



New School Proposals

The location of the development

Where is development proposed?

The site for the new school is located to the south of Stortford Road and east of Buttley's Lane, Great Dunmow. It falls within land allocated by the Great Dunmow Neighbourhood Plan for a new secondary school under Policy DS3 (page 55-57 of the Neighbourhood Plan).

No development is proposed on land to the south of the Flich Way.





Why are you building a new school in this location?

Helena Romanes School (HRS) has aspirations for significant improvements to its existing facilities. This could be provided by either expanding the existing school site or relocating HRS elsewhere. Having considered all available options, the relocation and development of the school presents the best solution. The Great Dunmow Neighbourhood Plan recognises the need for new improved secondary school facilities in support of HRS proposed move to a new site and has allocated this land as suitable for a new secondary school alongside supporting community infrastructure within its Neighbourhood Plan (Policy DS3).

Relocating HRS to a new purpose built school will minimise the disruption to its pupils. It enables the new school to be constructed prior to demolition of the old school reducing disruption to existing pupils and staff.

HRS consider that the site also presents an opportunity to provide primary accommodation as part of an all through school that can help to meet the shortfall in primary school places in Great Dunmow.

How big is the site?

The site is 13.5 hectares.

What is the site being used for now?

The site is currently being farmed for crops; however it is identified for development within the Great Dunmow Neighbourhood Plan under Policy DS3 for a replacement school for HRS.

The Proposals

What is being proposed?

HRS and Essex County Council are working together and providing investment into a new 'all through school' combining both secondary and primary teaching with shared, cutting edge facilities for both age groups.

The proposed 'all through school' education facility will provide the following facilities:

- Education in one location containing:
 - two form entry primary school;
 - nine form entry secondary school; and
 - sixth form.
- A eight-court Sports Centre is proposed, which will be made available for community use.
- Playing fields providing a full sized rugby and football pitch, together with 4 netball courts for secondary pupils, and 2 netball courts and an under 12 football pitch for primary pupils.
- Astro turf 4G pitch.
- A bus drop off area is proposed together with car-parking and cycle parking for primary and secondary staff and pupils.

The new school would provide capacity for up to 2,000 pupils, with the primary school pupils admitted in cohorts over a seven year period. A breakdown of pupil numbers is set out below:

- Primary Element – 420 pupils
- Secondary Element- 1,350 pupil numbers
- Sixth Form – 250 Pupils.

The primary school will be constructed and completed first opening in September 2021. The secondary school element will be transferred from the existing HRS school and opened in September 2022.

What sports facilities will be provided?

The new school will provide new sports facilities include:

- an eight-court Sports Centre, which will be made available for community use;
- full sized rugby and football pitch;
- 5 netball courts for secondary pupils;
- 2 netball courts and an under 12 football pitch for primary pupils; and
- Astro turf 3G pitch, which will also be made available for community use.

The existing Great Dunmow Leisure Centre will be retained in its existing location off Parsonage Downs.

Who will be able to use the sports facilities? Would youth and adult football clubs be able to have evening and weekend access to the pitches?

The school's impressive, new resources would also be accessible by the other local primary schools and community groups such as local football clubs.

Planning Policy

Is this site identified for a school in the Uttlesford Local Plan or the Great Dunmow Neighbourhood Plan?

The adopted Local Plan for the District was published in 2005 and therefore pre-dates these proposals to relocate the school. The draft Local Plan 2019 identified this site for a new secondary school, although the Council have decided to withdraw this Plan recently for reasons not relating to this proposal.

The Neighbourhood Plan was published in 2016 and identifies this land under Policy DS3 for a new secondary school. The Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the 'development plan' for the area and therefore has the same status as the existing adopted Local Plan which will be taken into consideration when the planning application is determined.

Planning Application

When will the planning application be submitted?

It is intended that the planning application will be submitted by mid July 2020.



What form will the planning application take?

The application will be submitted in full detail and accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

EIA is a process of evaluating the likely environmental impacts of a proposed project or development, taking into account inter-related socio-economic, cultural and human-health impacts, both beneficial and adverse.

Who will the planning application be submitted to and why?

Unlike the application for housing on the existing HRS site, the planning application for the new school will need to be submitted to Essex County Council. This is because it is a County Council funded project where the County Council has a significant interest in the application. This type of application is known as a 'Regulation 3' application by virtue of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 (SI 1992/1492).

When will the application be determined?

Applications which are subject to Environmental Impact Assessment are typically determined within 16 weeks, although sometimes such applications take longer. If the application is determined within 16 weeks, then the application would be determined by the end of October 2020.

Construction

How long will it take to build?

If planning permission is granted this Autumn, construction is expected to start at the first available opportunity and will be completed prior to September 2021 for the primary school element of the school.

Will air quality and traffic flows and noise levels be taken into account during construction?

