



BRIDGEWATER HIGH SCHOOL EXPANSION PROJECT

Consultation process from 9th December 2020 -
3rd February 2021

This is the formal consultation document
for the proposed Expansion of
Bridgewater High School's Published
Admission Number (PAN) from 300 to
360 in September 2023

Bridgewater High School Expansion Project

Consultation over expanding the Published Admission Number (PAN).

Overview

Bridgewater High School has been asked by Warrington Local Authority to increase its Published Admission Number (PAN) from 300 to 360, commencing in 2023 and starting with Year 7.

Because this is considered to be a “significant expansion” we must consult in line with guidance from the Department for Education. This is the consultation document.

In order to accommodate an increase in numbers, we must also build additional capacity. We must also consult over this through a separate Building Application process, details of which are included in this consultation document.

An introduction from the Principal, Tim Long

Exciting plans are being developed to invest significant capital money to support the expansion of Bridgewater High School so that it can meet the anticipated increase in the number of students in the south of the town. Following careful scrutiny and planning, the Local Authority identified the need to increase the number of secondary places following the significant level of new housing developments in the area. They approached Bridgewater High School and TCAT and we were keen to support this initiative. We consider this a fantastic opportunity for the school as it also allows us to:

- transform teaching and learning facilities across both sites
- redistribute our numbers more evenly across the two school sites
- provide a solution to the growing pressure on school places

However, we also want to make sure that as part of any expansion we keep all our stakeholders fully informed, giving them the appropriate opportunities to consult and feedback their views.

For the sake of clarity, this consultation document addresses the increase in the Published Admission Number from 300 to 360 starting with Year 7 in 2023. The consultation over the Building Application is a separate process.

In the light of the proposed increase to our numbers, we must, as an academy, follow the guidance published by The Department for Education in “Making significant changes to an open academy and closure by mutual agreement. Departmental guidance for all types of academy trust. Published November 2019.” A copy of this can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/847451/Significant_change_and_academy_closure_151119.pdf

The most relevant section relates to any proposed changes detailed in “Expansion of physical capacity” where it says:

“A ‘significant expansion’ is defined as an enlargement that increases the overall physical capacity of an academy (as recorded in its funding agreement) so that it can increase its overall teaching space enabling the school to provide places for more than 30 additional pupils.....Permanently changing the internal configuration of a school building to accommodate more than 30 additional pupils would also be classed as an ‘increase in capacity’ and requires the significant change process to be followed.”

To comply with the significant change process, we must “*demonstrate that a fair and open local consultation has been undertaken with all those who could be affected by the proposed change, and that the academy trust has considered all responses received. Comments or objections can be made on any grounds and opportunities for feedback should be given at all public and stakeholder meetings. The LA will hold important contextual information on the requirement for places locally and must be consulted in all cases.*”

Details of how you can feed back comments or objections are contained later in this document.

The Planning Application Consultation process

Whilst this document will give an overview of the proposed changes to the buildings, its main focus is to consult over educational change to the Published Admission Number (PAN).

The second consultation relates to the Planning Application which deals with the buildings. The Planning application process requires Warrington Borough Council’s Planning department to undertake an additional formal period of public consultation. Once concluded, the planning authority will consider representations received during this consultation before deciding on the planning application itself.

Warrington Borough Council’s standards and approach to community consultation are detailed within its Statement of Community Involvement <https://www.warrington.gov.uk/statement-community-involvement#:~:text=The%20Statement%20of%20Community%20Involvement,to%20the%20Development%20Plan%20Document.>

The majority of all planning application data is now held online to facilitate public engagement. When we have developed our proposals sufficiently to enable an application to be submitted we will publicise the planning portal website via the school website.

The Consultation Process over increasing the PAN 9th December 2020 to 3rd February 2021

This consultation document sets out:

- The position of Warrington Borough Council
- The school’s context
- Why there is a need for more places in the Appleton area
- Why Bridgewater High School is best placed to meet this need
- The expansion proposal
- The broad educational implications
- Managing the expansion project
- An overview of the Building plans
- Feeding back your views
- Concluding the consultation

The position of Warrington Borough Council

In order for the local authority to meet its statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places available for the local high school population, Bridgewater High School has been identified as being geographically best placed to cater for this area of growth in the town. The reason for the available investment for Bridgewater High school is that it has been identified as central to several housing developments in the local area and therefore is named as the school that will benefit from the funding in the S106 housing developer contribution for education places.

