



BRIDGEWATER HIGH SCHOOL EXPANSION PROJECT

Response to the Consultation process from 9th
December 2020 -10th February 2021

This is the formal consultation feedback to the proposed expansion of Bridgewater High School's Published Admission Number (PAN) from 300 to 360 in September 2023. It includes feedback following the virtual meeting held on Wednesday 10th February 2021.

Bridgewater High School Expansion Project

Consultation over expanding the Published Admission Number (PAN)

Part 1 Overview of feedback received on-line

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 have consulted in line with guidance from the Department for Education. This document is the final feedback to the consultation process that was launched on 9th December 2020. The on-line consultation closed on 3rd February when a response was produced and made available on our website. As part of this consultation process there was an open on-line meeting held on Wednesday 10th February to discuss this and take further feedback. This is covered in Part 2 of this document.

During the on-line consultation we received the following feedback directly to the school:

On-line feedback via our website	12 responses
Email	1 response

Consultation over the PAN

The purpose of this consultation is to seek views on the principle of expanding Bridgewater High School’s physical capacity to accommodate more students.

This does not override the annual requirement to consult formally on any change to Bridgewater’s Admission policy. This is a public consultation and further information will be provided nearer the date as and when required.

Consultation over the Planning Application

The consultation over the Planning Application is a separate process coordinated by Warrington Borough Council and is not directly part of this consultation process. However, as part of this we received some further responses which we reference in this document.

Bridgewater’s Principal, Chair of Governors, Shadow Chair and the Project Manager also attended a meeting of Appleton Parish Council.

