

1. Introduction

We would like to hear your views on a proposal that would see Hexham Middle School (HMS) move from its current site to new, state-of-the art buildings, which would be co-located with Queen Elizabeth High School (QEHS).

As moving HMS would constitute a significant change, we are obliged to conduct a formal consultation with our stakeholders before deciding whether to submit a Business Case to the Regional Schools Commissioner for approval.

Our schools have the potential to be assets for the whole community, celebrating the best of our past while providing exceptional facilities that can help build an exciting future.

We hope that all our stakeholders will welcome the opportunities this project offers.

2. Background

HMS and QEHS currently occupy two separate sites, about a mile apart in Hexham. The schools federated under a single governing body in 2008 and converted to academy status in 2016 to form Hadrian Learning Trust (HLT).

In 2018, HLT consulted on bringing QEHS and HMS together to form a single 11-18 Secondary school. However, in the light of

feedback on the wider re-organisation that this would have entailed, the Trust did not proceed with its proposal.

A positive outcome of the consultation was broad community support for major investment in HLT's schools' estate.

Since last summer, we have been working closely with Northumberland County Council and technical advisors on a feasibility study to evaluate potential site options. This study identified the current QEHS site identified as the preferred option for co-location of both schools.

In February 2019, the Council agreed to move ahead with a procurement process, based on a budget of £37 million. During this process, we will engage with bidding contractors and architects to develop detailed designs and plans.

Subject to various approvals, planning permission would be sought this autumn, with construction intended to be complete by September 2021. We do not envisage that the Middle School would move to the new site until construction work is complete.

You can read more about the feasibility study in the Council's [Outline Business Case](#).

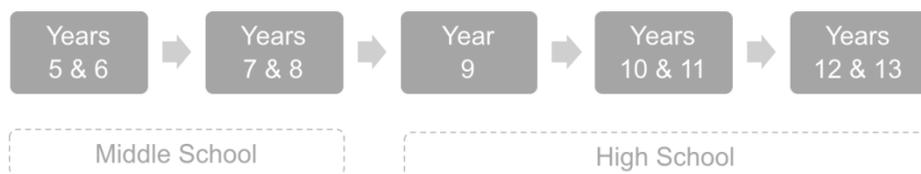
Please note this is not a consultation on the detailed plans and arrangements for site layout and new buildings. These matters would be dealt with through the Council's planning process.

The Proposal

The proposal is that Hexham Middle School should move from its current site to be co-located with the High School on Whetstone Bridge Road. The QEHS site shares many features currently enjoyed by students at HMS. These include mature trees, views over the surrounding countryside and a magnificent Grade II listed building in the shape of the Hydro (pictured later in this document).

Co-locating the schools provides a unique opportunity to enhance the quality of educational experience for our young people. Our ambition is to create inspiring and purposeful learning environments that will serve them well for many years to come. It also offers the potential for operational and financial benefits, while offering better value for public money.

Maintaining each school's distinctiveness, the intention is to establish a clear sense of progression through the different phases of a pupil's educational journey, providing each young person with a "home of their own".



Middle School pupils should feel part of a smaller school, with their own play areas, entrance and social space. During Years 5 and 6 (Key Stage 2), most of their lessons will take place in their home classroom or Middle School specialist spaces. However, they will also have the opportunity to access the high school's specialist facilities on occasion. Years 7 and 8 will have a similar experience, with their own separate social space and play areas. However, it is intended that they will routinely access the specialist facilities shared with the High School, for subjects such as science and the arts. This familiarity will ease transition into Year 9, without losing the excitement of moving on.

High School Years 9 to 11 should also have their own entrance and separate exterior social spaces. It is intended that each year group will have its own social base. As many Year 9 students will be new to the site, this will help them settle in, although our experience is that they do so quickly.

High School Sixth Form As students progress to more self-directed learning, it is important that they have appropriate social and study space. While some teaching is in smaller seminar groups and larger lectures, most lessons will be distributed around the High School. This will enable our Sixth Formers to continue to be excellent role models for younger students.

You can find further details of how we aim to maintain and enhance the provision for our students in our [Education Design Brief](#).

4. Admissions

Hadrian Learning Trust is responsible for setting the admissions policy for HMS and QEHS.

We do not intend to make any change to the catchment areas, Published Admissions Number (PAN) or over-subscription criteria for either school.

The main points of entry would remain as Year 5 for HMS and Year 9 for QEHS. As now, students would be welcome to join at other times provided that places are available.

5. School Transport and Travel

As part of the design and planning process, a comprehensive Travel Plan will be developed, which considers the impact of pedestrians, cyclists, cars and buses.

Given that HMS would only be re-locating to the other side of Hexham, we anticipate that this is unlikely to have a significant impact on students. Those from the East End would have a longer walk to Middle school; those from the West End would have a shorter walk.

Transport for individual pupils is the responsibility of Northumberland County Council and always arranged in accordance with their Home to School Transport Policy.

6. Staffing

Co-locating HMS and QEHS will enable staff across subjects and specialisms to work more closely together, share expertise and thinking and create opportunities to broaden their professional experience.

It also gives us the opportunity to think about how we can organise ourselves internally, to work smarter. At this stage, we have not decided what shape that might take or how it might impact on roles or structures. It is too early in the process.

As soon as we do formulate plans, we are committed to discussing them with staff and Trades Unions.

Ultimately, the same number of children will need to be taught and the same tasks will need to be done, whatever the setting.

7. What happens after the consultation?

The Trust Board will carefully consider all responses from consultees before deciding whether to submit a Business Case to the Regional Schools Commissioner for approval.

In parallel to this process, we will be working with the Council and technical advisers on a procurement process to develop detailed plans and proposals for new buildings. A Final Business Case would then be submitted to the Council for approval. Following that, a full planning application would be made.

8. Consultation process

The consultation will run for four term-time weeks from 27 March until 3.30pm on Friday 10 May.

Stakeholders consulted will include students, parents and staff of all Partnership schools, Northumberland County Council, Trades Unions, Councillors and the Member of Parliament. However, we welcome responses from the whole community.

Copies of the letter to stakeholders, Consultation Document and online Response Form are available via the HMS and QEHS websites.

We will also be holding drop-in sessions on the following dates, when you can speak to Trustees and Senior Leaders:

- Staff Only Drop-In: Fellside Hall, HMS, Thursday 4 April 15.30-17.00
- General Drop-In: Fellside Hall, HMS, Thursday 4 April 17.30-19.00

We are keen to hear the views of as many of you as possible. Please complete the online [Response Form](#) to help minimise administration costs.



Grade II listed Hydro building on the QEHS site, which would be retained and refurbished.