

# New Worcester City Secondary School

## Consultation Document

29 November 2021



Have your say:

Provide feedback on this consultation by **noon on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2022**

Visit [www.worcestershire.gov.uk/newsecondaryschool](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/newsecondaryschool) for more information

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## Current Context

Worcester is currently served by five secondary schools located around the City: Bishop Perowne CofE College; Blessed Edward Oldcorne Catholic College; Christopher Whitehead Language College; Nunnery Wood High School; and Tudor Grange Academy. The location of these schools and the catchment areas of Nunnery Wood High, Tudor Grange Academy, and Christopher Whitehead Language College are outlined in the map below. Bishop Perowne CE and Blessed Edward Oldcorne Catholic College provide faith-based secondary school provision for pupils from across the City and beyond.

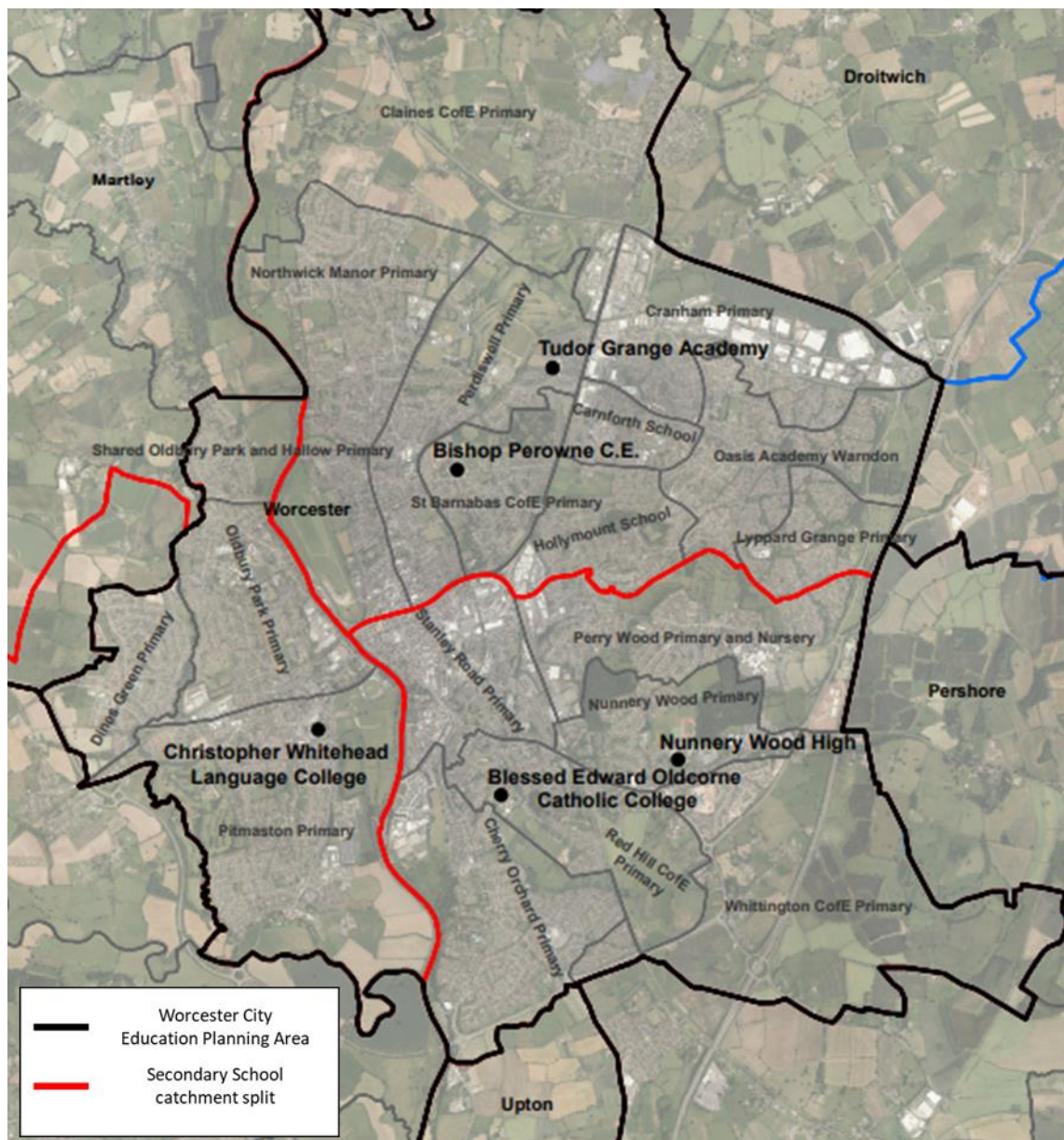


Figure 1 Map of Worcester City Secondary Schools