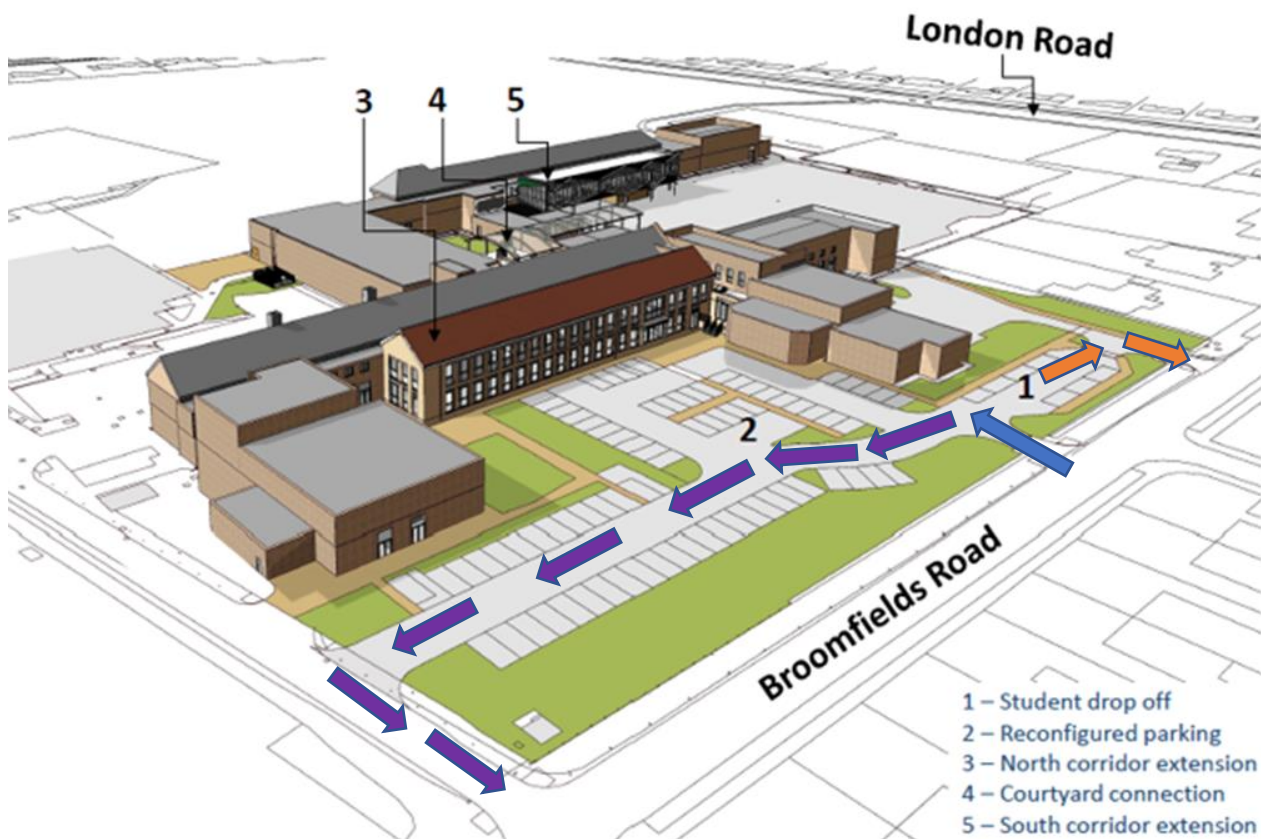
RESPONSE TO FEEDBACK

The main areas of feedback from both the PAN Consultation and the Planning Consultation relate to:

- The impact of increased numbers on traffic management
- The impact in terms of increased carparking needs
- The impact on students’ educational experience because of increased numbers
- The school’s capacity to manage effectively an increase in pupil numbers
- The impact of increased numbers in terms of students coming and going to school
- The capacity of the school to minimise disruption to learning and exams during the building phase
- Security issues relating to the build process and the new design

The impact of increased numbers on traffic management

Throughout the planning stage we have prioritised traffic management. The entry and exit points to the Upper site are a key element of this. We will divert traffic in two directions via a one-way system that includes a drop off option as shown below:



- 1 – Student drop off
- 2 – Reconfigured parking
- 3 – North corridor extension
- 4 – Courtyard connection
- 5 – South corridor extension

Key

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|--------------------------|
| | Entry point for all traffic | 1 | Visitor parking/drop off |
| | Staff traffic flow and exit route | 2 | Staff Parking |
| | Visitors’ and parents’ traffic flow and exit route | | |

On entering the site, staff will turn left and use the staff parking areas, eventually leaving the site via the one-way system to the road that provides access to the Leisure Centre. Since this exit will only be used by staff, use will be largely sporadic as they tend to arrive and leave the school in a staggered fashion. In the main, this is early in the morning before the school day and once the school day has finished. Throughout the school day, the school will continue to operate our regular mini-bus which takes staff from one site to the other and has been used for a number of years to reduce the quantity of cars moving between the school's two sites during the day.

On entering the site, we have proposed that visitors and parents will turn right, away from the staff parking area, and we have proposed a one-way system, alongside a layout that would allow anyone dropping off to do so as efficiently as possible, reducing the risk of traffic backing up within the site and onto surrounding roads.

In addition to the above, it is our expectation that there are likely to be conditions included in any Planning Permission that is granted. The process of discharging these conditions will further assist with making sure the school is operated in a way that minimises disruption to the local community.

Our understanding is that these conditions will require us to undertake the following actions:

1. Provide a Travel Plan which promotes non-car use, for approval by Warrington Borough Council. Any Travel Plan will include clearly defined targets and objectives for a shift to more sustainable methods of travel/non-car use.
2. Appoint a Travel Plan Co-ordinator who will be responsible for the implementation, delivery, monitoring and promotion of the Travel Plan.
3. Provide additional cycle parking.

Parking in the local area around the Broomfields Road route and the connections are also used by St Monica's primary school and we will work together to manage the situation. Meanwhile, the relocation of Year 9 to the Upper School will reduce student numbers at the Lower School by over 200 which will benefit the local area.

The impact in terms of increased carparking needs

There will be more staff on the Upper Site. However, there will also be increased parking moving from 59 plus 3 accessible to 67 plus 3 accessible spaces. We can also make greater use of the parking area at the back of Broomfields Leisure Centre which is rarely used where there are approximately 20 further parking spaces. We will also retain our inter-site minibus which can transport up to 20 colleagues at the start and end of lessons, breaks and the end of the day. Efficiently used, this should allow us to distribute parking across the two sites more evenly when needed.

