700-1845
Council officers	St Nicolas	Parents and carers	12 Feb	1845-1945
Council officers	Larkrise	Staff and governors	07 Feb	1530-1700
Council officers	Larkrise	Parents and carers	07 Feb	1500-1800
Council officers	Rowdeford	Staff and governors	26 Feb	1600-1700
Council officers	Rowdeford	Parents and carers	26 Feb	1700-1830
WPCC	Chippenham	District Specialist Centre	25 Feb	
WPCC	Devizes	District Specialist Centre	25 Feb	
WPCC	Salisbury	District Specialist Centre	25 Feb	
WPCC	Grasmere House, Salisbury	Parents and carers	15 Jan	1030-1230
WPCC	Springfield Campus, Corsham	Parents and carers	18 Jan	1030-1230
WPCC	Beverbrook Sport Facility, Calne	Parents and carers	28 Feb	1200-1400
Council officers	Trowbridge	Friends of Larkrise and St Nicolas	12 Feb	1100-1200
Council officers	Melksham Town Hall	Parents and carers	25 Feb	1100-1230

There were high levels of engagement online with 2,400 responses:

About you	Total	In Support	Not in support	In Support	Not in support
A Wiltshire resident	1444	609	835	42%	58%
A parent carer of a child or young person with a SEND	752	316	436	42%	58%
A relative or friend of a child/young person with SEND	605	196	409	32%	68%
A parent carer of a child/young person currently in one of Wiltshire's Special schools	342	139	203	41%	59%
A professional with an interest in special school provision	554	251	303	45%	55%
Someone representing an organisation with an interest in special school provision	102	65	37	64%	36%

The range of people representing an organisation with an interest included:

- Jacob's Ladder
- Larkrise School
- Parent Governors
- Wiltshire Portage
- Neptune Aquatic Solutions
- Colerne CE Primary School
- School Governor Rowdeford
- Sheldon School
- Wiltshire parent/carer support group
- Rowdeford School
- Magna Learning Partnership
- Exeter House School
- Pewsey Primary School
- Studley Green Primary School
- St Nicholas School
- Chippenham Senior PHAB Club
- No to special school closure
- S6C
- Taxis
- Cobra
- Parents
- Devizes Lions Club
- Virgin Care
- Wiltshire Connect
- Chippenham Town Council
- HCC
- An ex-student of Rowdeford School
- Clubs that used the facilities in holidays for young children/ adults with disabilities
- Parent of a SEN professional
- Rowdeford Governor
- Rowdeford Charity Trust (Registered No 1088605)
- HM Forces
- Parents' group
- Wiltshire Music Centre
- Canon's House
- PDA/ Autistic/ anxiety support groups nationwide

Wiltshire Council ran consultation meetings in each school with separate sessions for staff and governors and parents/carers. At the request of St Nicholas, extra meetings were held at the school. In response to the Friends of Larkrise and St Nicolas who expressed concerns about parents not being able to access evening sessions in the schools, an additional session was held at Melksham. The attendance to all meetings is below<sup>2</sup>:

	St Nicholas	Rowdeford	Larkrise	Additional session in Melksham	Total
Parent/carers	16	24	14	3	57
Staff	26	23	16	0	65
Governors/Trustees	7	5	4	1	17
Total	49	52	34	4	139

The consultation meetings led by WPCCC were attended by 31 parent/carers as detailed below:

	Calne	Corsham	Salisbury	Total
Parent/carers	16	11	4	31

There were also emails from:

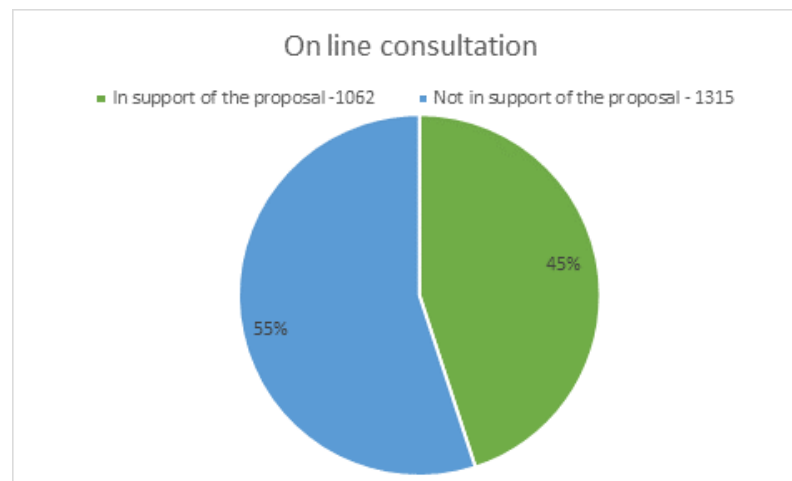
- Schools and Governors (34)
- Parent/Carers (47)
- Dr Murrison MP
- Other Local Authorities (1)
- Friends of schools (2)
- Town and Parish (Councils (3) Chippenham, Westbury and St Paul, Malmesbury Without)
- Professional organisations (3) including
  - Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
  - Virgin Care
  - Wiltshire Music Centre

<sup>2</sup> Please note that a number of parent carers attended multiple sessions (they are counted twice here).

## Analysis of the On-line Consultation

A report on the on-line consultation results is attached as Appendix 2. In summary, 45% supported the proposals and 55% did not:

In the consultation respondents were asked to indicate the three main reasons that they were for or against the proposals. The table below identifies their responses in rank order:



In support			Not in Support		
19%	518	The proposal is about giving the best provision for children and young people with SEND	22%	804	Increased travel time
17%	465	Having a rural location but close to a town with good community links	21%	767	The disruption to pupils who will have to move
14%	387	The idea that a Centre of Excellence will be created	20%	711	Closure of existing schools
14%	382	The proposal would provide improved facilities	13%	462	Concern about the size of the new school
13%	348	Other reason	12%	427	Being too remote
12%	317	There would be access to therapies all at one site	9%	342	Worries about inclusion
10%	279	Keeping the best of the schools	3%	104	Other
	2696			3617	

The on-line survey allowed respondents to make short comments. There were 344 comments in support of the proposal (the majority would appear to be existing Rowdeford school supporters) and only 103 comments against.

