

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

22 May 2019

Subject: Specials schools consultation

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

Key Decision: Key

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 1st 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 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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22 May 2019

Subject: Specials schools consultation

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

Key Decision: Key

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

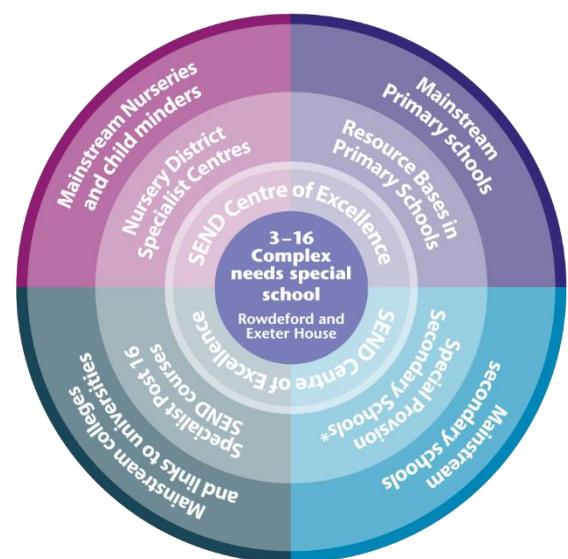
THE VISION

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 with¹:

- 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

¹ 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
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

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:

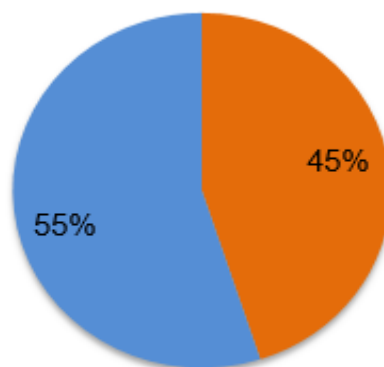
- A Speech and Language Therapist
- Ex-chair of Larkrise School
- A parent with a child in a unit in a mainstream school
- Six emails from a parent of a child attending St Nicholas
- Two collective responses from parents in the South of the County
- A collective response from parent governors at St Nicholas
- 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 support of the proposal -1062

■ Not in support of the proposal -1315

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 WPC 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^[1]. 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.

^[1] 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.² 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:

- 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 possible³.”

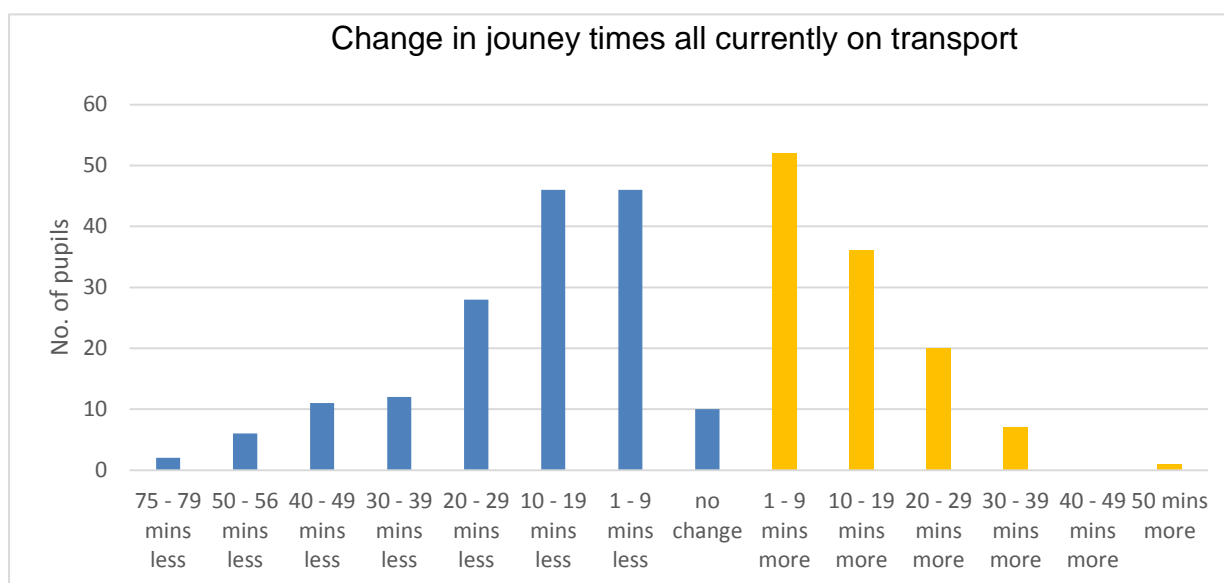
Contrary to the concerns raised during the consultation, the one school arrangement would not have a detrimental impact on the majority of pupils as their travel routes would not be longer than they currently experience. Neither would a disproportionate number of pupils with SEND have longer journeys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

