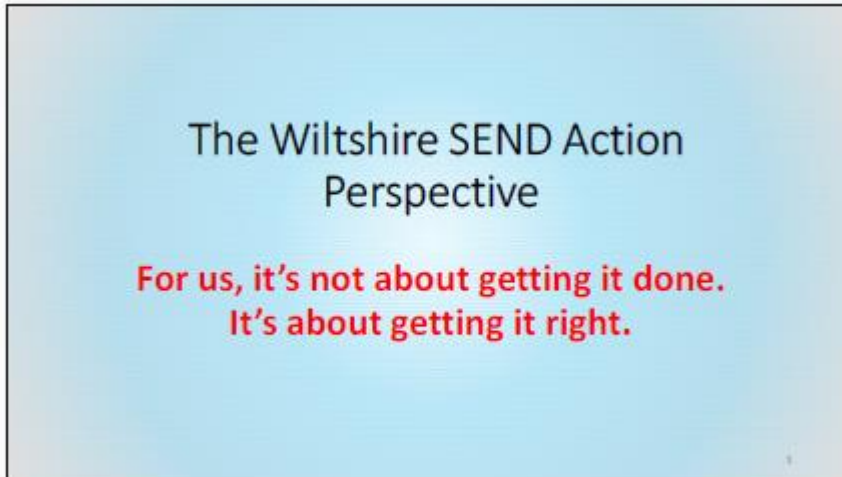


## SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (22 May 2019)

APPENDIX 13: The Wiltshire SEND Action Proposal presented at 2 May face to face meeting at County Hall.

### Slide 1:



### Intro

Good evening. Well, here we are again. Easter holidays forgotten already and we're back in the fray, trying to find the best solution for our children - and our sanity! Thank you to Wiltshire Council officers for their presentation. We do appreciate the complexity of the problem before us: in a nutshell, not enough money to do too big a job! However, we will do the best we can, all of us, to find the best way forward.

Let's see if we can begin with a set of criteria we can agree on. The key criteria for the local authority, as we have just seen, are:

### Slide 2:



I think we can agree that these are important criteria. However, there are significant omissions here. The criteria we would like to see met are:

**Location**  
**Size**  
**Choice**  
**Quality of Provision**

**Slide 3:**

### Inclusion and Social Integration

- **All children and young people:**
- Are known and accepted
- Are empowered, safe, happy and confident to use local facilities
- Have friends they see out of school
- Are valued and value others in their own community
- Enable others to be tolerant and understanding of difference

**Slide 4:**

### Location:

- **Local and community based**
- **Accessible**
- **In strategic towns: Trowbridge and Chippenham (areas of greatest growth in North)**
- **Minimal use of transport**

**Slide 5:**

### Size:

- **Child friendly scale**
- **Multiple sites, not one single school**
- **No single site over 200 places**

**Slide 6:**

### Choice

- All sites must offer widest possible range of designations and meet all Equality Duty legislation
- Both towns must offer both primary and secondary
- Flexible placements between mainstream – resource base – special school
- Post 16 choices

**Slide 7:**

### Quality of provision

- Strategic use of current buildings/remodeling/new build to keep costs down
- Quality of in-reach/outreach training
- maximise improved outcomes for wider range of SEND pupils
- Capitalise on specialist resources already in place

**Quality of provision**

- **Strategic use of current buildings/remodeling/new build to keep costs down**
- **Quality of in-reach/outreach training** more important than showpiece buildings
- This will **maximise improved outcomes for wider range of SEND pupils** than new buildings
- **Capitalise on specialist resources already in place** in Trow/Chipp (eg hydro pools, PMLD facilities, established network of local support staff) Don't throw the baby out with the bath water! Only build new where we NEED new!

## The Solutions:

### Slide 8:

Like it or not:

**We're going to need considerably bigger..... Budgets!**



### **Pic of Celia Imrie from The Calendar Girls, with the word 'budgets' masking her buns...**

As Helen Mirren famously (nearly) said, 'We're going to need considerably bigger bu...dgets' The crisis in SEND provision is not just a Wiltshire problem. Local authorities all over the country are wrestling with the problem of how to manage within the constraints of already over-spent High Needs Block funding. There is to be a countrywide National Crisis march at the end of this month. Now is not the time for short-term thinking. This crisis has been brewing for years. If we are going to undertake a major overhaul of provision within the county, we cannot reach for sticking plaster, knee-jerk solutions. We must be ambitious for our children. Parents in the south of the county are as unhappy as we are about the lack of provision for some designations and, although we can do little about the small number of children who will always need very specialized – and therefore expensive – out of county placements, we CAN do something about tackling the woeful lack of places for the rapidly rising number of children and young people with ASD. Planning for a few more places is not enough! We need to build in capacity – room to grow! The same goes for the dilemma of providing Post 16 routes. With the development of its 0 – 25 Agenda, Wiltshire was leading the pack! But provision again, is lagging behind. What DO we offer to young people beyond the age of 16? 18? 20? It's a hazy horizon over which they currently disappear without trace. If central government were happy to endorse EHCP plans for education provision up to the age of 25, then they must fund them too. And local authorities must play their part. When the goal posts move, EVERYBODY must move!

### Slide 9:

**Bottom line:  
for us, it's not about getting it done.  
It's about getting it right.**

So, our solutions to the current crisis are not just about keeping to Wiltshire Council's time frame of everything sorted by September, come what may! Parents across the county have had letters drop onto their doormats this week from the consultancy group ISOS, whom the LA have commissioned to look into the best use of the HNB funding. Their remit seems to be wider ranging than our present review, but does not seem to feed into the current round of consultations regarding the future of special schools. Why not? If they are going to be looking at the bigger picture, over a longer term, shouldn't our current situation form a part of that bigger review? From a parent's perspective, it feels rather like the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing.

**Bottom line: for us, it's not about getting it done. It's about getting it right.**

Here are our suggestions:

**Slide 10:**

In Trowbridge:

- Retain the current Larkrise School
- Expand the school into the Ashton Street site
- Include a sixth form centre, training rooms forest school and sensory garden
- Re-model? Re-build on new site?
- Consider co-location?
- Could deliver 150+ places

**In Trowbridge:**

- **Retain the current Larkrise School buildings**, but remove the mobile units to restore the outdoor space we have lost.
- **Expand the school into the Ashton Street site** across the road. Plans for this were well advanced in 2013/14: none of the problems outlined in your presentation seemed to be insurmountable then. When the Ashton St Centre was in daily use traffic congestion did not seem to present a problem. In fact today, any congestion around the site has been caused by WC's own actions in breaking their agreement and removing access for Larkrise staff to park there.

**Slide 11:**

Earlier Ashton Street plans: 2013/14



### Earlier Ashton St plan

- Plans drawn up at the time showed space enough for **up to 150 places, including a sixth form centre, training rooms, a forest school and sensory garden.** Beginning to sound a bit like a Centre of Excellence? We think so. It's an obvious solution staring us in the face and it is perverse to try to pretend otherwise.
- **Re-model? Or re-build?** We have been informed that a re-modelling of the current Ashton St buildings is also possible. Perhaps not as desirable, but if compromises have to be made, perhaps a combination of re-modelling and new build? This would have the added advantage of making places available very quickly to meet need right now and up until 2023, to allow for phased transfer of pupils at a manageable pace. This is an option which has definitely NOT been explored in detail!
- **New site or co-location? West Ashton Road** would make an excellent site as Trowbridge grows. It might feel quite 'rural' now, but once the planned housing in that area is completed, a school would be right at its heart – and still a walkable distance to the town centre, with all its curriculum opportunities. Or what about co-location with an existing or new primary school? At a time when local authorities nationally are expanding provision, co-locating services and integrating SEND children into local communities, Wiltshire seems to be resolutely marching in the opposite direction!
- Conservatively, this solution **could deliver 150+ places** for both primary and secondary pupils plus sixth form, with the current range of designations, including PMLD.

### Slide 12:

In Chippenham:

- **Retain St Nicholas School, re-model and expand**
- **Re-locate to a new site in Chippenham**
- **Consider co-location?**
- **Could deliver 140 places**

### In Chippenham:

- **Retain St Nicholas School and expand or re-locate** A similar solution could be found for St Nicholas School, by retaining Poplar College as sixth form provision and re-locating the current school to a site large enough to accommodate 140 pupils – or by retaining the current buildings, re-modelling and expanding onto nearby land.
- **Consider co-location?** Here is an exciting opportunity to look at the possibility of co-locating part of the school onto land adjoining an existing school such as Hardenhuish, as with the successful partnering of Poplar College with Wiltshire College, thus creating the possibility of flexible provision for both mainstream and SEND children. Primary provision could be retained at the current St Nicholas site, with secondary provision co-located at Hardenhuish.
- This solution could **deliver 140 places** for both primary and secondary pupils plus sixth form, with the current range of designations, including PMLD.