The number of secondary age pupils living in Worcester over the last decade has continually increased. The last several years have seen significant investment and expansion at four out of the five secondary schools in order to keep in line with pupil growth, however school places are now limited and pupils, particularly those living furthest from one of the schools, are struggling to gain a place at a school local to them, increasing traffic within the City and reducing residents' chances of gaining a place at their preferred school.

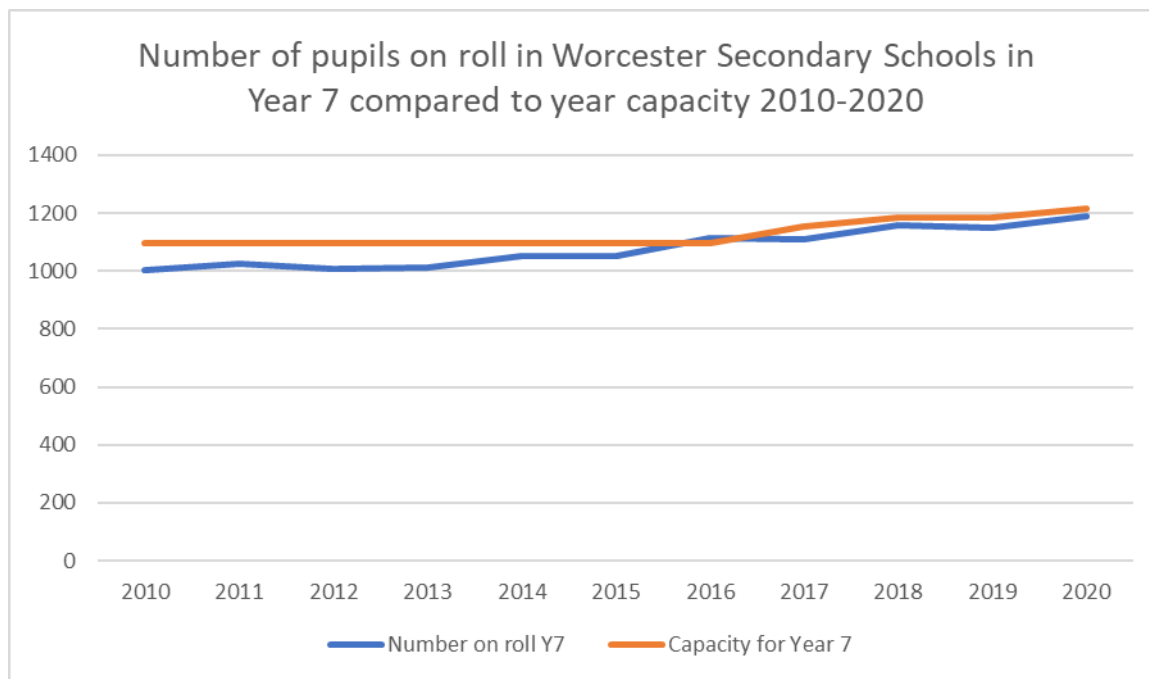


Figure 2 Graph showing the number of pupils on roll in year 7 at Worcester Secondary Schools 2010-2020

## Why we need a new school

Ensuring a sufficiency of school places is one of the key statutory duties of the Local Authority. With population growth in Worcester City and the approval of circa 5000 new homes in and around Worcester City to be delivered over the next 10-15 years, the delivery of new secondary school places to serve existing and new communities is critical to this duty.