In the second half of the third phase of consultation, the following face to face sessions were hosted by council officers during the extended pre-publication consultation period:

Where	Number of attendees	When	Time
Hardenhuish School, Chippenham	16	5 April	10:30-12:00noon
County Hall, Trowbridge	52	2 May	6:30-8:30pm
Devizes Sports Club	26	3 May	11:00-12:30pm
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>		

These sessions were open meetings for anyone interested in the special educational needs provision (specifically in the north). The slides used are



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attached here.

In addition to these, an information morning was held by Wiltshire Council for the south at the Diocesan Education Centre in Wilton on 1 May. A total of 32 individuals attended this session, representing parent and carers, a primary school, an independent school, Wiltshire Parent Carer Council, a councillor and Salisbury City Council.

The consultation will be managed through four stages as below.

### Views of Service Users and Other Stakeholders - Summary

Consultation replies from the consultation in the summer and the January /February 2019 consultation are available on the cabinet link above. All transcripts and notes of meetings, emails, letters are part of the appendices and presented to cabinet members.

Key areas of debate, concern and comment which might impact on protected characteristics included whether:

- One school was the right approach

- Leading to reduction in choice
- Segregating children/young people with SEND
- Depriving other communities of inclusive engagement with children/young people with SEND
- A decision based on cost
- Creating a 'super' school
- Travel times and routes become excessively long
- Medical and health support would be insufficient to meet need and increased risk
- Post 16 education should only happen away from the school
- The proposal led to a lack of community engagement in the wrong location
- Coproduction was not really being outworked
- The Centre of Excellence was just a name and would not really change practice
- Transition planning would be adequate
- The status of the new school should be a new academy or a maintained school and whether it should involve closing and opening a school or enlarging one school
- Early Years was required at the school
- There were issues with staffing, recruitment and retention, particularly in relation to
  - Travel and recruitment
  - The academy or maintained status
  - Fair access to jobs
  - Staff leaving because of disruption and whether there would be jobs for everyone
- The costs were enough and the build plans actually workable
- The admissions plan was appropriate
- The curriculum was wide enough to meet need

For the purposes of the EIA the protected characteristics are assessed in Appendix 16. This document assesses risk by three parties:

- A LA officer developing the programme

- The independent view of an external consultant with 20 years of experience of developing school projects
- A representative of WPCC

In addition, an option appraisal has been taken forward based on the 4 criteria below looking at the alternate approaches generated through the third phase of the consultation. This is in Appendix 14.

- Sufficiency - the creation of additional places
- Quality –the proposals lead to increased quality (partnerships, physical space, engagement, education)
- Outcomes for pupils – the proposals lead to better outcomes for pupils (health, wellbeing, educational/vocational goals, preparation for adulthood and independent living)
- Financial efficacy – the proposals enable needs to be met within the available funds.

## 5. Overall Impact

The impact assessment suggests that mitigating actions can reduce, but not eliminate risk. This is a very complex project and it is challenging to put across all the reasoning and balance of issues that the Council has reviewed to arrive at the proposed option. There are over 3500 pupils with an EHCP and many more on SEN support in mainstream schools. It is essential that the plan supports both the individual and majority needs.

The assessment of issues and of protected characteristics suggests that overall the one school proposal can have a significant positive impact for children and young people with SEND both in the school and supported through the Centre of Excellence in terms of:

- Wellbeing
- Increased availability of choice (within the school)
- Progress
- Attainment
- Health
- Community opportunities,
- Inclusion and integration

However, it is recognised that some students:

- Will have longer journeys (although more will have shorter journeys)
- May experience a level of disruption as they move from the old to new schools
- May have worries during the development of the project about what school will be like in the future.



For some parents:

- This may be seen as a loss of support – the school is often seen as extended family – causing anxiety and increased stress and worry
- This will/may incur additional travel costs
- Require time and commitment by officers to build relationships and engagement, particularly where consultees see the outcome as not their preferred option.

It is hoped this will be mitigated by:

- Many opportunities for engagement in the development of the school and centres of excellence
- Good transition plans and investment in support for children, staff and families
- Better access to health care professionals
- Increased support and networking with families via the schools, WPCC and SEND team
- Greater diversity and choice within the one school curriculum as this will be a large school
- Well-arranged transport and transport plans
- Good planning, coproduction and communication throughout the progress of the project
- Taking forward the plan more rapidly than first envisaged by transferring the schools into one school at the soonest possible opportunity – thus:
  - Reducing anxiety for staff about roles and jobs
  - Beginning the work around the Centre of Excellence as soon as possible e.g. shared training, strategy and intention
  - Creating shared approaches to significant matters like admissions and also back room functions such as photocopying contracts etc.
- Taking forward the statutory processes around the buildings and locations of schools on the original timetable in 2023
- Building the new provision in a way that offers certain groups of pupils to potentially move in early and create phased transition
- Applying to the Secretary of State to set the new school up as a maintained school offering greater flexibility around transition.

## 6. EQIA Outcome

**No change – continue to implementation**

The policy is robust and evidence shows no potential for discrimination and all opportunities to advance equality have been taken.

**Adjust the policy and continue with implementation**

Adjust to remove identified adverse effects and missed opportunities to promote equalities and achievement of outcomes

**Stop and remove**

Remove or change the policy if the EQIA identifies actual or potential unlawful discrimination.