The Local Authority will be liaising closely with Bridgewater High School as it develops the site and expands the school roll to ensure as smooth a transition as possible. Over time we expect to see the PAN for each year grow from 300 to 360. However, we recognise that this will be phased in line with the completion of the new housing and is unlikely to happen immediately. Furthermore, we wish to avoid creating over-capacity in the area before actual demand materialises. Therefore, whilst there is no doubt that these additional 60 places will be required at some point, any increase in the PAN will not happen before 2023. The subsequent increase will be calibrated in line with additional demand for school places and we do not consider that there will be any change to the current catchment area.

The school's context

Bridgewater High School is a large, 11-16 co-educational, secondary school operating across two separate sites in Appleton, Warrington. The School converted to an academy in December 2014 and is part of The Challenge Academy Trust (TCAT) which comprises nine schools and a Sixth Form College all based in the wider Warrington area.

Bridgewater High School would usually admit 300 pupils into the Year 7 cohort each year. Due to exceptional demand and appeals the school now has more than 300 pupils in all Year groups. Due to significant housing developments creating the need for additional places, as well as the current basic need for more pupil places as evidenced by applications over the past 3 years, the proposal is to expand permanently the school's Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of 300 to 360. This would start in September 2023 with initially growth in Year 7 only.

The school operates a Designated Provision with 24 places reserved for pupils with Special Educational Needs (Resourced Provision). The provision is for pupils with an autistic spectrum condition in the age range 11 to 16.

This provision is unaffected by the proposed school expansion. Furthermore, the plan is that its facilities on the Upper Site will be physically enhanced.

Why there is a need for more places in the Appleton area

Warrington Borough Council has a statutory duty to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to meet the current and future demand for pupil places.

Bridgewater High School's Published Admission Number (PAN) is 300. The 24 students in the Designated Provision are additional to this.

Demand for places at Bridgewater High School has exceeded available places consistently over recent years. For example, in 2019

No. of 1st preferences received – 328

No. of 2nd preferences received – 195

No. of 3rd preferences received - 59

Total number received - 582

In September 2020 applicant numbers were as follows:

No. of 1st preferences received – 301

No. of 2nd preferences received – 155

No. of 3rd preferences received - 79

Total number received - 535

Similar to many other areas in Cheshire, Appleton has been facing a growth in the demand for school places. Proposed housing developments at Appleton Thorn, Grappenhall Heys, Appleton Cross and Stretton could yield in excess of 1,000 new dwellings with the majority designated for family occupation. As the local community and population expand there is likely to be an increase in the demand for pupil places at Bridgewater High School.

Pupil numbers have been consistently higher than the school's overall capacity of 300 per year. For example, overall pupil numbers for Year 7 have been 312 in 2018, 318 in 2019 and 306 in 2020. Overall pupil numbers have been 1555 in September 2019 and 1541 in September 2020 (both including the Designated Provision).

Warrington Borough Council's forecasted pupil numbers could see the school's pupil population grow to 1800 by September 2025 (excluding the Designated Provision).

Why Bridgewater High School is best placed to meet this need

Warrington Borough Council has assessed and analysed a complex range of data before coming to the decision to expand Bridgewater High School including all of the following:

- Pupil numbers and planning forecasts for the short and medium term
- Capacity at neighbouring schools
- Location and size of the school site
- Ability to expand the school
- Catchment area and proximity of housing developments/increasing demand
- School performance (Attainment, Progress, OFSTED rating, etc.)
- Parental preference and applicant numbers

The expansion proposal

If the proposal goes ahead, 60 additional places will be offered to children applying for Year 7 places from September 2023. This means that construction will have to take place to enlarge the school ready for September 2023 if not before. This construction will create more teaching space and enhance facilities in the school. We will eventually receive additional funding for the increase in pupils to allow for extra teachers and the resources and equipment needed to accommodate this increase. We would continue to add classes

every year until September 2027 when we will have 360 children per year group equating to 1800 children from Year 7 to Year 11 based on the 360 PAN.

As part of this expansion we will also use the opportunity to distribute students more evenly across the two sites. This means that Year 9 will move to the Upper site at the latest from September 2023 but potentially from 2022 depending upon the progress of the building work. (see below for more detail.)

