

Summary of Consultation Evening on 20 September 2023 – Proposal to increase the age range at Hatchside School and expand it onto an additional site within the grounds of Mayespark Primary School.

The meeting opened with a presentation from the local authority, providing an overview of the proposal and its rationale, as well as the structure of the consultation and decision-making process. This was followed by a question-and-answer session, the key elements of which are summarised below.

Q. A question was raised in relation to the fact that parents of pupils at Mayespark Primary School had only been notified of the consultation evening a few days previously. It was felt that this was insufficient time to coordinate attendance and that a number of parents were unable to attend, due to the short notice.

A. The local authority representative apologised for the late notice of the consultation evening. Statutory notices had been published on 11 September and an email had been sent out to all statutory consultees on this date also. However, it was acknowledged that it would have been beneficial to also include Mayespark parents within this email circulation. On that basis, the local authority offered to arrange a further consultation evening, should any parents request this. The local authority agreed to coordinate with Mayespark Primary School to have an email sent out to parents, to offer an additional date.

Q. It was stated that there was a feeling that the local authority was lacking in transparency in relation to this consultation, due to the late notice of the meeting. The feeling amongst some attendees was that this would lead to fewer responses and questions being raised.

A. In response, the local authority clarified that all statutory processes had been followed and all statutory consultees notified of the proposed changes. The consultation format provided a degree of engagement that was in excess of the statutory benchmark and there was no intention for the consultation to lack in transparency. The local authority also confirmed that they were keen to hear from as many interested parties as possible and offered to organise a further meeting to this end.

Q. A concern was raised in relation to the pressures on therapy provision within Redbridge at the moment. There was a feeling that the local authority was not doing enough to meet the therapy needs of young people with SEND. There was a suggestion that the expansion of Hatchside provision would place a further strain on therapy provision within the Borough.

A. There is a comprehensive therapy offer in place at Hatchside, which the school have devolved funding and responsibility for. As numbers increase in the provision, concomitant funding will be allocated to the school to account for this, meaning that the expansion will not place any additional pressures on funding. There is a national

shortage of Speech and Language Therapists, but the local authority is working with Hatchside and other special schools to do as much as possible to mitigate this, such as working with the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists for further support and involvement in recruitment projects.

Q. A query was raised in relation to the proposed vehicular entrance for the Hatchside provision and the proposed times for pupil pick-up / drop-off. There was a concern that this may pose a conflict with the access arrangements for Mayespark pupils, especially those attending the ARP.

A. It was clarified that the proposed vehicular access route comes from Goodmayes Lane and enters the site via the south-eastern boundary. In order to manage any issues associated with access conflicts between the two provisions, it was agreed that Hatchside would develop a bespoke Travel Plan, which defined the access times so as not to overlap with the drop-off / pick-up times of Mayespark.

Q. There were concerns raised regarding the number of pupils requiring specialist placements within the Borough and how the local authority would be meeting this demand.

A. The local authority has robust plans in place to meet the future demand for specialist placements. The local authority has already provided 264 new specialist places since 2019 and has a planned programme of capital works to add further places. The Hatchside proposal forms an integral element of this programme, in meeting the needs of the 64 pupils at the current site, by providing them a suitable transition location for Key Stage 2.

Q. A question was raised regarding whether the Hatchside proposal was part of the national Delivering Better Value Programme.

A. The Delivering Better Value in SEND Programme is aiming to support local authorities and their local area partners to improve the delivery of SEND services for children and young people, whilst working towards financial sustainability. It is a programme providing dedicated support and funding to 55 local authorities, selected based on those facing the greatest financial challenges. As Redbridge has historically been able to manage its SEND provision within the High Needs Block funding envelope, it is not part of the Delivering Better Value Programme and nor is the Hatchside scheme. The Hatchside proposal ensures that the local authority is able to continue to deliver cost-effective specialist placements locally within the Borough, thereby avoiding excess pressures on its High Needs Block.

Q. The Mayespark Annex is the proposed accommodation for the Hatchside KS2 provision. An attendee queried how the pupils currently using this building would be accommodated within the Mayespark site, should the proposal proceed.

A. The Headteacher of Mayespark confirmed that the school had experienced substantial falling rolls over a number of years, which now meant that the Annex would no longer be required for its own teaching needs from September 2024. As such, all Mayespark classes would be able to be accommodated within the main Mayespark building from this date.

Q. A query was raised as to what form of leasehold / freehold arrangements would be put in place in respect of the Annex.

A. The local authority confirmed that the site would be leased to Astrum as part of a 125-year leasehold arrangement, as is standard for any land / buildings used by academy trusts. This would mean that Astrum would be responsible for all running / maintenance costs associated with this building and dedicated outside area, which would mitigate the budgetary pressures that may otherwise be experienced by Mayespark, due to operating a building that was larger than the space required for their pupils on roll.

Q. A question was raised regarding whether the capital spend on the Hatchside scheme might be better allocated to other priorities within the specialist estate.

A. The local authority confirmed that the key priority of the SEND capital grant funding that it received from the DfE was to deliver additional specialist capacity within the Borough and that the Hatchside proposal was both a cost-effective and critical element of the wider programme in this respect. It was added that the funding allocated to the Hatchside scheme was only a small part of the overall capital funding envelope and did not exclude the consideration of other capital investment priorities.

Q. An attendee stated that they did not feel that the Mayespark Annex was of sufficient footprint to accommodate the Hatchside KS2 provision, in terms of core classroom space, as well as ancillary areas (such as sensory rooms, meeting rooms, therapy spaces etc.).

A. The local authority confirmed that a capital allocation had been earmarked for this scheme, which provided a benchmark of the anticipated cost, but was sufficiently flexible to accommodate additional building requirements, should they emerge as part of the detailed design process. Should the proposal proceed, the local authority would work in partnership with Astrum and parental representatives to develop a suitable design / works programme in relation to the building, which fully met the needs of the pupils concerned.

Q. A query was raised as to the type of primary needs currently provided for at Hatchside.

A. Astrum confirmed that there was a broad range of SEND needs accommodated at Hatchside, which includes Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Speech, Language and

Communication Needs, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties, and Severe Learning Difficulties.

Q. An attendee queried where the Hatchside pupils would transition to at secondary level.

A. Astrum confirmed that, due to the breadth of the primary need types provided for at Hatchside, the pupils on roll would likely transition to a number of different secondary provisions, including Little Heath School, Newbridge School, and mainstream schools (including ARPs).