The impact on students' educational experience because of increased numbers

There was concern expressed over the impact of increased numbers on class sizes. In the consultation document we provided this table to illustrate the current distribution of 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

This table illustrates the impact 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

Where a respondent pointed to an example of a top set that exceeded 30, this was correct. However, the decision to exceed 30 was not because of a shortage of staff. Rather it represented decisions made by that department about how they wanted to distribute classes taking into account, specifically, the implications of exam tiering at GCSE.

From a curriculum planning perspective each year group is divided into two equal bands called Appleton and Stockton. In this instance, there were 6 teachers allocated to the Appleton band and 6 to the Stockton band meaning that the average group size available for the year group before setting was 25. Moving forwards, the increase to 7 teaching groups in each half year should still ensure that the current ratio potential is maintained.

It is also true that the school will be bigger. However, it is important to remember that the total number is split over 2 sites. We currently 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.

In terms of numbers, it is worth noting that according to 2019 data, the average state funded secondary school in England has 986 students. At Bridgewater, the current distribution across the sites is 936 (Lower) and 605 (Upper). Going forward this would change with Lower having 720 students and Upper having 1080. Therefore, it is true that the year groups themselves will be large when compared nationally. However, taking into account the two sites, the number of students present on each site will only be slightly above the national average at Upper and below it at Lower.

We are confident that we will retain the sense of belonging within each of the year groups that will also ensure that all students feel part of one school, albeit a large one split across two sites. However, this is something we have always embraced and do not feel that it will be significantly different going forward. Furthermore, we have always felt that the splitting of year groups across sites has helped transition and personal development by keeping a narrower age range together. We already invest heavily in our pastoral care system which will increase proportionately with any increase in student numbers.

In terms of the curriculum, any changes going forward will be made in the light of Department for Education guidance and we see no reason why an increase in numbers should be a determining factor in any change to our curriculum. We have also made sure that the expansion project increases access to specialist rooms such as science laboratories, ICT, Music and Food Technology rooms. Furthermore, we are creating a dedicated SEND resource area on the Upper site.

Finally, when moving Y9 to Upper, we will retain our three-year KS3 curriculum with GCSE Options only being chosen during Year 9.

The school's capacity to manage effectively an increase in pupil numbers

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. This includes pastoral care and SEND which we will look to increase proportionately as well.

It is also important to recall that we have experience of managing 2 key stages on one site. This changed at Upper with the closure of our sixth form. However, the experience of and expertise in managing two key stages at the Upper site has not been lost and therefore we are confident that we can accommodate this change.

The impact on increased numbers in terms of students coming and going to school

There will be an improved entry point for students from Broomfields Road. This will be a dedicated path leading directly onto the playground and clearly signposted from the current pavement running alongside Broomfields Road. This will also lead to cycle storage areas.

There is an existing pedestrian refuge on London Road that caters for the Northbound drop off on the A49 and the pick-up in the late afternoon which is outside the evening peak in terms of traffic. It is considered that the provision is sufficient to meet the needs of the student movement for the increased numbers.

The capacity of the school to minimise disruption to learning and exams during the building phase

Bridgewater's consultant team have considerable experience designing and managing complicated projects within fully occupied and operational school buildings. Maintaining the education of pupils is a key Bridgewater requirement for this project which has been incorporated within the project scope from the outset.

Following detailed discussions with key Bridgewater staff, a phasing strategy is being developed which will include all necessary safeguarding measures to protect pupils, staff and visitors as well as minimising disruption to day-to-day operations, timetabling, examinations, fire routes, etc. Proposals to temporarily relocate teaching activities and staff away from any potential disruption are also included. Particularly disruptive works are identified within the Phasing Strategy and programmed to be completed during an appropriate school holiday period.

The agreed Phasing Strategy, which forms part of the Contractors Contract documentation, clearly defines restrictions, control measures and limitations placed upon the works. Restrictions include working hours, vehicular movements, separation and DBS checks for all operatives in accordance with our Safeguarding Policies.

We recognise that selecting the right contractor who has the right mix of technical resources, capabilities and experience relevant to this type and size of project will be critical to the success of the scheme. Selection criteria for the main Contractors incorporate a requirement for a demonstrable track record of successfully delivering similar works in live school environments. The tender process- overseen by senior leaders at Bridgewater including the Principal, Bridgewater governors and TCAT Trustees, will scrutinise the Phasing strategy in granular detail.