**Slide 13:**

In Rowde:

- **Rowdeford School offers choice and aspiration**
- **Space to expand**
- **Could deliver 130+ places**

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**In Rowde:**

- **Rowdeford School offers choice and aspiration** Rowdeford School is a unique site, well suited to its current purpose as a rural secondary school for children with MLD. If this designation was expanded to include ASD and SLD where appropriate, the focus of this school could range from the ambitious academic route for high functioning young people, with already established links into Lackham College and on to higher education, to a range of vocational pathways within the rural/land based industries easily accessed at this site. This would offer real choice for parents and children at every level.
- Keeping Rowdeford at its current PAN would enable it to retain its current curriculum and the unique 'magic' the school is rightly prized for.
- **Administrative Centre and external services** Land previously earmarked for the super school could enable administrative and some external services to be centralized, thus achieving economies of scale. Passenger Transport could re-locate here, or a Training Centre built. External health services such as Occupational Health, Speech and Language services etc could all be co-located here so that they can work together to provide a properly integrated service to all three special school sites, reducing costs by reducing the need for haphazard visits and therapists criss-crossing the county. Centralizing services, rather than children, makes much more sense than transporting every child with SEND in North and West Wiltshire across the county twice a day! And this new build would not necessarily have to impact the SEND budget!
- **Executive management.** Rowdeford would make an excellent central place from which an executive management team could work. It would have equal proximity to both satellite sites and would ensure that, with Heads of School taking care of the day to day management at each site, the Executive Head would be able to drive the vision, plan for the future and ensure quality provision in every aspect of the curriculum. Planned admissions would be centralized here, ensuring that every child is placed in the most appropriate environment. A training team could be established here, planning and delivering high quality training to all mainstream schools, resource bases and the special schools themselves, with opportunities for local staff to spend time working with the training team on a rolling basis, then cascading the training out locally, to keep costs down.
- **Space to expand** If the expected rise in ASD continues, there will be space at Rowdeford to expand in the future, if needed.
- This solution could **deliver 130+ places** for secondary age children with MLD, ASD and SLD.

In essence then, we are proposing

**Slide 14:**

NOT a one size fits all super school, but...

- **A fully integrated SEND Service across multiple sites**
- **Strategically managed and offering LOCAL, SPECIALIST training to nearby mainstream schools and resource bases**
- **Suited to a large rural county with ever-expanding strategic towns.**

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So let's see..... how does this fit with Wiltshire Council criteria?

**Slide 15:**

Sufficient Provision

**This model offers 400+ places with space to expand in the future and to flex the provision from year to year.**

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**Slide 16:**

Value for Money

- **Keeps the best of what currently works and renews/replaces that which doesn't**
- **Delivers outstanding training opportunities**
- **Achieves economies of scale**
- **Reduces transport costs**

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**Delivers outstanding training opportunities** for all schools in all strategic towns with considerably reduced staff travel time and costs.



### Slide 17:

Quality

- **New build on a smaller scale**
- **More desirable to SEND families**
- **Strategic management will enable quality assurance**
- **Town locations will always attract high quality staff**
- **Offers choice**

- **New build on a smaller scale** in both Trowbridge and Chippenham will be much **more desirable to SEND families** within the locality than a large super school miles away from home.
- **Strategic management will enable quality assurance** at each site: ‘the right provision, in the right place, at the right time’
- **Town locations**, with a wide variety of property available, **will always attract high quality staff** at every level: from teachers to classroom assistants, drivers and MDSAs. In a special school the quality of ALL the staff is key to each child’s learning and progress.

### Slide 18:

Outcomes

- **Already existing excellent relationships are maintained and enhanced**
- **Children are secure in familiar, small scale environments**
- **Parental anxiety is reduced**
- **Children are energized and focus on their learning**
- **A healthier way of life for the maximum number of children**

- The **excellent** and long-standing **relationships** already existing in the current schools **are maintained and enhanced** by the new opportunities for flexible learning in stimulating and exciting spaces
- **Children are secure in familiar, small scale environments** where each child is known personally to every member of staff.
- **Parental anxiety is reduced** as parents are secure in the knowledge that, should a crisis arise, their child – and a local hospital - is never very far away.
- **Children are energized and** have more time to **focus on their learning** when they are not spending long periods each day travelling in cramped mini buses. Walking or wheeling to a local school is **a healthier way of life for the maximum number of children** possible and is a step towards the Climate Emergency measures WC have only just signed up to.