Pupils will continue to be taught on both sites, with the Lower school accommodating Years 7 and 8 (720 pupils) and the Upper accommodating Years 9, 10 and 11 (1080 pupils).

In considering this proposal a feasibility study has been commissioned to explore different options for the sites and the possibilities for construction including all associated costs. The details of these options will be negotiated with the Trust’s representatives and their architects in partnership with Warrington Borough Council to ensure minimum disruption to existing pupils in the creation of high-quality learning spaces and facilities to meet the needs of the local school community.

These can be viewed in more detail in the Building Application consultation process when it starts. There will be a link on our website <https://bridgewaterhigh.org/> and in the case of the Planning Application, this can be viewed via Warrington’s own website. <https://www.warrington.gov.uk/statement-community-involvement#:~:text=The%20Statement%20of%20Community%20Involvement,to%20the%20Development%20Plan%20Document>

The broad educational implications

The first thing to acknowledge is that ultimately the number of students in each year group will increase by 60. Therefore, we will increase the number of classes proportionately. Currently across KS3 and within the Core at Key Stage 4, classes are taught in two half year blocks, Stockton and Appleton, with 6 classes in each band.

This table illustrates class sizes at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 (Core) based on a PAN of 300 (excluding the Designated Provision)

Classes	English	Maths	Science*	History*	Geography*	MFL	D&T**	ICT	PE	EPA	RE*
Number	12	12	12	12	12	12	13/14	12	12	12	12
Average size KS3	25	25	25	25	25	25	23/21	25	25	25	25
Average size KS4	25	25	25	***	***	***	***	***		***	***

*In year 7, these subjects are taught in tutor groups. There are 10 tutor groups.

**The practical nature of these subjects means they are typically taught as smaller groups

***At KS4 these subjects are option subjects and typically benefit from smaller class sizes

When we move to a PAN of 360, (excluding the Designated Provision) we plan to have 14 classes at KS3 and in the Core at KS4. We will also move from 10 tutor groups to 12 tutor groups

Classes	English	Maths	Science*	History*	Geography*	MFL	D&T**	ICT	PE	EPA	RE*
Number	14	14	14	14	14	14	15/16	14	14	14	14
Average size KS3	25.7	25.7	25.7	25.7	25.7	25.7	24/23	25.7	25.7	25.7	25.7
Average size KS4	25.7	25.7	25.7	***	***	***	***	***		***	***

*In year 7, these subjects will be taught in tutor groups. There will be 12 tutor groups.

**The practical nature of these subjects means they are typically taught as smaller groups

***At KS4 these subjects are option subjects and typically benefit from smaller class sizes

As you will see there is a modest increase in the average class size if we maintain the symmetry we currently have which we would need to do in terms of efficiency.

However, set against national benchmarks this would still be regarded as within the expected average class size which for secondary schools is between 23 and 26. Furthermore, where students are set, we often have different combinations of numbers as this table illustrates:

	Stockton	Appleton
Set A	30	30
Set B	30	30
Set C	27	27
Set D	26	26
Set E	25	25
Set F	22	22
Set G	20	20
Total	180	180

Will year groups be located on the same site as they are now?

We regard this as a perfect opportunity to relocate Year 9 from the Lower site to the Upper site. There are a number of reasons and benefits for doing this.

Currently the Lower School has the highest density of students and there is limited opportunity to grow capacity here. In fact, there is a compelling argument that if possible we reduce capacity on the site to allow greater access to specialist teaching areas. By moving Year 9 to the Upper Site- where the scope for expansion is far greater, we will reduce the numbers at Lower from 940 to approximately 720 (this number will fluctuate slightly depending on the Designated Provision numbers).

We firmly believe that this move will enhance the Lower Site by making it a relatively less congested site. The latest this will happen is September 2023. However, depending on the progress of the building work it could be as soon as September 2022.

In terms of moving Y9 to the Upper site, there are distinct educational benefits. Just as there have historically been benefits for the whole of KS3 to be located on one site, there are now opportunities if we move Year 9 to the Upper site sooner.

By establishing Y9 on this site, it means that when they do embark upon GCSEs they are fully prepared in terms of the site and its organisation. We also believe that by having Y9 on the same site as they take their GCSEs, we can improve even further our programme of transition and support for KS4.