Across any education planning area<sup>1</sup> in Worcestershire, the Local Authority seeks to maintain a level of surplus (extra) school places. This is an important factor to ensuring parents have a reasonable opportunity of acquiring a place at their preferred school,

<sup>1</sup> An education planning area encompasses a set of schools within close geographical proximity and could be considered as realistic alternatives, for pupils for which the Local Authority use for education planning purposes.

children moving into the area during the school year are able to join a local school, and children are able to move schools if needed. As a result, ensuring a sufficiency of school places alongside a small surplus is critical in meeting the strategic aims as outlined in the Worcestershire Education and Skills Strategy (2019-2024)<sup>2</sup>. However, with increases in the number of children seeking a year seven place in Worcester City over the last decade and Worcester's population continuing to grow, there is now a clear need for additional secondary school places.

Over the last five years, significant funding has been invested into the existing secondary schools in Worcester City with four out of the five schools having increased the number of places offered. All secondary schools in Worcester are on limited sites and are significantly restricted in the potential for future additional facilities. The provision of a new secondary school to meet this need was therefore approved by Cabinet on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021<sup>3</sup> and is planned to have its first intake of year 7 pupils in September 2026.

## The proposals

In Summer Term 2021, all stakeholders and interested parties were asked to provide their thoughts on some of the key elements to deliver a new secondary school. The key findings and results of that survey and how they relate to this proposal can be found here:

[New Worcester Secondary School engagement results \(May-June 2021\)](#)

This initial engagement has been highly influential as Worcestershire Children First and Worcestershire County Council have collaborated to create a specification to deliver a new secondary school for Worcester. The key aspects of the specification and proposals for the new school are outlined below.

As per Government Guidelines, the new secondary school must be opened as a free (academy) school and its delivery will be undertaken through the free school presumption route. The presumption process is the main route by which local authorities establish new schools in order to meet the need for additional school places. Local authorities are responsible for determining the specification for the new school and will fund and deliver

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/12514/education\\_skills\\_strategy](https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/12514/education_skills_strategy)

<sup>3</sup> <https://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=131&MId=3723&Ver=4>

the site and buildings and work with the approved academy sponsor to establish the school.

Any new school must be operated by an academy trust<sup>4</sup>, to be determined via the free school presumption process.

In order to select the new school's academy sponsor, applicants will be invited to submit an application to the Local Authority, a competition will be run to review applicants in relation to specific requirements as set out in the academy sponsor specification. This consultation is being carried out to gain our stakeholders' feedback on the proposals for the new school and draft specification to ensure that their views are represented in order to select the appropriate academy sponsor and deliver the school in line with stakeholder expectations.

### Pupil age range

The new school is proposed to have a secondary school age range (Year groups 7 to 11), i.e. for pupils aged 11-16 years. This is because there is an insufficiency of secondary school places for pupils of this age across Worcester City.

It is not proposed that this school will have a sixth form. There is a breadth of existing 'Good' post-16 provision available to pupils in Worcester City that is able to adapt and provide sufficiently for pupils leaving this school.

Results from the initial engagement survey found that respondents were keen to ensure pupils attending this school had a clear pathway to post-16 provision that offered a wide range of opportunities. The post-16 market in Worcester is well established and specialist post-16 establishments are able to provide a more varied option to pupils and provide a clear route.

This age range is in line with other secondary schools in Worcester, where three have an age range of years 7-11, and two operating six forms with an age range of years 11-18.

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<sup>4</sup> An Academy Trust is a set of schools operated under a not-for-profit company responsible for the performance and running of schools.

## Size of the school

The school will initially be built to provide 120 places per year group (four forms of entry) which will provide the number of spaces required while ensuring a suitable surplus across Worcester City over the next 10 years.

The school will open initially with a year 7 only, admitting up to 120 pupils, and then grow year on year as pupils move through the school.

Further demand for secondary school places in the City is likely over the next several decades as new housing is delivered, therefore the school is proposed to be designed with larger core facilities to enable expansion in the future in line with need.

The school will also have specialist facilities to support pupils on roll with special educational needs or disability, which may include a dedicated Mainstream Autism Base.

## Location

The proposed location for the school is on land at Newtown Road in Worcester City.