## 7. Mitigating Action Plan

Action	Anticipated Outcome	Lead	Deadline	Actual Outcome	Comments
Consultation events as described above	Views will be heard and families engaged in the aspiration of the project. That those who continue to disagree will feel that they have had the opportunity to express their views.	Helen Jones	1 March	There has been a wide-ranging consultation, with additional sessions. Transcripts have been recorded and included in the report appendices.	There is still some scepticism that the Council will pay attention to views expressed.
Advice and support from internal and external legal teams	There is a court hearing on the 15 <sup>th</sup> of March which will identify if the decision timetable needs to be altered	Helen Jones	26 March	Decision to extend consultation to improve engagement with families engaged in the court case	
On-going communication	Stakeholders feel well informed even if they disagree	Sue Ellison	On going		
Renew the Equalities Impact Assessment for the cabinet paper in May 2019 and regularly update as decisions are made and developed	We continue to be aware of the risks and impacts on vulnerable groups	Helen Jones	12 May		
Continue to follow guidance on opening and closing schools and making changes to maintained schools	The process is legally compliant	Helen Jones	On-going		
A full project plan will be drawn up	Risk management and mitigation of negative impacts will be built into the plan	Helen Jones	July 2019		

## 8. Next Steps

Are there plans to provide feedback to the groups or people that have been consulted in preparing for this assessment?	There is a full communication plan and information will be fed back to all groups consulted following the cabinet report of the 22 May 2019
How is it proposed that the Mitigating Actions Plan will be monitored?	The Director of Commissioning will hold oversight and will be reporting to Corporate Directors, Cabinet Members and engaging with members of the Scrutiny Group.
Has the assessment been included with Cabinet papers?	Assessment will be included with all relevant papers
Has a review date been identified to revisit this assessment to consider if there has been a significant change in circumstances?	Yes. Following the cabinet report on the 22 May 2019, a full decision needs to be communicated to the Secretary of State. A further report will come to Cabinet in July 2019

## Officers Involved in Completing Screening

Officer completing Equality Impact Assessment	Judith Westcott
Date submitted	12.5.2019
Head of Service or Operational Director sign off	I agree with the content and outcome of this Equality Impact Assessment
Date approved by Head of Service or Operational Director	

## Impact Assessment

Criteria	4 is high negative impact, 0 is low negative impact	Likelihood	Impact	Combined score	Residual Likelihood	Residual Impact	Residual Combined Score
<b>Legal challenge</b> to the Authority under the Public Sector Equality Duty. There is a legal challenge through judicial review and it is accepted that this is likely to continue even though all effort has been made to abide by and fulfil the legal requirements of the process, mitigate risk and not take forward discriminatory acts.		4	4	16	4	4	16
<b>Financial costs/implications</b> There is a risk assessment of the possible cost implications of the build (made available to cabinet). Three scenarios have been presented identify low, medium and high risk and the possible financial implications.		3	2	6	3	2	6
<b>People impacts</b> These have been widely considered in the report and the EIA		3	3	9	1	1	1
<b>Reputational damage</b> It is acknowledged that it has been hard to manage some of the public messages around this project. A full communication plan has been in place and significant mitigating action has been made to ensure that the public are aware of the LA's commitment to a working with parent/carers and sharing their thinking.		3	3	9	3	3	9
<b>Average combined score</b>				10			8

The Equality Impact Assessment embraces three reviews with different scoring mechanisms. Overarchingly, the Special School programme is not perceived to discriminate against those with protected characteristics. There are areas for consideration in respect of discrimination but these are not perceived to be overtly discriminatory when seen in the round. The council is cognisant of areas for improvement and has robust plans in place to address areas where more can be done.