And what about our criteria?

**Slide 19:**

Location

- Multiple sites offering...
- Local, community based provision
- Socially inclusive and cohesive
- Close to home, public transport and A&E
- **No compromise!**

- Whilst some children will always have to travel to school if they live in rural areas, or to access a very specialized facility, the majority live in, or close to a strategic town. It makes every sense to keep children close to the communities they live in or visit regularly – to shop, to access leisure facilities and local services and to visit family and friends. It makes even MORE sense if those children are likely to live their whole lives in the same community. Our children learn slowly, over time, to feel secure in a familiar environment. They are the very LAST people we should be shunting from one place to another every few years and expecting them to adjust to the new without complaint.
- If you remove all the children and young people with SEND from their communities – how do those communities learn to live with them when they are suddenly returned several years later? This is NOT inclusion! Our children are known in their local communities because they spend time every day in the shops, museums, parks etc. as part of their curriculum. These arguments have been rehearsed with Wiltshire Council officers again and again – and STILL location does not feature in their list of criteria. There is no compromise on this: children with SEND need to learn by **being** and **doing** in their **own** community.

**Slide 20:**

Size:

- Small scale, manageable sites
- Fewer, less overwhelming buildings
- Every child known to every adult

- Every major study that has ever been done proves time and again that children with SEND do not thrive in large, busy schools on big, complex sites. At 350+ Wiltshire's formerly proposed super school would, by some margin, be the biggest in the

country! Dividing it up into 'pods' would not make it less overwhelming to a child whose anxieties are raised merely by the presence of large numbers of people all moving in different directions at the end of playtime. There is a reason why ALL other special schools in the country are SMALL!

**Slide 21:**

Choice:

- Ensures parental choice
- Offers flexibility
- Meets all PSED and EIA legal requirements

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- Maintaining sites in multiple locations gives parents – and schools themselves – choice about the right provision for their children. The opportunity to 'move up' to a bigger, or more demanding school at secondary age may be an excellent opportunity for some children. It will be unattainable for others. All children and young people have the right to be self-determining and to make their own choices in life. Why would children with SEND be any different?
- Not just quality, but EQUALITY of opportunity and choice is maintained for children with SEND, as Equality Impact Duty requires by law.

**Slide 22:**

Quality of Provision:

- Quality of teaching and learning more important than buildings
- Directs better training across all SEND environments
- Maximises opportunities for sharing ideas and strategies to enhance learning
- Dynamic strategic management encourages ambitious ideas

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- For parents, the quality of teaching and learning is more important than a shiny new building, so we envisage a re-balancing of the way the capital spend is used. More money spent on training facilities to ensure that ALL children with SEND benefit from the specialist knowledge of our SEND teaching staff. If this is locally provided, it will reach further and benefit more children. Easier to arrange a one hour training session for local TAs, teachers or resource base staff who can all get to the local special school quickly and easily than to use up half a day travelling to get to the super school and back.
- Local provision enables much more networking and cross-fertilisation of ideas than a remote school could achieve.

- Remodelling and some new build would help to retain and recruit the best staff, if there were also opportunities for this kind of interaction.

**Final slide 23:**



**Inclusion – not Segregation!**

**We need a fully integrated SEND Service across multiple sites, strategically managed and offering LOCAL, SPECIALIST training.**

**Our children deserve nothing less.**

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It's an emotive picture, I know; calculated to shock. You may be familiar with Stoke Park, halfway down the M32 on the way into Bristol. It stands forlornly on its hill, ramparts braced against the world – and every attempt to turn it into a des res community of luxury apartments has failed. It still looks every inch the institution it always was. And it is as potent a symbol now as it was when they finally closed it down and stopped pretending that shutting up people with mental health conditions, like learning difficulties, SEMH and Autism, in big institutions was a good idea.

We don't claim to have all the answers. We can't manage your budget for you. We don't know what land you own or what planning rules you have to follow. That's your job. We're just here doing ours. Being parents. Loving our children and fighting – as we have since the day each one of them was born – for their right to be treated equally. To have what other children have: a decent education in a local school. We owe it to them to give them that. And so do you.

Thankyou for listening.