Warrington Borough Council Planning Officers also propose to attach a number of Planning Conditions to the Planning consent. A Planning Condition requires the Contractor to submit a Construction, Highways and Environmental Management Plan (CHEMP) for Council approval prior to works commencing. This plan sets out how the Contractor proposes to manage all construction operations including site management and logistics whilst identifying appropriate mitigation measures relating to Highways and Traffic, Site Layout and Storage and Environmental Controls covering phasing of the works, working hours, mitigation measures for noise, vibration, dust and air quality, etc. Once approved, the development will be carried out in accordance with the approved plan which will remain in force for the duration of all construction activities.

Given these control measures we are confident that any disruption will be kept to an absolute minimum and will not impact upon exam classes.

Security issues relating to the build process and the new design

Ensuring that the site is secure from a safeguarding perspective is a statutory requirement. The open aspect of the Upper School playing field means it is impractical to fence in. However, we will create an internally secure perimeter within the Upper school playground area that should prevent all but the most determined person from being able to access the playground area where residential gardens are adjacent.

A query was also raised about the Planning Application for the Lower school with regards to bike sheds and security. As was stated at the start, this consultation document does not address directly planning issues

as they relate to the formal Planning Application cycle. However, the advice from planning was that the changes being suggested for the Lower Site would not require a formal planning application- especially in terms of the entrance area leading up to the where the bike sheds are currently located as this is predominantly a landscaping issue. The intention is broadly to retain the existing security measures. However, we will use this as an opportunity also to provide secure bike sheds either by locating them within the secure line or by having bike sheds that can be locked at the start and end of the school day.

Additional queries

One respondent raised the issue as to why the expansion in the PAN had not been linked to an expansion in the age range e.g. Y7-Y13 as well. The view was that since the closure of Appleton College, there wasn't sufficient strategic provision in terms of a school based sixth form in the South Warrington area.

From a school perspective, when we closed our sixth form it was because our numbers were not viable. In the original consultation to close the sixth form the Local Authority commented that the low numbers choosing Appleton College as a sixth form "is probably to be expected, given the level of access to high quality post 16 provision both within Warrington and in neighbouring authorities." The Governors shared this view at the time and are also of the view that whilst the PAN will be expanding, there is not sufficient evidence that this would provide enough numbers to sustain a sixth form at this time. Furthermore, the LA did not ask us to expand the age range. However, this view is valid and duly noted.

Additional comments

Several respondents commented positively on the Expansion Project. For example:

"The extension is necessary to accommodate the growing numbers of houses being built in the area."

"I am very much in favour of the proposed expansion plans which will provide the modern facilities and opportunities our young people need.There is a key, holistic wellbeing theme running through the expansion plan which is vital for young people today."

"I welcome the investment in the school and therefore the local community."

Part 2 Response to feedback from the on-line consultation meeting on Wednesday 10th February 2021

The on-line meeting was conducted via zoom. The meeting was hosted by Keiron Powell, Headteacher of Bridgewater Upper School. The panel consisted of:

- Tim Long, Principal, Bridgewater High School
- Stephen Whatmore Chair of Governors, TCAT Trustee and Vice Chair of TCAT
- Graham Bratley Shadow Chair of Governors, Bridgewater High School
- Tracey Hatton, Headteacher of Bridgewater Lower School
- Michael Jones Associate Director E3 Cube Ltd
- Jill Stanton, Business manager and Clerk to Governors

The Agenda for the meeting was as follows:

1. Introduction to the Panel (Keiron Powell, Host & Headteacher Upper)
2. Overview of feedback from the on-line consultation (The Principal, Tim Long)
3. Response to submitted questions (Panel made up of the Principal, Governors and Project management representative)
4. Opportunity for wider questions (Panel made up of the Principal, Governors and Project management representative)
5. Conclusion (Chair of Governors)

The meeting was attended by 8 members of the public

Mr Long the Principal, explained the context of the consultation.