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT		Scoring criteria											LA			Consultant			WPC			LA			Consultant			WPC		
													Score (a)	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)	Score (a)	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)	Score (a)	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)	Residual score	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)	Residual score	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)	Residual score	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)
		Positive			Neutral			Negative			What is planned to mitigate any negative impacts.																			
		10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	10-0	10-0	10-0	10-0	10-0	10-0	10-0	10-0	10-0	10-0	10-0	10-0	10-0					
1	Eliminating discrimination	To what degree do colleagues involved in the Special School project understand and empathise with the socio-economic challenges associated with being a parent and carer of a child with profound and multiple learning difficulties and appreciate and ameliorate potential problems?	Socio-economic challenges are well understood with proactive mitigation strategies put forward, particularly around the financial challenges of securing well paid employment and the emotional stress on the family whose loved one might present significant health vulnerabilities.	The precarious work life balance of parents and carers and the associated socio economic challenges is appreciated.	The socio economic challenges for parents and carers of pupils with severe disabilities is not well understood.	5	10%	0.5	3	10%	0.3	4	10%	0.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respite and support - threshold, eligibility and childcare</li> <li>Flexible working for parent carers - council contracts, carers strategy</li> <li>We will increase funding in early help to improve social infrastructure and cultural maintenance programs</li> <li>Additional family support aligned to the "troubled families" programme will be made available to parents of severely disabled children and young people.</li> <li>We will advocate a living wage for parents of disabled children that appreciates the precarious nature of work when the parent and carer responsibilities are amplified with respect to severely disabled dependents.</li> </ul>	7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7						
2		How would we appraise our organization's culture?	Parents and carers are happy in stable supportive relationships, well off financially, feel very secure and are free to enjoy a good standard of living for themselves and their children.	Parents and carers are feel like they are financially secure, safe and free to enjoy a reasonable standard of living for themselves and their children.	Parents and carers are financially challenged, do not feel happy nor safe and do not enjoy a reasonable standard of living for themselves and their children.	4	10%	0.4	2	10%	0.2	2	10%	0.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing options</li> <li>Realistic personal budgets</li> <li>Market of opportunities</li> <li>SEND workers engage with families to give support</li> <li>We utilise the FACT programme which as spent considerable time listening and engaging with families.</li> <li>We will audit, develop and strengthen our communication and engagement plan as we go forward.</li> </ul>	6	10%	0.6	4	10%	0.4	6	10%	0.6						
3	Page 633	What preventive training have we undertaken?	Effective training sessions raise employee awareness of the socio-economic context of family life in the context of SEND and disability.	Training sessions raise employee awareness of socio-economic awareness in the context of SEND and disability.	Training is not provided to raise awareness of socio-economic risks and issues.	4	10%	0.4	2	10%	0.2	2	10%	0.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All staff involved in the Special School project will be given access to training on the latest best practice.</li> <li>FACT has been raising the need to understand whole life issues</li> <li>Parent led element</li> </ul>	7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7						
4	Advance equality of opportunity	Do we strive to provide all residents with family members with SEND, with the tools and skills necessary to thrive as a individually and as a family; and realise their own hopes, dreams and aspirations as well as those of their family members?	The new centre of excellence planned for Roweford affords a better standard of living due to increased access to employment, business opportunities, training and education.	The new centre of excellence planned for Roweford affords a reasonable standard of living due to access to employment, business opportunities, training and education.	The new centre of excellence planned for Roweford does not and is not likely to provide reasonable standard of living due to access to employment, business opportunities, training and education.	4	10%	0.4	2	10%	0.2	2	10%	0.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early help community hubs or short breaks for disabled children. - ongoing pressures: budgets vs numbers</li> <li>Increased investment in programmes such as Time Out for parents</li> <li>SEND outreach</li> <li>Targeted services such as intensive family support, youth justice, employability - all supported by evidence-based programmes</li> <li>We will further develop our whole family approach. With the child's needs at the centre, we will identify what other family members need too so that we can include and support all of them. This is essential to helping them build positive relationships.</li> <li>We also work with our partners to make sure families get tailored, wrap-around packages of support.</li> </ul>	6	10%	0.6	2	10%	0.2	2	10%	0.2						
5		Do we ensure that our policies, services and practices reflect our commitment to social mobility for those with SEND and their families?	Policies and programs are constantly revisited to create a social mobility for all families with children and young people with SEND.	Policies and programs are revisited (being designed and embedded FACT) to create a social mobility for all families with children and young people with SEND.	Policies and programs decrease social mobility for all families with children and young people with SEND.	4	5%	0.2	2	5%	0.1	5	5%	0.25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considerable effort will continue to be made to offer a wide range of consultations formats and information in a range of formats.</li> <li>The communication plan will be regularly monitored and enhanced with a view to ensure policies, services and practices are fully inclusive.</li> <li>The programme will continue to be monitored by cabinet,</li> </ul>	6	5%	0.3	4	5%	0.2	6	5%	0.3						
6		Is social mobility mainstreamed into the business planning process for the special school project and ensuring these processes are aligned to the Council's strategic equality objectives?	There is a demonstrable and very effective commitment to SEND children and young people's social mobility and that of their parents and carers.	There is a demonstrable commitment to SEND children and young people's social mobility and that of their parents and carers.	The social mobility of SEND children and young people and their parents and carers is not supported.	2	5%	0.1	2	5%	0.1	2	5%	0.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We appreciate that for some parents for whom the responsibility of significant caring routines can weigh heavily, the new school will present real challenges that will add to this weight. Appropriate measures will be taken to overcome this weight to ensure it does not act as an anchor to social mobility.</li> </ul>	5	5%	0.25	7	5%	0.35	7	5%	0.35						

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT Socio-economics/ at risk groups <b>Discrimination factor</b>			Scoring criteria										LA			Consultant			WPCC			Residual			LA			Consultant			WPCC								
			Positive			Neutral			Negative			Score (a)	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)	Score (a)	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)	Score (a)	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)	Residual score	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)	Residual score	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)	Residual score	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)										
			10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	10-0			10-0			10-0			10-0			10-0			10-0										
													10-0	100%	(a) x (b)	10-0	100%	(a) x (b)	10-0	100%	(a) x (b)	10-0	100%	(a) x (b)	10-0	100%	(a) x (b)	10-0	100%	(a) x (b)									
7		Are complaints dealt with fairly and promptly? <i>Concern/ Anxiety</i>	All complaints are dealt with promptly and fairly.	Complaints are dealt with fairly and more than 90% within the appropriate timescales.	Complaints are not dealt with fairly and promptly.	8	10%	0.8	8	10%	0.8	8	10%	0.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will go the extra mile. Parents concerns will be listened to and reflected on to inform our policy and practice. Families's voices will be heard through our active consultation work.</li> <li>Independent evaluations will make sure the planned Special School and associated services will make a difference.</li> <li>We lead the way, commissioning research and innovating with our pioneering Special School programme. We will never stand still. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You said, we did, as a result...</li> <li>Nothing about you, without you</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	8	10%	0.8	8	10%	0.8	8	10%	0.8															
8	Foster good relations	Do we promote the use of sustainable travel and transport pertinent to those with disabilities?	Travel modes significantly improve the physical well-being of the children and young people with SEND who use them. They are very safe and relaxed, enabling the child to arrive at the school ready for a day of study.	Travel modes are appropriate for the physical well-being of the children and young people with SEND who use them. They are safe and reasonably stress free, enabling the child to arrive at the proposed Special School ready for a day of study.	Travel modes negatively impact the physical well-being of the children and young people with SEND who use them. They are stressful and mean the child does not arrive at school ready to learn.	6	10%	0.6	6	10%	0.6	4	10%	0.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will make transport arrangements for all children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety issues related to their special educational needs (SEN) or disability</li> <li>We do appreciate a small number of children will have a longer journey on the bus than they do currently and will take effective measures to mitigate for this.</li> <li>Building on existing links we will improve access to and from family communities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>see disability (8)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	8	10%	0.8	8	10%	0.8	6	10%	0.6															
9	Page 634	What transport arrangements are made for those in socio-economically challenging circumstances?	(for 100%) Primary school aged children with SEND travel less than 30 minutes to school and for secondary school aged children with SEND less than 60 minutes.	(for at least 90%) The maximum each way length of journey for a child of primary school age is 45 minutes and for secondary school age 75 minutes.	Primary aged children travel primary 45 minutes or more and for secondary school age 75 minutes or more.	6	10%	0.6	6	10%	0.6	6	10%	0.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A whole system approach to travel should create a better set of routes for pupils, reducing the number of pick-ups and distance between pick ups</li> <li>We will review our Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy through the prism of those living in socio-economically challenging circumstances and strive to ensure that no one is worse off as a result of the planned Special School. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>see disability (9)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7															
10			What sort of safe spaces do we provide for children and young people in receipt of free school meals? <i>Shouldn't the offer and experience be the same for all?</i>	The planned workplaces exude a luxurious boutique 5 star experience.	Inclusive spaces pertinent to the needs of those with severe and moderate learning difficulties are created that foster time being spent with one another and with teachers, support staff and their parents and carers.	Children and young people with SEND feel isolated and vulnerable in basically furnished accomodation.	7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will continue to engage with Threeways in Bath and SEND in the international private sector to learn from best practice.</li> <li>We have increased the budget for Furniture, Fittings and Equipment and IT equipment to £1M.</li> </ul>	8	10%	0.8	8	10%	0.8	8	10%	0.8														
11		To what degree have we co-produced the Special School project with children and young people with SEND and where appropriate their carers and parents?	Children and young people with SEND (and where appropriate their parents and carers) are given multiple ways to share their feedback and their perspective. Their stories create an open dialogue leads to very positive outcomes.	Children and young people with SEND (and where appropriate, their parents and carers) are given ways to share their feedback and their perspective. Their stories create an open dialogue leads to positive outcomes.	Neither children and young people with SEND nor their parents and carers, have had their voice heard.	4	10%	0.4	4	10%	0.4	6	10%	0.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will continue to provide a wide range of consultation options open to all stakeholders. We are fully committed to coproduction and believe the strong relationship with Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC) will enable good engagement. Should the project receive approval we have a programme of engagement with all schools and stakeholders to improve active coproduction of the Special School going forward. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>see (11) disability</li> </ul> </li> <li>Post 16 preparation, transition, opportunities, aspirations - market place</li> </ul>	7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7															
			Total										54	100%	5.1	44	100%	4.2	48	100%	4.45				Total			100%	6.95	Total			100%	6.35	Total			100%	6.45
			Average										4.583			Average			6.58333																				