However, we must stress that we will retain our three-year KS3 curriculum with GCSE Options only being chosen during Year 9.

Finally, as a result of this proposed expansion, there will be a significant improvement to the quality of our educational facilities on the Upper site with some improvements to the Lower Site.

How will you manage the increase in numbers?

The average state funded secondary school in England has 986 students (2019 data).

Source: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>

As a large split site school, we are used to managing large numbers of students. We also devolve significant autonomy to each site. On both sites there is a headteacher, a fixed leadership team and a fixed administrative and support team including one for catering purposes. Therefore, in effect both sites work as if they were fully operational schools in their own right. The current distribution across the sites is 936 (Lower):605 (Upper). Going forward this would change with Lower having 720 students and Upper having 1080. In the case of the Upper site, this would still sit favourably if compared to the size of schools nationally. In addition, the site itself has plenty of capacity to expand.

We will also retain the organisational structure of having two bands, Stockton and Appleton. These will continue to be equally balanced in terms of gender and ability. Both bands will follow the same curriculum. The only difference will be the addition of one extra teaching class in each band.

As the number of students increases so will our revenue. We will therefore ensure that this increased revenue is spent proportionately and in line with national benchmarks.

In terms of managing two key stages on one site we have recent experience of this when we ran our own sixth form. Therefore, we are confident that we will be able to lead out the final year of KS3 alongside KS4 in a highly effective manner.

Finally, one of the consequences of Covid-19 has been the need to split our lunches to maintain “social bubbles”. This has provided an ideal opportunity to assess the benefits of split lunches and we are overwhelmingly of the conclusion that this is a good thing. This will clearly alleviate some of the demand for canteen places across the two sites whilst providing a calmer, more capacious dining experience for our students.

Will the increase in numbers effect the level of pastoral care available?

We are confident that we will retain the high quality of pastoral care we currently have. We will retain the Stockton/Appleton band system and its associated pastoral support structures. We will also look to increase the level of pastoral support proportionately as the number on roll grows.

Will the increase in numbers effect the level of support for students with SEND?

We see no reason why any increase in numbers should impact upon the provision for students with SEND. As the school grows in all aspects there will be a proportionate increase in terms of the funding we receive and therefore where we spend it. We will therefore grow any additional support in line with our current provision whilst ensuring it is appropriately benchmarked against national guidance.

Will there be changes to where teachers and support staff work?

Currently all teachers and support staff are available for deployment across either site and many colleagues work across the two sites. We do not intend to change this principle. However, it is inevitable that by moving Year 9 from Lower to Upper there will a redistribution of where teachers teach and where support staff support. However, in essence we see no major changes other than the fact that the sites are swapping where their allocated amount of teaching and support take place.

Will you be changing the admission criteria when you expand?

There are no plans to change our current admissions criteria. However, because we will be expanding our PAN from 2023 there is a statutory requirement to consult with stakeholders. This process is a formal Warrington wide consultation and you will be invited to take part in the process should you wish. Nearer the consultation period we will write to you explaining the process.

Managing the expansion project

TCAT Trustees have ultimate oversight of this expansion project in conjunction with Warrington's Local Authority. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) will also monitor the progress of any expansion.

Bridgewater's Local Governing Body also has a working party to oversee this development and the successful contractor will appoint a project manager on site.

Will there be any change to Governance and Administration?

We believe that the capacity of the Local Governing Body and that of TCAT Trustees is sufficient to provide on-going and appropriate scrutiny and support for this development. Therefore, we are not envisaging any changes.

In terms of administration, as numbers grow the administrative infrastructure will need to expand proportionately and this will be carried out in context of national benchmarks. Also, given that Year 9 are moving from the Lower Site to the Upper Site, there will need to be a review of where administrative staff are located to ensure an equitable and appropriate distribution.

Who is paying for the expansion project?

TCAT on behalf of Bridgewater High School has signed a legally binding funding agreement with the Local Authority. The Local Authority have been able to access central government funding to meet its statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places available for the local high school population.

Will students and staff be involved in the process?

Yes. There are many opportunities to involve students in all aspects of the building and design process. We will have an "educational programme" that will sit alongside the building project involving students in as many aspects of the new build as we can. Students and staff will also be involved in some of the design decisions we will be taking.

Will there be an impact on the learning of other students?

