

## Report on Consultation

Proposal for re-location of Hexham Middle School

27 March – 10 May 2019

### 1. Background

During the four school weeks from 27 March to 10 May 2019, Hadrian Learning Trust conducted a consultation 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).

Details of the consultation process, including the proposal and rationale, can be found in the [Consultation Document](#).

We consulted parents, staff and students at both schools, partnership schools, Hexham Town Council, Northumberland County Council, the Member of Parliament and the wider community. Drop-in sessions for stakeholders were held at HMS and the consultation was publicised in the local newspaper.

### 2. Number of responses received

A public consultation is not a vote or referendum but designed to gather the views of stakeholders. In reaching its conclusions, the Trust Board has considered carefully all views expressed in what is more a qualitative than quantitative process.

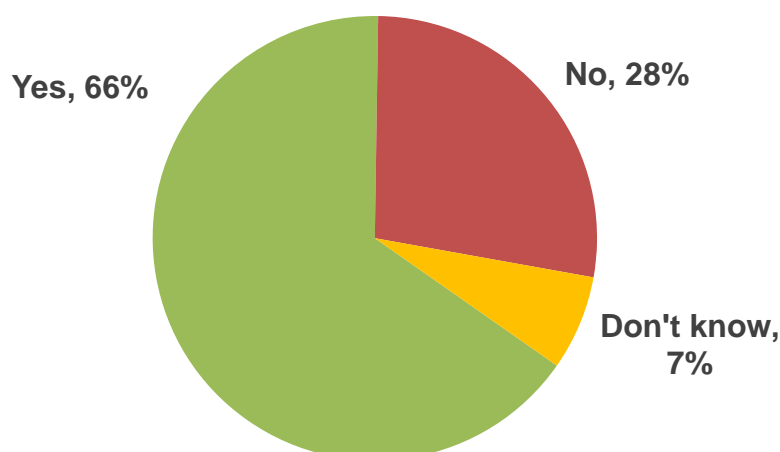
In total, we received 61 responses to the Consultation. Three respondents did not answer the question, so have not been included in the pie chart below but their comments have been taken into account.

We do not have sufficient data to calculate a percentage response rate. However, as a guide, there are currently about 1,744 children in our two schools. By comparison, 3,131 responses were received to last year's consultation on age range change.

### 3. Responses to proposal

*Do you agree that HMS should benefit from major investment in new buildings and state-of-the-art facilities by moving to Whetstone Bridge Road?*

The chart below shows the responses to this question. Overall, almost two thirds (66%) gave a positive response. 63% of parents also responded positively.



The table below shows the number of responses received by respondent type.

Respondent Type	Yes	No	Don't Know	Did not answer
Parent/Carer	22	11	2	0
Pupil Student	0	1	0	0
Staff	11	0	1	0
Trustee/Governor	3	0	0	0
Local Resident	1	3	1	3
Other	1	1	0	0

The reasons that respondents gave for their answers are summarised below

#### Reasons given in support of the proposal:

- Much needed investment.
- Need fit-for-purpose buildings.
- Students, staff and parents deserve best facilities possible.
- Our children deserve same opportunities that other children in Northumberland already have.
- Scheme looks ambitious and achievable.
- Community will benefit from better educational and sporting facilities.
- Makes transition to QEHS smoother.
- Important that Year 5 and 6 are relatively self-contained but opportunity for gradual integration into larger school community.
- Enables closer collaboration between Middle and High School staff/sharing of best practice.
- Opportunity for children to understand design and build process.
- Makes financial sense to invest in single site.

- Reduces running costs of separate sites.
- Educational and financial benefits from closer working.

### **Concerns raised about the proposal:**

- Will mature trees and gardens be lost?
- Garden areas are important to relieve stress for QEHS students.
- HMS should retain distinct identity and specialist facilities in Year 5 and 6.
- Mix of age ranges on one site.
- Schools need separate entrances, yards and dining.
- Ensure children joining from other schools do not feel disadvantaged.
- Make it easier/safer for school transport to drop off/collect children.
- Pavements/pedestrian safety.
- Traffic volumes impacting on students and local residents.
- Disruption to schools during build process.
- Impact of building work/noise on local residents.
- What happens to HMS site and its listed building?
- Update current schools on existing sites.
- Investment and location should be separate questions.
- Older students are a bad influence.
- Two-Tier by the back door.
- Larger schools are less good at looking after vulnerable children.

## **4. Conclusions**

The Trust would like to thank everyone who took part in the consultation.

We note that the overall number of responses was low and infer that for most of our stakeholders this proposal is relatively uncontroversial.

We also note the concerns raised during the consultation. Some of these are being addressed during the procurement phase, through detailed plans and designs. Some will properly be tested through the statutory planning process. Some are a matter of opinion rather than fact.

Taking all of the above into account, the Trust Board has decided to move forward with the proposal for the re-location of HMS to Whetstone Bridge Road. The next step will be for us to submit a Significant Change Business Case for approval by the Regional Schools Commissioner. We anticipate that this will run in parallel to a formal planning application during the autumn.

We will, of course, keep all of our stakeholders informed as matters develop.

### **Data Protection**

Responses to the Consultation potentially included personal information, including names and postcodes. These have not been disclosed to any third-party person or organisation outwith Hadrian Learning Trust. Data have been aggregated for the purpose of analysis in relation to the Consultation.

Responses will be retained for a period of up to twelve months and then destroyed.