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT Protected characteristic - Disability <b>Discrimination factor</b>			Scoring criteria										LA			Consultant			WPCC			Residual											
			Positive			Neutral				Negative			Score (a)	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)	Score (a)	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)	Score (a)	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)	Residual score	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)									
			10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	10-0	100%	(a) x (b)	10-0	100%	(a) x (b)	10-0	100%	(a) x (b)	10-0	100%	(a) x (b)								
													10-0	100%	(a) x (b)	10-0	100%	(a) x (b)	10-0	100%	(a) x (b)	10-0	100%	(a) x (b)									
1	Eliminating discrimination	To what degree do colleagues involved in the Special School project understand exactly what disability discrimination is and identify potential problems?	Disability discrimination is well understood - the voice of the SEND child and young person (including that of their parents and carers) is fully appreciated				Disability discrimination is understood - the voice of the SEND child and young person (including that of their parents and carers) is appreciated.				Disability discrimination is not well understood - colleagues have not taken the perspective of SEND children and young people nor their parents and carers into consideration.		6	10%	0.6	6	10%	0.6	4	10%	0.4	<b>What is planned to mitigate any negative impacts.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for individuals who may choose not to affiliate with stakeholder groups</li> <li>• Robust opportunities for engagement with C&amp;YP, not exclusively special provision but include home ed, mainstream resource base, college etc</li> <li>• Colleagues will continue to consult and work closely with stakeholder organisations such as Wiltshire Parents and Carers Council (WPCC) to ensure the Special School project is an outstanding centre of excellence for children and young people with SEND.</li> </ul>			7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7
2		How would we appraise our organization's culture?	All SEND children and young people feel like they are truly welcome, safe and free to be themselves.				Children and young people with SEND are comfortable and can express themselves in an authentic way. (Where appropriate this will be through their parents and carers.)				From the SEND child or young persons perspective (and where appropriate their parents and carers perspective) stakeholders appear aloof and detached from their lived experience.		5	10%	0.5	5	10%	0.5	5	10%	0.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are developing a Youth Ambassadors scheme which will work with the project</li> <li>• We will audit, develop and strengthen our communication and engagement plan as we go forward.</li> <li>• Awareness training for settings and providers</li> </ul>			7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7
3		What preventive training have we undertaken?	Effective training sessions raise employee awareness of discriminatory practices in the context of SEND and disability.				Training sessions raise employee awareness of discriminatory practices in the context of SEND and disability.				Training is not provided to raise awareness of disability discrimination.		5	10%	0.5	5	10%	0.5	6	10%	0.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff involved in the Special School project will be given access to training on the latest inclusive best practice.</li> <li>• Monitor impact of training - customer feedback</li> </ul>			7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7	8	10%	0.8
4	Advance equality of opportunity	Do we strive to provide all children and young people with SEND with the tools and skills necessary to shine, and that starts with letting them know that they can be exactly who you they are; and realise their own hopes, dreams and aspirations?	The new centre of excellence planned for Roweford affords an outstanding inclusive education for those with severe and moderate learning difficulties, where children and young people with SEND feel like they belong and are supported to thrive.				The new centre of excellence planned for Roweford affords a good education for those with severe and moderate learning difficulties.				The new centre of excellence planned for Roweford does not and is not likely to provide a good education for those with SEND.		8	10%	0.8	10	10%	1	8	10%	0.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working closely with Larkrise, St Nicholas and Roweford schools to build on existing best practice, every child/young person will have a transition plan and a travel plan alongside their on-going EHCP.</li> <li>• Partnership working with parents to inform, review and develop provision. Must recruit quality staff.</li> </ul>			10	10%	1	10	10%	1	10	10%	1
5		Do we ensure that our policies, services and practices reflect our commitment to equality of opportunity for those with SEND?	Policies and programs are constantly revisited to create a more tolerant, diverse environment for all children and young people with SEND. This includes regular review at WASPP and WPCC.				Policies and programs are revisited to create a more tolerant, diverse environment for children and young people with SEND.				Policies and programs are rarely revisited to create a more tolerant, diverse environment for children and young people with SEND.		9	5%	0.45	9	5%	0.45	7	5%	0.35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considerable effort will continue to be made to offer a wide range of consultations formats and information in a range of formats.</li> <li>• The communication plan will be regularly monitored and enhanced with a view to ensure policies, services and practices are fully inclusive.</li> <li>• More robust engagement of WPCC in review of policies and programmes especially education.</li> </ul>			9	5%	0.45	9	5%	0.45	9	5%	0.45
6		Is equality mainstreamed into the business planning process for the special school project and ensuring these processes are aligned to the Council's strategic equality objectives?	The Council has a global employee resource group which offers executive sponsors and mentors for children and young people with SEND at the proposed Special School and a strong Voice and Influence service actively embraces a wider ally community for the Special School project including Wiltshire Members of Youth Parliament, Student Councils, Young People's Councils, student voice and pupil voice in schools.				There is a demonstrable commitment to SEND children and young people's engagement and participation in decision making.				There is not a demonstrable commitment to SEND children and young people's engagement and participation in decision making.		6	5%	0.3	6	5%	0.3	2	5%	0.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considerable effort will continue to be made to offer a wide range of consultations formats and information in a range of formats.</li> <li>• Structures do not robustly facilitate engagement of all children and young people with SEND. Needs proper investment.</li> </ul>			7	5%	0.35	7	5%	0.35	8	5%	0.4

