

### **Site solutions for Melbury Medical provision**

#### **Summary**

This report copies the site search completed in December 2020 and then further reviews options outlined in the consultation undertaken in January/February 2021

#### **Site search in December 2020**

##### **Current position and expansion on existing site**

- 1.1 Due to a rise in the secondary age population and rising needs, especially in mental health, numbers have increased year-on-year. Last year, 63 students benefitted from the services. However, the limited accommodation at the Canterbury Road campus only allows up to 20 students to be accommodated at any one time, with pupils requiring the support of small class groups of no more than 10. There has therefore needed to be an over reliance on home tuition, and only KS4 pupils on site. Numbers are forecast to increase, both as the general secondary age population increases, and the increase in children with mental health needs that are unable to remain in mainstream secondary schools.
- 1.2 The default position in the capital programme is to increase the on-site provision at the Canterbury Campus to 40 pupils, funded from the £900,000 agreed in the capital programme.
- 1.3 For a temporary period only, the provision has moved to Worsfold House providing for up to 40 pupils.
- 1.4 There are issues with the default position of moving back to an expanded Bungalow on the Canterbury Campus. Expansion to 40 pupils may not be sufficient in the medium term and there is a risk that a further project would be required in the near future. Moving to a new site with a larger building would meet the growing need with a much more teaching time and a rounded offer. It could facilitate access to a broader curriculum, rather than 1:1 home tuition, and access to specialist on-site facilities such as food technology, Art, Design Technology, PE and Computing.
- 1.5 Should Merton Medical Education Services move from the Canterbury Campus the space released will provide opportunities for the Pupil Referral Unit, where, with the growth in the general secondary school population, there is also growing demand and the need for additional accommodation, especially in the KS3 cohort and those more vulnerable PRU pupils who may struggle in the larger PRU building
- 1.6 The brief is therefore to identify a site that will provide for 6 classroom spaces plus supplementary accommodation, with access to an outside space. The site will need to have good public transport accessibility for secondary age children. Any design of the building will need to take into account safeguarding risks for the children i.e. potential for self-harm etc.

##### **Option for Melbury Medical to move permanently to a new site**

- 1.7 The most recent site search report was completed in March 2020 in relation to additional SEND provision and Whatley Avenue, SW20 (former Adult Education building being used by Harris Academy Wimbledon up to November 2020) has been earmarked to provide ASD SEND places for approximately 80-90 pupils.
- 1.8 Reviewing the options from this previous review:
- 1.9 **Battle Close** – the site is much larger than required and would require a new build at the cost of circa £3 million so the combined build and opportunity loss is over [REDACTED] million
- 1.10 **Worsfold House** – the site is of sufficient size (circa 6,500m<sup>2</sup>) but it has been identified by the DVS as having a value of up to circa [REDACTED] million. Feasibility studies dating from the recent Cricket Green School expansion shows it is not practical to adapt to be a SEND school, and this would include medical school with for 6-7 classes. Therefore it requires a new build at circa £3 million, so the combined build and opportunity loss is over [REDACTED] million
- 1.11 **Former Merton Adult Education, Whatley Avenue** – this was earmarked as the preferred site for SEND provision for a pupil capacity 80-100 places. It is considerably larger than the identified need for medical provision, and so would not surpass the SEND need.
- 1.12 **Chaucer Centre** - The Chaucer Centre has a similar a GIFA to Whatley Avenue and so is also considerably larger than the identified need for medical provision. It would require the Merton council staff training centre to close and lettings on first floor to be re-located.
- 1.13 The site is larger (6,300m<sup>2</sup>, 1.55 acres excluding parking area between SMART centre and Chaucer Centre) and based on the indicative DVS value of [REDACTED] million per acre for housing land in Mitcham and Morden this provides a value of [REDACTED] million.
- 1.14 Realistically to be suitable it would need to be new build. Based on an estimated cost of £3 million, the combined build and opportunity loss is [REDACTED] million.
- 1.15 In terms of separating the more vulnerable medical needs children and the main PRU, using this site would be only marginally better than the current position of the medical provision being immediately adjacent to the main PRU.
- 1.16 **50 Montgomery Close, Pollards Hill** - This would be considerably too small; it is 20% of the size of Whatley Avenue.
- 1.17 **Schools with surplus places** – the same issues as for SEND would apply in terms of separating provision for secondary age children and therefore not an option.
- 1.18 **Children's Centres (including with Nursery provision) and Youth Centres** - As for SEND provision, these are too small for the need with the exception of **Lavender London Road Nursery** which provides nursery places but does not have the status of a maintained nursery school.