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is being undertaken, which will assess all likely significant environmental impacts including impacts on traffic flows and air quality both during construction and once the school is operational. The results of the EIA will be reported in an Environmental Statement that will be submitted with the planning application.

Transport

What will be the impact in terms of the roads and congestion?

A Transport Assessment is being prepared in order to assess the impacts upon the local highway network. These will consider the traffic associated with the proposed school site, incorporating travel patterns that currently occur and are planned in the vicinity of the site. All work is submitted to Essex County Council as the Local Highway Authority for them to verify the work produced. Any mitigation measures for the local road network as a result of the development will be identified.

How will children travel to the school?

Children will travel via a range of travel modes. The existing Helena Romanes School has a high proportion (65%) of children arriving and departing by Dedicated School Bus services. This would still be expected as part of the proposals. However, links through and across to developments either consented or planned are also expected to occur. Footway / cycleway improvements and connections are to be incorporated within the proposals to maximise the ability for pupils, staff and visitors to access the site without need of the private car. A School Travel Plan will be produced and enacted by the school to reduce car usage.

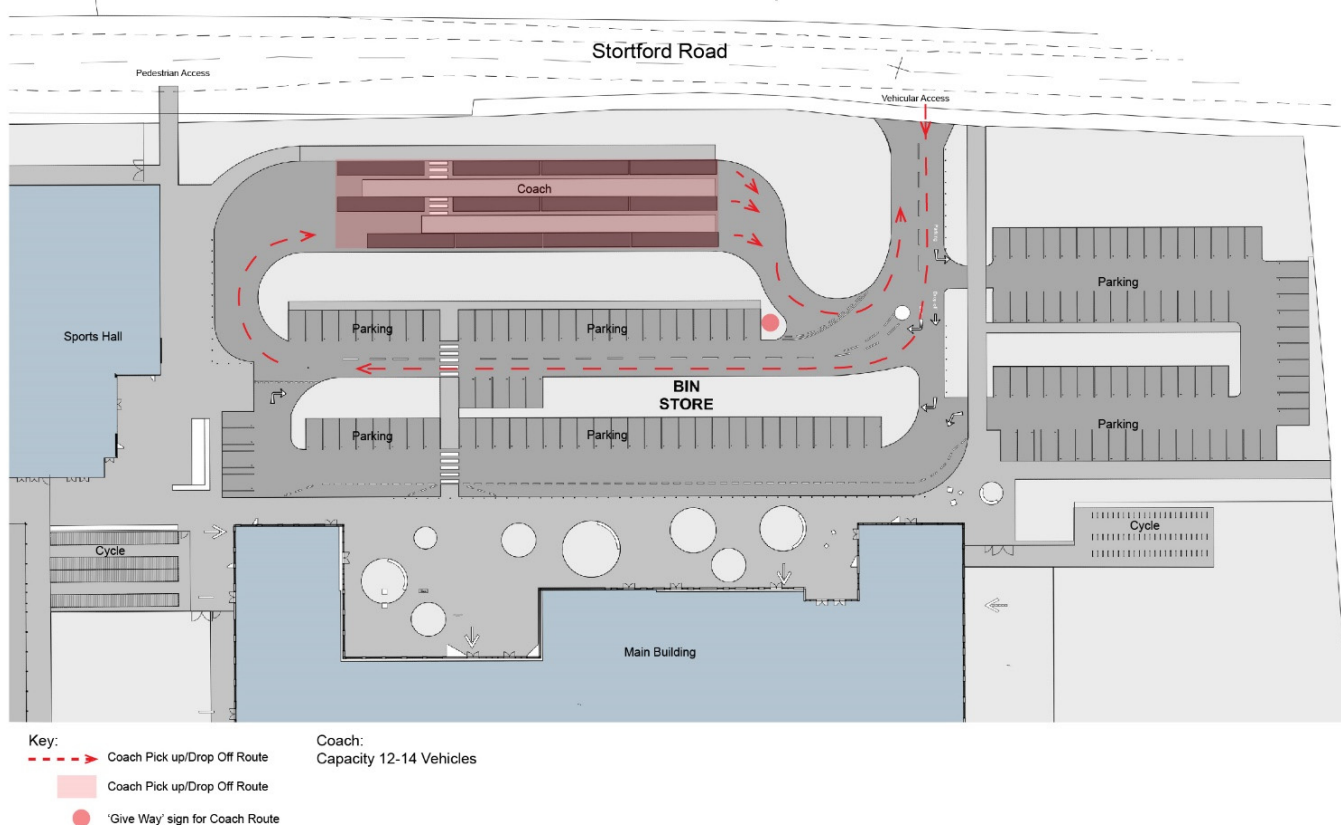
What about the children that wish to walk to the school?

The vast majority of Great Dunmow is within the acceptable walking distance of approximately 2km for schools as set out by the Chartered Institute for Highways and Transportation (CIHT).