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EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT		Scoring criteria											LA			Consultant			WPCC			Residual			LA			Consultant			WPCC		
													Score (a)	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)	Score (a)	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)	Score (a)	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)	Residual score 10-0	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)	Residual score 10-0	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)	Residual score 10-0	Weight (b) Total must equal 100%	Net score (a) x (b)			
		Positive				Neutral				Negative			What is planned to mitigate any negative impacts.																				
		10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0																					
7		Are complaints dealt with fairly and promptly?	All complaints are dealt with promptly and fairly.	Complaints are dealt with fairly and more than 90% within the appropriate timescales.	Complaints are not dealt with fairly and promptly.	8	10%	0.8	8	10%	0.8	8	10%	0.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will keep a running log of frequently asked questions alongside other visual and accessible forms of sharing</li> <li>Continue feedback option through WPCC</li> </ul>	8	10%	0.8	8	10%	0.8	8	10%	0.8									
8	Foster good relations	Do we promote the use of sustainable travel and transport pertinent to those with disabilities?	Travel modes significantly improve the physical well-being of the children and young people with SEND who use them. They are very safe and relaxed, enabling the child to arrive at the school ready for a day of study.	Travel modes are appropriate for the physical well-being of the children and young people with SEND who use them. They are safe and reasonably stress free, enabling the child to arrive at the proposed Special School ready for a day of study.	Travel modes negatively impact the physical well-being of the children and young people with SEND who use them. They are stressful and mean the child does not arrive at school ready to learn.	6	10%	0.6	6	10%	0.6	4	10%	0.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not always a minibus. School based travel coordinator - reduce number of pick-ups</li> <li>We will make sensitive transport arrangements for all children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety issues related to their special educational needs (SEN) or disability - partnership with parent carers.</li> <li>There will be trained passenger assistants with those pupils who are at regular risk of health or behaviour related emergencies</li> <li>The proposals will reduce the overall time on the buses</li> <li>We will improve the experience of being on transport through fun on the bus and extended school activities</li> <li>If needs can be met in the local mainstream school as is the intention, then we will reduce the need for travel to Roweford entirely.</li> <li>We do appreciate a small number of children will have a longer journey on the bus than they do currently.</li> </ul>	7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7	6	10%	0.6									
9	Page 636	What transport arrangements are made for all eligible children with SEND?	(for 100%) Primary school aged children with SEND travel less than 30 minutes to school and for secondary school aged children with SEND less than 60 minutes.	(for at least 90%) The maximum each way length of journey for a child of primary school age is 45 minutes and for secondary school age 75 minutes.	Primary aged children travel primary 45 minutes or more and for secondary school age 75 minutes or more.	6	10%	0.6	6	10%	0.6	6	10%	0.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A whole system approach to travel should create a better set of routes for pupils, reducing the number of pick-ups and distance between pick ups</li> <li>We will use the DfE guidance to where ever possible ensure pupils have journey times within the recommended limits, and also bench mark this against other rural counties.</li> <li>The creation of a new school would create new places, giving more children across Wiltshire the chance to have a school closer to home.</li> <li>Our experience has been that families often choose to live closer to special schools when they are aware of good and outstanding practice and so will choose to live closer to Roweford school with reduced travel requirements. - may not be in the family's gift ie affordability.</li> <li>Creative approach to travel options - person centred</li> <li>Sensitive to health needs</li> <li>How do we meet needs of parents who don't drive but</li> </ul>	8	10%	0.8	6	10%	0.6	6	10%	0.6									
10		What sort of safe spaces do we provide for children and young people with SEND?	The planned workplaces go the extra mile to consider the safety and comfort of all children and young people with SEND.	Inclusive spaces pertinent to the needs of those with severe and moderate learning difficulties are created that foster time being spent with one	Children and young people with SEND feel isolated and vulnerable.	10	10%	1	10	10%	1	10	10%	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will continue to engage with Threeways in Bath to understand how they supported the transition.</li> <li>We have increased the budget for Furniture, Fittings and Equipment and IT equipment to £1M.</li> <li>Informed planning</li> </ul>	10	10%	1	10	10%	1	10	10%	1									
11		To what degree have we co-produced the Special School project with children and young people with SEND and where appropriate their carers and parents?	Children and young people with SEND (and where appropriate their parents and carers) are given multiple ways to share their feedback and their perspective. Their stories create an open dialogue leads to very positive outcomes.	Children and young people with SEND (and where appropriate, their parents and carers) are given ways to share their feedback and their perspective. Their stories create an open dialogue leads to positive outcomes.	Neither children and young people with SEND nor their parents and carers, have had their voice heard.	5	10%	0.5	4	10%	0.4	6	10%	0.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will continue to provide a wide range of consultation options open to all stakeholders. We are fully committed to coproduction and believe the strong relationship with Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC) will enable good engagement. Should the project receive approval we have a programme of engagement with all schools and stakeholders to improve active coproduction of the Special School going forward.</li> <li>The proposals have been shaped and informed as a result of engagement and co-production with parent carers.</li> <li>Ensure the project is seen in a wider sense of community and builds on these local areas and facilities rather than operating as an institution in its own right.</li> </ul>	7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7									
		Total		100%	6.65	100%	6.75	66	100%	6.15	Total		100%	7.9	100%	7.7	Total	100%	7.75														
		Average		6.517			Average			7.78333																							



EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT			Scoring criteria									LA			Consultant			WPC			What is planned to mitigate any negative impacts.									LA			Consultant			WPC		
												Score (a)	Weight (b)	Net score	Score (a)	Weight (b)	Net score	Score (a)	Weight (b)	Net score										Residual score	Weight (b)	Net score	Residual score	Weight (b)	Net score	Residual score	Weight (b)	Net score
			Positive			Neutral			Negative			10-0	Total must	(a) x (b)	10-0	Total must	(a) x (b)	10-0	Total must equal	(a) x (b)	10-0	Total must	(a) x (b)	10-0	Total must	(a) x (b)	10-0	Total must	(a) x (b)									
			10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	10-0	Total must	(a) x (b)	10-0	Total must	(a) x (b)	10-0	Total must equal	(a) x (b)	10-0	Total must	(a) x (b)	10-0	Total must	(a) x (b)	10-0	Total must	(a) x (b)							
1	Eliminating discrimination	To what degree do colleagues involved in the Special School project understand exactly what age discrimination is and identify potential problems?	Age discrimination is well understood - the voice of the child and young person is fully appreciated			Age discrimination is understood - the voice of the child and young person is appreciated			Age discrimination is not well understood - colleagues have not taken the perspective of children and young people into consideration.			6	10%	0.6	6	10%	0.6	4	10%	0.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Colleagues will continue to consult and work closely with advocate groups and forums for children and young people to ensure they have a clear and vibrant voice in the new building and more importantly the wider aspiration for a more inclusive education across Wiltshire.</li> <li>Invest in advocacy</li> </ul>	8	10%	0.8	8	10%	0.8	7	10%	0.7								
2		How would we appraise our organization's culture?	All children and young people feel like they are truly welcome, safe and free to be themselves			Children and young people are comfortable and can express themselves in an authentic way			From the child or young persons perspective stakeholders appear aloof and detached from their lived experience.			5	10%	0.5	5	10%	0.5	5	10%	0.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will engage with children and young people as representatives on the governing body of the programme and develop a communication plan as we go forward.</li> <li>YP commissioner</li> </ul>	8	10%	0.8	8	10%	0.8	8	10%	0.8								
3		What preventive training have we undertaken?	Effective training sessions raise employee awareness of discriminatory practices			Training sessions raise employee awareness of discriminatory practices			Training is not provided to raise awareness of age discrimination			5	10%	0.5	5	10%	0.5	6	10%	0.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All staff involved in the Special School project will be given access to training on promoting best practice in lobbying, advocating, promoting and fighting for the rights of children and young people.</li> <li>Measure impacts</li> </ul>	7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7	8	10%	0.8								
4	Advance equality of opportunity	Do we strive to provide all children and young people with the tools and skills necessary to shine, and that starts with letting them know that they can be exactly who they are; and realise their own hopes, dreams and aspirations?	The new centre of excellence planned for Roweford affords an outstanding education where children and young people feel like they belong and are supported to thrive.			The new centre of excellence planned for Roweford affords a good education			The new centre of excellence planned for Roweford does not and is not likely to provide a good education			8	10%	0.8	10	10%	1	8	10%	0.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working closely with Larkrise, St Nicholas and Roweford schools to build on existing best practice, we will seek to embrace all organisations that work with children and young people, whether, early years settings, school, doctors surgeries or police et al, to drive forward a child centred and child friendly Wiltshire.</li> <li>see (4) disability</li> </ul>	10	10%	1	10	10%	1	10	10%	1								
5		Do we ensure that our policies, services and practices reflect our commitment to equality?	Policies and programs are constantly revisited to create a more tolerant, diverse environment for all children and young people. This includes regular review at WASPP and WPC.			Policies and programs are revisited to create a more tolerant, diverse environment for all children and young people.			Policies and programs are rarely revisited to create a more tolerant, diverse environment for all children and young people.			9	5%	0.45	9	5%	0.45	7	5%	0.35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considerable effort will continue to be made to offer a wide range of consultations formats and information in a range of child and young person friendly formats.</li> <li>The communication plan will be regularly monitored and enhanced with a view to ensure policies, services and practices are fully attuned to children and young people.</li> <li>see (5) disability</li> </ul>	9	5%	0.45	9	5%	0.45	9	5%	0.45								
6		Is equality mainstreamed into the business planning process for the special school project and ensuring these processes are aligned to the Council's strategic equality objectives?	The Council has a global employee resource group which offers executive sponsors and mentors for children and young people at the proposed Special School and a strong Voice and Influence service actively embraces a wider ally community for the Special School project including Wiltshire Members of Youth Parliament, Student Councils, Young People's Councils, student voice and pupil voice in schools.			There is a demonstrable commitment to children and young people's engagement and participation in decision making.			There is not a demonstrable commitment to children and young people's engagement and participation in decision making.			7	5%	0.35	9	5%	0.45	2	5%	0.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Youth Ambassadors scheme will be part of the project.</li> <li>Considerable effort will continue to be made to offer a wide range of consultations formats and information in a range of formats appropriate to children and young people.</li> <li>see (6) disability</li> </ul>	9	5%	0.45	7	5%	0.35	7	5%	0.35								
7		Are complaints dealt with fairly and promptly?	All complaints are dealt with promptly and fairly.			Complaints are dealt with fairly and more than 90% within the appropriate timescales.			Complaints are not dealt with fairly and promptly.			8	10%	0.8	8	10%	0.8	8	10%	0.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will keep a running log of frequently asked questions alongside other visual and accessible forms of sharing</li> <li>see (7) disability</li> </ul>	8	10%	0.8	8	10%	0.8	8	10%	0.8								