Any impact will be kept to a minimum with as much work as possible being completed over holiday periods. However, we will be assigning a senior colleague to oversee this process to ensure that learning is not interrupted even if there have to be, at times, room changes to facilitate building works.

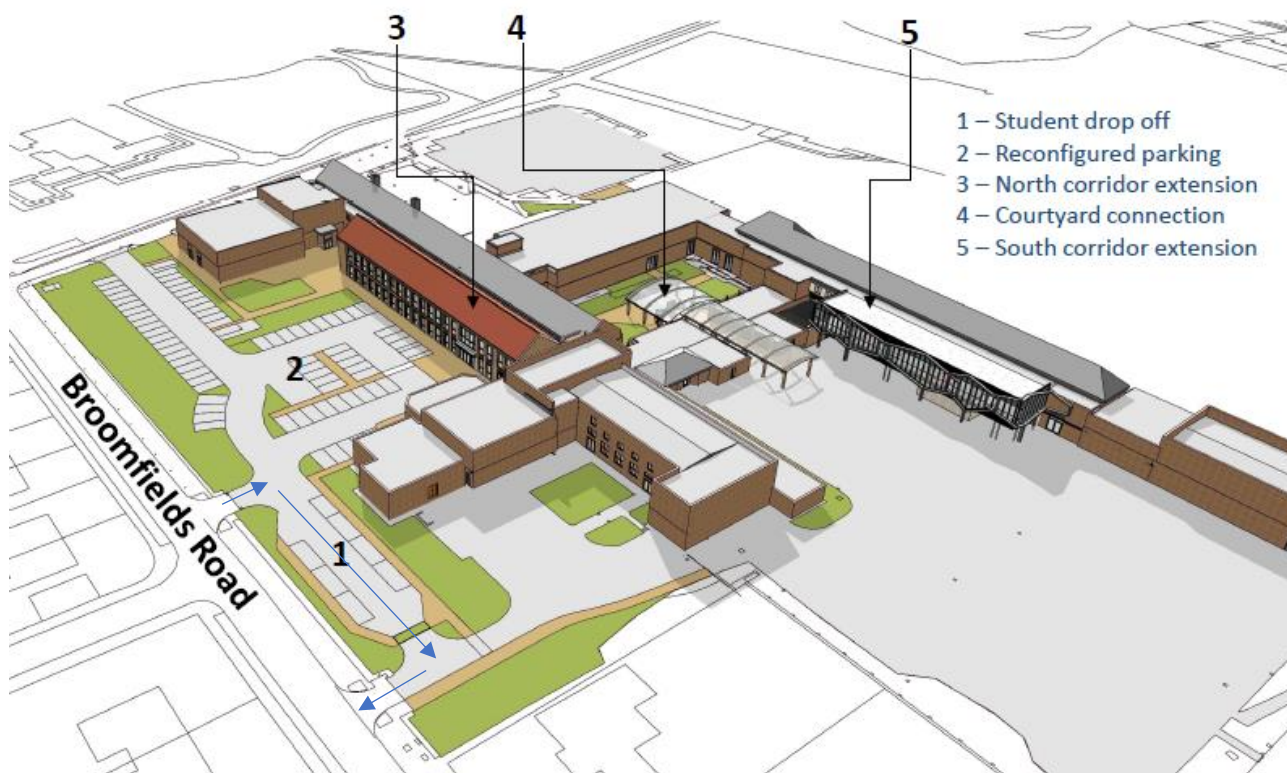
Does the expansion project include Broomfields Leisure Centre?

Broomfields Leisure centre is not part of Bridgewater's Expansion project. It is run by Livewire, a non-profit organisation in Warrington. However, a separate feasibility project is currently underway through the Local Authority looking at its future and as a school we are fully involved in these discussions.

An overview of the Building plans

Upper

This building project looks to expand existing provision. Additional classes will be built as extensions to the two main corridor blocks. There will also be a rolling programme to refurbish existing classrooms and the dining facilities will be upgraded along with the school hall. Here is an architect's 3D impression looking from the north west:



(1&2) New student drop off zone and reconfigured parking

Access to the school has been of paramount importance to us. We have decided to use this as an opportunity to provide drop off points for students within the boundaries of the school, thereby alleviating the traffic on Broomfields Road. We will also re-landscape this part of the school to include additional parking spaces and electric charging points. Traffic will continue to flow in via the main school entrance and via the road leading to Broomfields Leisure Centre. However, a one-way system within the carpark will direct parents who are dropping off to exit via the first entrance on Broomfields Road- currently used for deliveries. There will be a perimeter path to ensure that all students can also access the playground and new entrance safely.

