

The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2016

Proposal to expand Secondary School provision at Westhoughton High School

1. School and local authority details

Name of school: Westhoughton High School, Bolton Road, Westhoughton, Bolton, BL5 3DN

Name of Local Authority: Bolton Council, Department of People Services, 1st Floor Town Hall, Bolton BL1 1RU

Contact Details: Ruth Crawford, Acting Principal Asset Management Officer, Bolton Council, Department of People Services, 1st Floor Town Hall, Bolton BL1 1RU, or via email at ruth.crawford@bolton.gov.uk

2. Objectives

Since around 2009, Bolton has seen an unprecedented rise in the demand for school places. In response to this demand almost 5,000 new primary school places have been created in schools across the borough. This increased pupil population has now started transferring into secondary schools as pupils progress from Year 6 to Year 7 and there is now a need to increase secondary school provision to meet this demand.

The objective of this proposal is to permanently expand Westhoughton High School to admit an additional 40 children to each year 7 intake with effect from September 2019 and in doing so, to raise the current overall capacity of the school from 1,150 to 1,350 pupil places by creating 200 additional pupil places overall. It is proposed that this will be achieved through a new extension and by undertaking some internal remodelling of the existing school building. As part of the proposal it is also planned to demolish an aging block of classrooms that will provide the opportunity for more appropriately located increased external recreational and social space for the additional pupil numbers.

The proposed expansion of Westhoughton High School will therefore help to provide increased opportunities for children in Bolton to access high quality education and to provide parents with a greater choice of schools within the borough.

3. Description of the proposed alteration and evidence of demand

On the 4th December 2017 and 12th February 2018, the Executive Member with responsibility for children and schools considered reports advising of the increased demand for pupil places and of options to increase the expansion of secondary school provision across the borough. These reports highlighted the pressures that Bolton is facing in respect of secondary school provision and the urgent need to increase capacity across the borough's Secondary schools.

Of those schools that were approved for expansion, the proposal to increase the physical capacity at Westhoughton High School falls within the requirements of a 'significant alteration' as defined within the School Organisation Regulations and therefore is required to undergo this formal consultation process.

Prior to this formal process, an initial informal consultation exercise was undertaken to advise interested parties of the proposed expansion of the school and to seek their views. This informal consultation exercise commenced on the 4th June and closed on the 13th July 2018. On 13th August 2018, the Executive Member considered the responses to the informal consultation exercise and approved the publication of the Statutory Notice to expand capacity at Westhoughton High School and in doing so, approved to undertake this formal consultation on the proposal.

Given the forecast demand for school places across the borough, it is proposed to enlarge and increase the capacity of Westhoughton High School by permanently raising the current admission number to provide an additional 40 intake places. The school currently has a planned admission number of 230 pupils per year group and it is proposed that this will increase to admit 270 pupils per year group with each new Y7 intake so that the school will grow incrementally each year. The current capacity of the school is 1,150 and the proposed capacity once all future years have filled will increase to 1,350 pupil places.

4. Implementation and any proposed stages for implementation

If approved, it is proposed that the school will permanently expand from 1st September 2019 although the school has accommodated upto 40 additional Y7 pupils in September 2018 because of the high demand for places. The proposal subject of this consultation is to make this change permanent for further Y7 intakes.

5. The effect on other schools, academies and educational institutions within the area.

Over the last year or so discussions have taken place with all secondary schools within the Borough about the possibilities of increasing capacity to respond to a rising demand for places and in addition to the proposed expansion of Westhoughton High School, the Council is also supporting proposals to increase capacity at Canon Slade CE Academy, ESSA Academy, Sharples Academy, St Joseph's RC High School, Thornleigh Salesian College, and Ladybridge Community High School.

Bolton Council believes that all education provision should be of high quality and when considering proposals to increase capacity, the creation of additional pupil places should be at popular and successful schools. Westhoughton High School was judged to be Good by Ofsted at its last inspection in October 2015 and continues to be a popular school as evidenced by the high number of admission applications.

6. Consultation

The Department for Education guidance sets out a process that must be followed when making prescribed alterations to maintained schools and there is a strong expectation that the Local Authority will informally consult interested parties in developing their proposal prior to publication as part of their duty under public law to act rationally and take into account all relevant considerations. An appropriate informal public consultation exercise was therefore carried out for 6 term time weeks from 4th June to 13th July 2018 to allow all interested parties the opportunity to find out more about the proposal and to submit their comments.

The consultations document was widely circulated to staff, governors, parent/guardians and pupils of the school. Heads and Governors of other schools were also advised as were Local elected members, MP's, faith groups and nearby Local Authorities.

The document was also available on the Council's website at

<http://www.bolton.gov.uk/website/Pages/Schoolsandchildren.aspx>

In addition, a public meeting was held at the school on Wednesday 20th June, from 4pm until 6-30pm offering the opportunity for anyone who wished to attend to discuss the proposal with senior colleagues from the School and Council officers and to raise any concerns they might have had.

7. Project costs including how long-term value for money will be achieved.

The proposed development comprising the physical expansion and remodelling of the school is estimated to cost in the region of £2.4M and will be supported from Basic Need capital funding that has been allocated to Bolton Council from the Department of Education. This funding is provided to assist Councils meet their statutory responsibility to provide sufficient school places.

A review of the school's current and future accommodation needs has been undertaken to identify the building provision required to meet the educational needs of the additional pupils. The proposed scheme will provide a permanent new extension to the school in addition to internal remodelling of parts of the existing building. It is also proposed to take the opportunity to demolish an older block in order to provide more appropriate and secure additional external recreational and social space to meet the needs of the additional pupils.

The proposed works will be procured in an appropriate manner to ensure value for money.

8. How to respond to the proposal

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal (i.e. by 10th October 2018), any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to:

Ruth Crawford, Acting Principal Asset Management Officer, Bolton Council, Department of People Services, 1st Floor Town Hall, Bolton BL1 1RU, or via email at

ruth.crawford@bolton.gov.uk