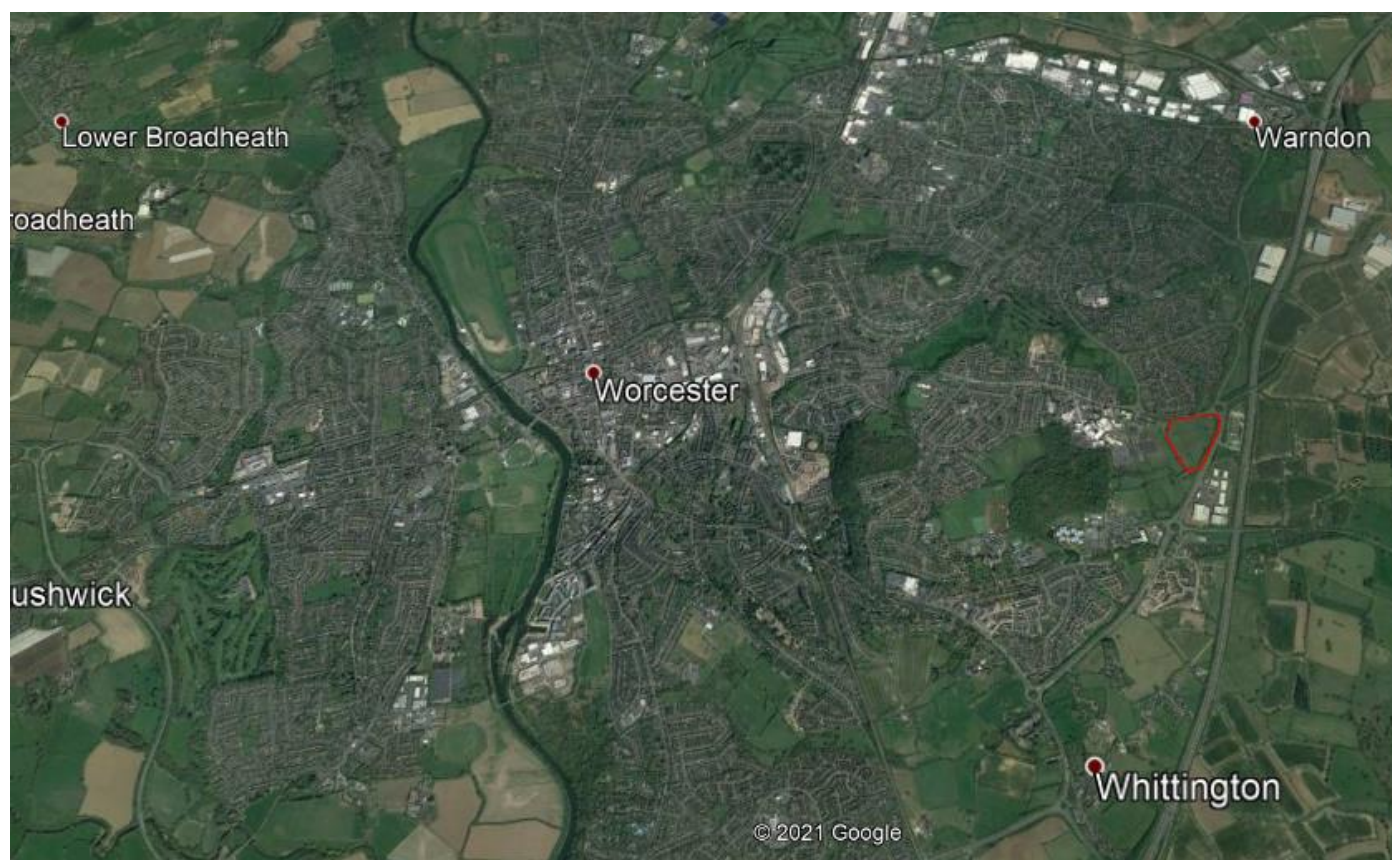


Figure 3 Map of proposed school location

A number of sites were considered in the search for land for the new school, with focus on sites that would appropriately serve the North East of the City, who are currently least likely to receive one of their preferred schools, as well as ensuring families in new and existing communities can access a school within their local area. The key reasons why this site is proposed are outlined below:

- a. The site is well located within the community of pupils the school will serve. Predominantly those pupils who are currently located furthest from a secondary school and who are least likely to be offered a place at one of their preferred schools.
- b. The location of the site is in a distinct part of the City, appropriately placed to meet current housing growth and improve outcomes for existing communities
- c. The site is well connected to existing foot and cycle paths, as well as public transport routes, meaning that pupils can utilise active travel routes from day one of the school opening to travel to school.
- d. The site is well located to alleviate some pressure for places in the North as well as the South of the City.
- e. The site is located close to green spaces which will enable opportunities for integrating this within the build of the school and curriculum, both of which are shown to enhance the learning environment for pupils
- f. This site provides sufficient space to deliver a 600-place secondary school, as well as capacity to consider further expansion of the school in the future, safeguarding secondary school provision for children in Worcester for decades.
- g. The site is a greenfield site and the delivery of a school for this provides opportunities to enhance the existing ecology and habitats on the site to benefit both the school population as well as existing wildlife.
- h. The community use of sports facilities at a new school at this location will provide closer access for residents to facilities of this type.

The admissions criteria of the school will be determined through a separate consultation, which will include factors such as whether the school will operate a catchment area, feeder schools, etc.

## Values

Feedback from parents, residents and stakeholders identified a number of important values that the school should represent. These have been summarised below and are proposed to be the criteria for appointing the Academy Sponsor for the school. It is proposed that an Academy Sponsor must exemplify these values to be considered for the new school. These are in line with feedback from children and young people.



### ***A focus on the wellbeing and mental health of pupils and staff***

The engagement with stakeholders in the summer revealed that ‘ensuring pupils feel their mental health and wellbeing is well supported’ is critical in the delivery of a good school for Worcester City. Academy sponsor candidates will be required to show their approach to wellbeing and mental health as part of their application. It is also proposed that small teaching spaces and quiet zones are integrated within the school where possible and that clear and established processes are in place to provide early help and social care for pupils and staff in need. The school will also be required to offer ongoing development opportunities for all staff and ensure the wellbeing and mental health of staff, as well as pupils, is a key priority. When selecting the location of the school, sites that offer access to green space were prioritised.

### ***An ethos and practice of inclusivity***

The importance of inclusive practice was highlighted in engagement findings. The following principles are put in place to ensure a high level of inclusivity and ensure all pupils can fully access school life:

- The chosen sponsor must have a strong ethos and evidenced practice ensuring inclusivity of all pupils, ensure all pupils are able to access the curriculum and quality first teaching (QFT) and high-quality teaching, in particular making appropriate adjustments for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), vulnerable learners and Looked after Children.
- The chosen academy sponsor will be expected to build an ongoing, holistic understanding of their pupils and their needs, and facilities will reflect an ethos of inclusivity.
- The school will have a strong IT Policy that seeks to utilise technology to support inclusivity and accessibility for all pupils, including children with SEND.
- The management of other facilities such as bathrooms and staff facilities must link to the inclusivity policy of the school, regarding gender and self-identity.
- The school must work closely with the Local Authority and other organisations to ensure all pupils receive the correct support to ensure full access to the curriculum and school life.

- The school should commit to staff continuing professional development (CPD) and training to upskill senior leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and other school staff in understanding the requirements to meet the individual needs of pupils.

### ***Strong behaviour policy***

Respondents felt that the most important key outcome of the school is that 'pupils feel safe at school'. The academy sponsor specification has a focus on a strong behaviour policy and requires applicants to provide evidence of such. The school will be built with safeguarding best practice.

### ***Strong leadership from Head and senior staff***

Ensuring the school has strong leadership from the Head Teacher and Senior Staff is crucial to ensuring other values of the school are upheld. As part of the academy sponsor application, applicants will be required to provide evidence of strong leadership. The specification will also outline a requirement for the school to have a dedicated head of school and offer ongoing development opportunities for all staff.

### ***Non-faith basis***

Two out of the five existing secondary schools in Worcester have a faith element in their practice or admissions policy. Respondents did not view faith-based values as being as important as other values, such as pupils feeling safe at school, strong leadership from Head and senior staff, and pupils feeling their mental health and wellbeing is supported. Therefore, this school is not proposed to specifically be aligned with any faith.