(3) The North Extension- facing Broomfields Road

An extension will be built in the car park to the north of the school building, adjacent to the existing dining and assembly halls. The current entrance for visitors will be moved to face Broomfields Road and

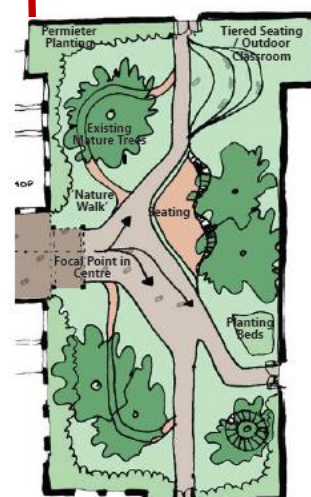
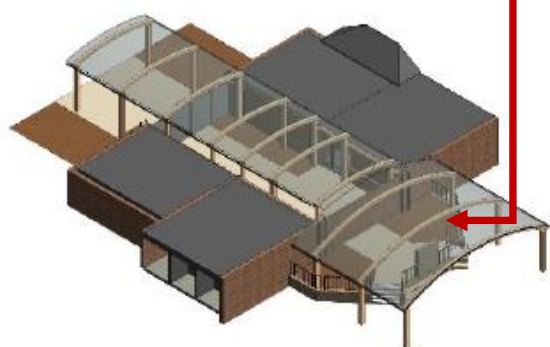
will revitalise the overall appearance of the school and improve the first impressions visitors will experience. On the ground floor this extension will contain the Visitor Entrance, EPA classrooms and a brand-new Food Technology Room. On the first floor the new rooms will be Science Laboratories to meet additional need. The look of the building will be relatively traditional.

(4) Student Entrance: the Courtyard connection

There is a very attractive garden area that sits at the heart of the upper school. However, it is not very accessible. The plan is to open this up fully to students so it becomes their main entrance point. This will also increase their social areas and will provide additional food outlets. It will be landscaped as a “wellbeing garden” and hopefully become a place of relaxation and peace where students can go during their break times. It will also articulate ideas of environmental sustainability.



Here is an architect’s impression of the proposed courtyard connection.



(5) The South Extension facing the playground

Like the north extension, this will build on the existing two-story building that houses English and Maths. It will be built on part of the playground. This will also look out towards the new student entrance. It will have a relatively modern feel and also articulate ideas of environmental sustainability.

Here is an architect's impression looking from the north east.



Lower

There will be a net loss of students on the Lower site. However, the overall expansion project will allow us finally to improve the dining provision on the Lower site and ensure it is as welcoming to students as the newly designed Upper school will be.