- 1.19 While it was discounted for SEND ASD provision as being too small for that need, it has been considered for the medical provision. The building has 7 potential classroom spaces so could be easily adapted. Due to it being on charity land it also has no potential for housing.
- 1.20 Lavender Nursery could be adapted to provide for up to 60 children for the medical provision at a fraction of the cost in the capital programme compared to extending at Canterbury Road.
- 1.21 However, it would be closing a nursery developed under the Sure Start programme in the early 2000s providing nursery places and the council would need to be satisfied that it was still meeting its childcare sufficiency duty
- 1.22 It is noted that other children's centres and primary schools listed in the SEND school provision site report do have surplus places. If there is a sufficiency need without Lavender Nursery, then this could provide this provision.

### **Conclusion in December 2020:**

- 1.23 All options except Lavender Road nursery would require new build and would therefore require extensive capital building costs plus loss of opportunity cost in capital receipt.

## **Review in June 2020**

### **Background**

The consultation on the proposal to move Merton Medical Education Services (MMES) to Lavender Nursery (London Road) ended on Monday 22 February 2021. Two specific questions arose from the consultation on alternatives to Lavender Nursery:

- Could MMES be located at Whatley Avenue, in addition to the planned special school provision?
- Could MMES stay where they are at Worsfold House, either permanently or for an extended period, of circa two years?

### **Review of Accommodation requirement for MMES**

MMES works with the most vulnerable students in the borough, aged 5-16, many of whom come from areas of extreme deprivation within Mitcham. These pupils are physically unwell, many undergoing chemotherapy, or mentally unwell and struggling to overcome psychosis, suicidal ideation, self-harm, depression, extreme attachment disorders and anxiety.

The brief for MMES is to provide accommodation for 60 children, generally organised in group sizes of around 10 children. Therefore a building is required to provide 6 classroom spaces plus supplementary accommodation, with access to an outside space. The site will need to have good public transport accessibility for secondary age children. Any design of the building will need to take into account safeguarding risks for the children i.e. potential for self-harm etc.

### **Planned special school provision at Whatley Avenue**

The case to use Whatley Avenue for a special school with a specialism to provide for ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) children was agreed by the council's Corporate Management Team in March 2020, but progression of the project was delayed by the Covid period. A report is now going to Cabinet on 22 June 2021.

The plan is for the new provision to be primarily for children with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) managed by Melbury School and to open in September 2022 with capacity for 80 pupils. There are a number of advantages to this approach, one of which is that it is the quickest means to deliver the places.

The case for additional special school provision is very clear in the Cabinet report:

- Further significant increases in EHCPs (Education, Health and Care Plans) and demand for specialist SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) places clarifies there is demand for more places than previously perceived
- National data based on SEN2 council returns confirms that Merton has a deficiency of state SEND places compared to comparative council areas and has almost the highest percentage of pupils with EHCPs in independent schools
- The council has a significant deficit in its 'High Needs' Dedicated Schools Grant budget, mostly due to the high cost of specialist school placements
- There is a particular need for more provision for children with ASD with slightly higher functioning than currently placed at Cricket Green School

With Independent day school provision averaging £45k per placement, and maintained schools for this type of need £25k per placement, increasing maintained schools provision is a vital part of addressing Merton's Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs budget deficit.

The Whatley Avenue special school project is therefore key to providing as many places state school places as possible.

It is clear that the council can, and needs to fill the Whatley Avenue building as a special school. The cost avoidance from 80 maintained places compared to independent is circa £1.6 million per annum, so £8 million over 5 years.

Whatley Avenue has a relatively small amount of space for outside play for a special school, and to enable sufficient space it will be necessary to dismantle a temporary building at the site. There is not the site space to add a building on the site for another purpose e.g. MMES.

### **Worsfold House**

MMES is currently temporarily housed in Worsfold House providing 4 classrooms for up to 40 children, along with a primary age Melrose School class in a separate area whilst the expansion of Melrose School is being completed. Approximately half the building is being occupied. Plan 1 overleaf shows the current configuration.

Using the Worsfold House site permanently has been discounted for the following reasons:

1. The Worsfold House site has been identified as a site for housing, with a capital receipt attached to its sale. If it is kept by the council, this capital receipt would be lost
2. The Worsfold House build was considered for school use (for Cricket Green) a few years and design consultants put significant effort into trying to make it work. However, the building is built as offices with only a small number of classroom sized spaces. The

conclusion then was that it realistically needed to be knocked down and re-built for permanent school use. This remains the case.

The issues raised in the December 2020 land search report remain the case.