### **Build principles**

The engagement findings showed a desire for the build of the school to be focused on energy efficient building methods and an aim towards carbon neutrality. A minimum build specification will be created in line with the Worcestershire County Council aims towards sustainability and Net Zero Carbon by 2050.

The school will initially be built as a 120 place per year (600 total) secondary school in line with current need but will be designed with core facilities for up to 240 pupils per year to enable future expansion in keeping with the initial build and timed alongside the growth

in population of Worcester City. This is in keeping with the engagement findings that buildings should be adaptable to future need and changes in education practice.

In line with engagement findings, local materials and construction companies will be prioritised where possible throughout the procurement process.

## The possible impact of the proposal

### Delivery of additional school places

A new secondary school in Worcester City would provide more school places for year 7 to 11 pupils in the Worcester City education planning area. As a result, these children will have a reasonable opportunity to acquire a place at their preferred school, children moving into the area during the school year will be able to join a local school, and children will be more easily able to move secondary schools if needed.

As this school will also support the longer-term growth of new housing within the City and support in providing a more appropriate surplus (extra) places in the City, other secondary schools may experience less pupils per year group dependent on parental preference.

### Travel

One of the key outcomes of this project is for more families to have a secondary school within their local community, resulting in reduced car use and enabling more pupils to travel to school by active travel methods, i.e. walking and cycling. A Traffic Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of the planning process for the school build and the appointed academy sponsor will be required to develop a School Travel Plan encouraging safe travel to school which promotes walking and cycling.

### Specification

The school specification will be released alongside the application form for the academy sponsor competition and will be used as assessment criteria when selecting an appropriate sponsor. Ensuring that the specification outlines the important criteria for an academy sponsor is imperative to selecting the correct sponsor.

## Natural environment

The proposed location of the school provides opportunities to enhance local habitats and integrate the natural environment into school life and the curriculum of the school. The design of the school will seek to minimise disruption of existing trees and hedgerows on the site and enhance habitats for wildlife wherever possible. A public bridleway currently runs through the centre of the site which will require diversion should this proposal be approved. Opportunities exist to minimise the diversion and enhance any new bridleway within the existing landscape. The proposal to divert the bridleway will be subject to a separate statutory consultation should this proposal be approved.

## Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

The provision of a new school allows us to design the provision in line with current best practice to enable accessibility. Consideration can be given to the creation of a new Mainstream Autism Base (MAB) for the school, which will allow more children who are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to access appropriate provision within their local community within a mainstream school.

## Have Your Say

We would like to gain feedback on the proposals for the new school and the draft specification, particularly with regard to what stakeholders would expect from a new school and what they feel is important for the chosen academy sponsor to be able to demonstrate. The draft specification outlines requirements in relation to school size, location, inclusivity, leadership, policies (including transport, behaviour, and IT), pupil performance, behaviour and attendance, pupil and teacher mental health, and partnership working, among other things. Please consider any characteristic you would expect to see from an academy sponsor of a new secondary school when providing your comments.

Please note you will have opportunity to have your say about the design of the school during the planning application process. The academy sponsor will also go through a pre-opening consultation in order to consult on admissions arrangements and the specifics of school opening.

We welcome your comments on this proposal via our online survey:

[Worcester City Secondary School consultation survey \(opens in a new tab\).](#)

The closing date for this survey is **noon on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2022.**

More information about this consultation can be found on the [New Worcester City School website \(opens in a new window\).](#)

If you require an alternative format of this document, the survey or translation into community languages, please contact [newsecondaryschool@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:newsecondaryschool@worcestershire.gov.uk)

## What happens next

Based on feedback received during this consultation, the school specification will be amended and finalised before being released as part of the academy sponsor competition, which will begin in the spring term of 2022. The feedback received will help to ensure the chosen sponsor meets stakeholder expectations regarding the new school, as selection of the sponsor will be according to the requirements outlined in the school specification.

Your responses will also support us to progress planning and design for this site, with further opportunities to comment through the planning process.

## Contact details for this consultation

Please direct any enquiries to our dedicated mailbox via [NewSecondarySchool@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk](mailto:NewSecondarySchool@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk).

Have your say:

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