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT			Scoring criteria										LA			Consultant			WPC			What is planned to mitigate any negative impacts.			LA			Consultant			WPC			
													Score (a)	Weight (b)	Net score	Score (a)	Weight (b)	Net score	Score (a)	Weight (b)	Net score				Residual score	Weight (b)	Net score	Residual score	Weight (b)	Net score	Residual score	Weight (b)	Net score	
			Positive				Neutral				Negative		10-0	Total must	(a) x (b)	10-0	Total must	(a) x (b)	10-0	Total must equal	(a) x (b)	10-0	Total must	(a) x (b)	10-0	Total must	(a) x (b)	10-0	Total must	(a) x (b)				
8	Foster good relations	Do we promote the use of sustainable travel and transport?	Travel modes significantly improve the physical well-being of the children and young people who use them. They are very safe and relaxed, enabling the child to arrive at the school ready for a day of study.				Travel modes are appropriate for the physical well-being of the children and young people who use them. They are safe and reasonably stress free, enabling the child to arrive at the proposed Special School ready for a day of study.				Travel modes negatively impact the physical well-being of the children and young people who use them. They are stressful and mean the child does not arrive at school ready to learn.		6	10%	0.6	6	10%	0.6	6	10%	0.6	6	10%	0.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will support staff to join the Wiltshire car share scheme</li> <li>Encouraging and empowering local mainstream schools to be more inclusive, we will create safe walking, cycling and travel routes and encouraging more pupils to walk and cycle to school</li> <li>Transport arrangements will not require a child to make several changes on public transport resulting in an unreasonably long journey time.</li> <li>The proposals will reduce the overall time on the buses</li> <li>We will improve the experience of being on transport through fun on the bus and extended school activities</li> <li>If needs can be met in the local mainstream school as is the intention, then we will reduce the need for travel to Roweford entirely.</li> <li>We do appreciate a small number of children will have a longer journey on the bus than they do currently.</li> </ul>	7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7	7	10%	0.7
9	Page 638	What transport arrangements are made for all eligible children?	(for 100%) Primary school aged children travel less than 30 minutes to school and for secondary school aged children less than 60 minutes.				(for at least 90%) The maximum each way length of journey for a child of primary school age is 45 minutes and for secondary school age 75 minutes.				Primary aged children travel primary 45 minutes or more and for secondary school age 75 minutes or more.		6	10%	0.6	6	10%	0.6	6	10%	0.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A whole system approach to travel should create a better set of routes for pupils, reducing the number of pick-ups and distance between pick ups</li> <li>We will use the DfE guidance to where ever possible ensure pupils have journey times within the recommended limits, and also bench mark this against other rural counties.</li> <li>The creation of a new school would create new places, giving more children across Wiltshire the chance to have a school closer to home.</li> <li>Our experience has been that families often choose to live closer to special schools when they are aware of good and outstanding practice and so will choose to live closer to Roweford school with reduced travel requirements.</li> <li>see (9) disability</li> </ul>	8	10%	0.8	6	10%	0.6	6	10%	0.6			
10		What sort of safe spaces do we provide for children and young people?	The planned workplaces go the extra mile to consider the safety and comfort of all children and young people				Spaces are created that foster time being spent with one another and with teachers, support staff and their parents and carers.				Children and young people feel isolated and vulnerable		10	10%	1	10	10%	1	10	10%	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will continue to engage with Threeways in Bath to understand how they supported the transition.</li> <li>We have increased the budget for Furniture, Fittings and Equipment and IT equipment to £1M.</li> <li>Informed planning</li> </ul>	10	10%	1	10	10%	1	10	10%	1			
11		To what degree have we co-produced the Special School project with children and young people?	Children and young people are given multiple ways to share their feedback and their perspective. Their stories create an open dialogue leads to very positive outcomes.				Children and young people are given ways to share their feedback and their perspective. Their stories create an open dialogue leads to positive outcomes.				Children and young people have not had their voice heard.		5	10%	0.5	5	10%	0.5	4	10%	0.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will continue to provide a wide range of consultation options open to all stakeholders. We are fully committed to coproduction and believe the strong relationship with Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPC) will enable good engagement.</li> <li>Should the project receive approval we have a programme of engagement with all schools and stakeholders to improve active coproduction of the Special School going forward.</li> <li>Advocacy for children/ YP</li> <li>Invest in robust structures for engaging with ALL children/ YP with SEND include home educated and AP</li> </ul>	8	10%	0.8	8	10%	0.8	8	10%	0.8			
			Totals										75	100%	6.7	79	100%	7	66	100%	6.15	Total			100%	8.3	100%	8	100%	8				
			Average										6.61667			Average			8.1															