³ <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
	37	32	-1368



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	

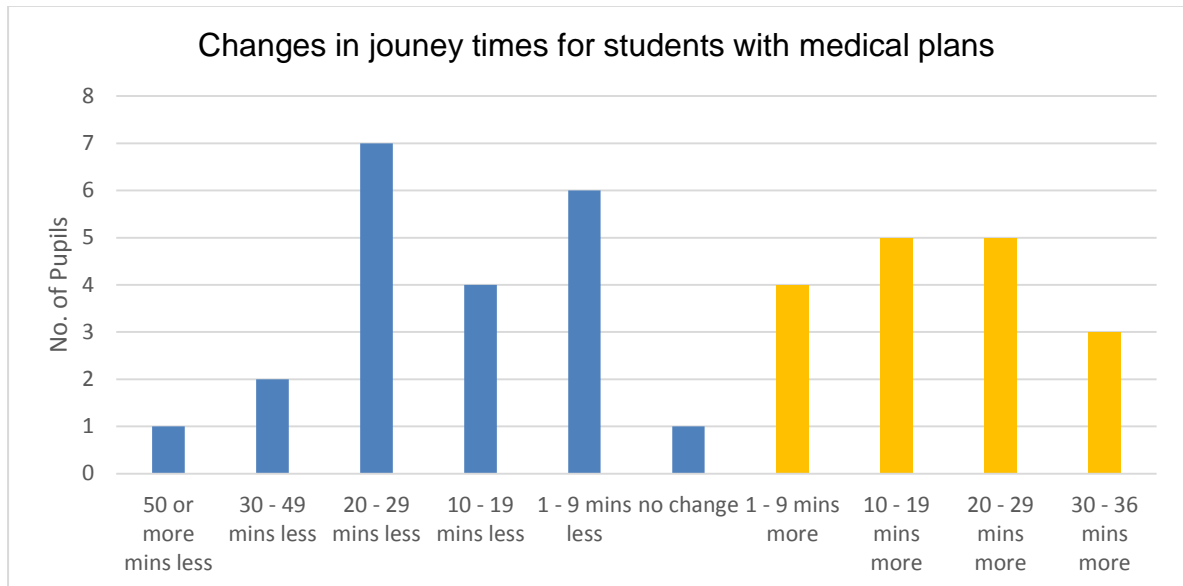
In relation to the Government's travel guidance, there would be 12 children of primary age travelling more than 45 minutes (currently 17). For five of these their journeys would be shorter than is currently, two with the same journey length and five with 11 to 38 minutes more. Appendix 9 shows the current 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.

Journeys to multi-site primary at Larkrise and St Nicholas, primary/secondary at Rowdeford	No. of pupils	%
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:

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

(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:

Specialism	Rowdeford	St Nicholas	Larkrise	One school
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.

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.

"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

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
Construction Works Costs:			
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>
Non-Works:			
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>
Risks (contingency pot)			
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>
Risk that could be backed off to contractor			£2,511,500
<i>Total Forecast Project Cost</i>	<i>£27,228,738</i>	<i>£37,607,301</i>	<i>£31,774,238</i>

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 5th 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 noticed, 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/756572/Maintained_schools_prescribed_alterations_guidance.pdf