- The increase in our PAN was at the request of the Local Authority
- The meeting addresses the principle of increasing the PAN
- Concerns regarding the Planning Application are being addressed through the Planning Application process run by the Local Authority
- However, common sense says that some issues such as traffic management should be discussed in this meeting as well

Mr Long then summarised the feedback in terms of respondents:

On-line feedback via our website	12
Email	1
In favour, with some queries	7
Not in favour	1
Seeking further information or clarification	5

Three questions were submitted prior to the meeting as follows:

1. What are the implications for teaching staff?

Response

Mr Long explained that as numbers increase so will staff proportionately since income will increase. If Y9 move to the Upper site there will be a need for a proportionate amount of support staff to follow Y9 students to the Upper Site.

2. Is there a planning application yet for The Lower School in terms of a planning application for the demolition of the outbuildings adjacent to the school and landscaping an area of hardstanding?

Response

Michael Jones, Associate Director E3 Cube Ltd, explained that they had been advised that planning permission was not needed for this. However, a certificate of demolition would be required when the works took place. Mr Jones was able to confirm that the bike sheds would be broadly in line with the current footprint and that they would not butt up against the residential fencing. He also confirmed that there is no impact on trees. Any trees that are removed are diseased and additional trees would be planted elsewhere so overall, the footprint of trees is a betterment.

3. In an ideal, Covid-free world, will the expansion allow for any greater community space/use from the School for the local Community (given the lack of any Community Centre in the immediate vicinity and the uncertainty over the future development of Broomfields Leisure Centre) and thus integrate it more into the local area?

Response

Mr Long confirmed that the school would be actively looking to make the Upper school available through its lettings programme. This would include areas such as the refurbished school hall and the wellbeing garden area as well as the TCAT Professional Development Centre.

During the meeting a number of further questions were raised:

A question was asked about whether there will be sheltered areas that students will be able to go to in the rain.

Response

Mr Powell commented that wet lunches have always been a challenge and so this was always a big focus which has been designed in from the start. Split lunches were introduced during COVID and this has been a huge improvement. This will stay and will improve the management of lunch times. There will be a larger dining space and there will also be sheltered /covered areas in playground.

A question was asked whether there is a proposal to widen the road at the entrance and exit point of the car park Upper.

Response

Mr Jones replied that there is a slight widening at the top of the road by St Monica's – but this can't go much further down because of existing services.

A question was asked about the finances and when the building work will start and finish.

Response

Mr Jones confirmed It will take two summers to complete. The aim is to have Year 9 at Upper school from Sept 2022. At the moment, it depends on planning permission.

The Local Authority is responsible for planned places in the Warrington and they draw down central funding from the government. A legally binding funding agreement has been signed between the Trust and the LA for the monies. These funds are ringfenced for the expansion project only. Bridgewater is not required to contribute anything to the build.

A question was asked about the average size of classes and implications of larger numbers.

Response

This particular issue relates to maths top sets – the challenge for maths sets is the implication on higher and foundation tiers and a desire not to mix tiers in sets. The situation should not be any worse because staff will increase proportionately.

Bridgewater also makes a conscious decision to invest heavily on staffing which is why it is slightly above some national benchmarks in this area of the budget.

A question was asked about traffic management around Broomfields Road and Lyons Lane.

Response

Mr Jones confirmed that a travel survey was carried out at the start of the consultation. It indicated that the majority of Years 7 & 8 seem to walk to school, whilst more Y9-11 students seem to arrive by car. Mr Long confirmed that the school will manage traffic if it becomes an issue. For Lower school, there will be a reduction in students from 950 – 720 and the school is confident that this should alleviate some of the pressures of traffic in Lyons Lane.

The Chair of the Local Governing Body concluded the consultation meeting by thanking everybody for their attendance and the questions that were asked.

He confirmed that school leaders and governors would consider what they have heard and incorporate into this final response document.

Conclusion

Governors, Trustees and school leaders believe there has been a fair and open consultation.

Having considered the feedback and queries gathered throughout the consultation process, Bridgewater High School approves in principle the increase in the PAN from 300 to 360 from 2023.

They will now recommend to the RSC that the increase to the PAN, as requested by Warrington Borough Council should be approved subject to a full business case being submitted.

Tim Long, Principal



Stephen Whatmore, Chair of Governors, TCAT Vice Chair



Graham Bratley, Shadow Chair of Governors