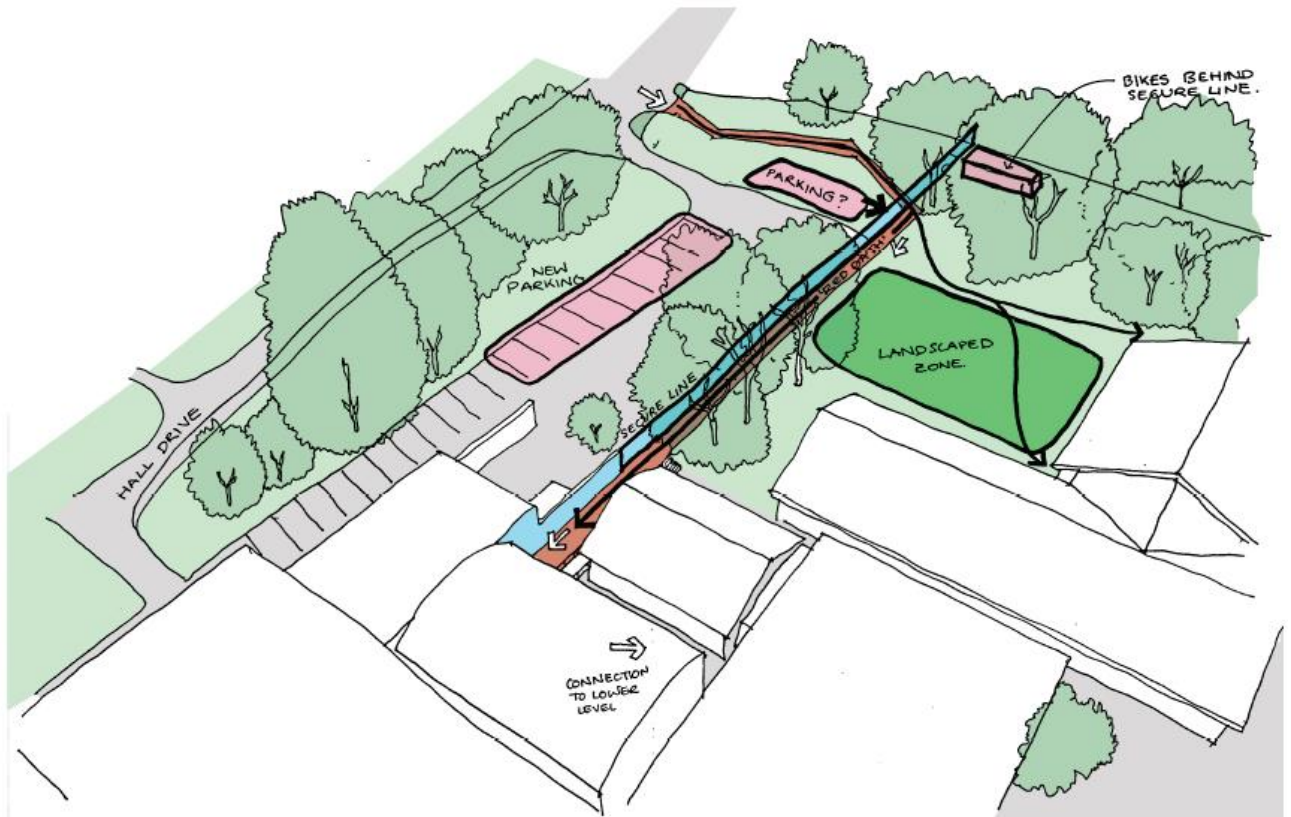
Student Entrance: the canopy and dining concept

Where students leave Hall Drive to enter the school, their “walk in” will be improved by landscaping the area, bringing in the concept of wellbeing through the natural environment. The canopy area will be refurbished to provide more welcoming seating whilst the main Hall will convert in to a permanent eating area and a flexible space that can double up as both an assembly and dining area.

Refurbishment at Lower

We will also refurbish the PE Changing Rooms and roll out a programme of classroom refurbishment.

An architect's impression of the improved entrance at Lower:



An architect's impression of the remodelled Hall and Canopy area at Lower:



Feeding back your views

Due to the current pandemic, it is not possible to arrange the usual drop-in session at the school where representatives from the Local Authority and the Trust would be available to talk through this proposal. However, you can access information via our website by following this link:

<https://bridgewaterhigh.org/expansion-project-consultation/> . You can also go directly to the consultation document by following this link: <https://sway.office.com/K78zU286WsDZavP7?ref=Link>

Moreover, your views can be registered through our online consultation portal <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/bhexpansionproject> . We will regularly monitor this and provide interim feedback where appropriate. At the end of the process we will conduct an on-line event where we respond more formally to any comments we have received. Further details about this will be published nearer the date and will be posted on our website.

If you prefer to write directly to the school please direct any questions or queries to Jill Stanton Bridgewater High School, Broomfields Road Warrington WA4 3AE by the closing date of February 3rd 2021.

Please mark any correspondence with the heading Bridgewater Expansion Project. Likewise, if you prefer to email the school, please do so to the following address: expansionproject@bridgewaterhigh.com

Concluding the consultation

When the consultation is concluded, the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) will reach a conclusion as long as we demonstrate that:

- a fair and open consultation has taken place.
- the proposed changes are aligned with local pupil place plans
- any change is unlikely to have a negative impact on educational standards at the academy or at other local schools or colleges
- appropriate planning permissions and other consents required have been secured
- the proposal does not displace existing pupils

The RSC will then consider a range of factors and make a balanced judgement when deciding whether to approve or reject a proposal. They may also decide to refer that matter to the Secretary of State for a decision.