**Worsfold House** – the site is of sufficient size (circa 6,500m<sup>2</sup>) but it has been identified by the DVS as having a value of up to circa [redacted] million. Feasibility studies dating from the recent Cricket Green School expansion shows it is not practical to adapt to be a SEND school, and this would include a medical school for 6-7 classes. Therefore it requires a new build at circa £3 million, so the combined build and opportunity loss is over [redacted] million

While the DVS valuation has to remain confidential, the council can say that the total cost of this option is £5-10 million:

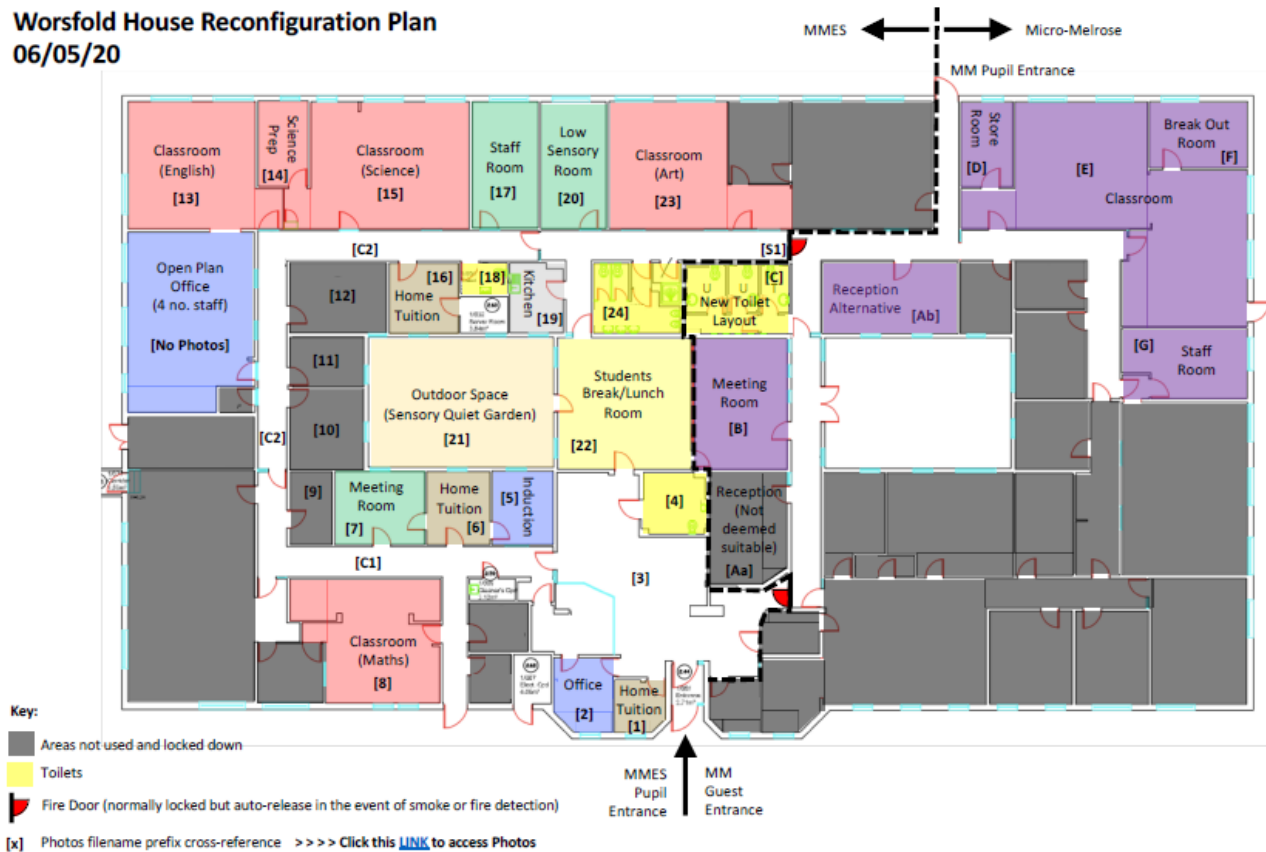
### Continuing to use Worsfold House for a period

Since Worsfold House is being used by MMES temporarily, it could be considered that this temporary use could be extended, for two years or so while other options are considered. However, this presents the following issues:

- The building was converted at a low cost for a short period and provides a poor quality environment in what is essentially a disused office block with toilets liable to flooding, an outdated and unreliable lighting system, windows without safety glass and inadequate heating system
- The building was converted to only provide for 40 pupils and cannot be easily extended to 60 children and so to meet demand expected following the Covid period
- There aren't likely to be alternative options in two years

### Plan 1

**Worsfold House Reconfiguration Plan**  
06/05/20



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