Where will school buses park and will children have to cross roads or parking areas to reach the school?

The school buses are to enter the site and are to be provided with a dedicated drop off / pick up location. The internal layout is to be designed to be as safe as possible for children, and that it is expected that there will be on-site supervision of the boarding / alighting periods.

The diagram below illustrates our current draft proposed arrangements:



Is the site accessible by public transport?

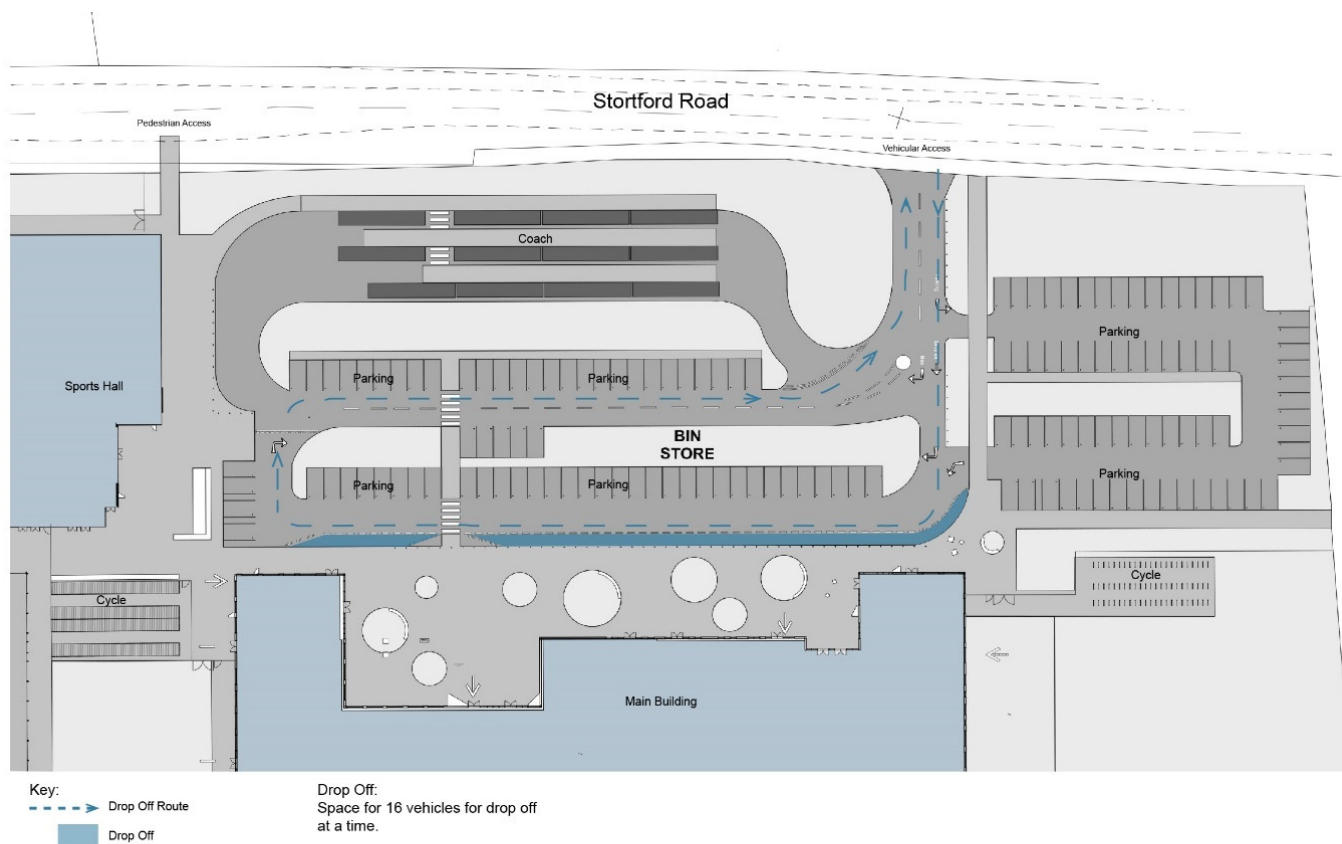
Currently the nearest public bus services are available from the 'Woodside Way' stops around 350m to the east of the site. These provide access to public bus services 42A, 133 and 313. We are aware of public transport improvements planned as part of wider development schemes due to come forward, which will further enhance public bus accessibility close to the site. The existing Helena Romanes School has a high proportion (65%) of children arriving and departing by Dedicated School Bus services.



Will there be parking for parents?

Essex Parking Standards do not specifically provide parking broken down to parents. An overall parking standard is calculated by the number of pupils of the schools. Parking will be provided compliant to these standards. The internal layout will however be designed to allow for some drop-off facilities (particularly in relation to the primary school provision of the site).

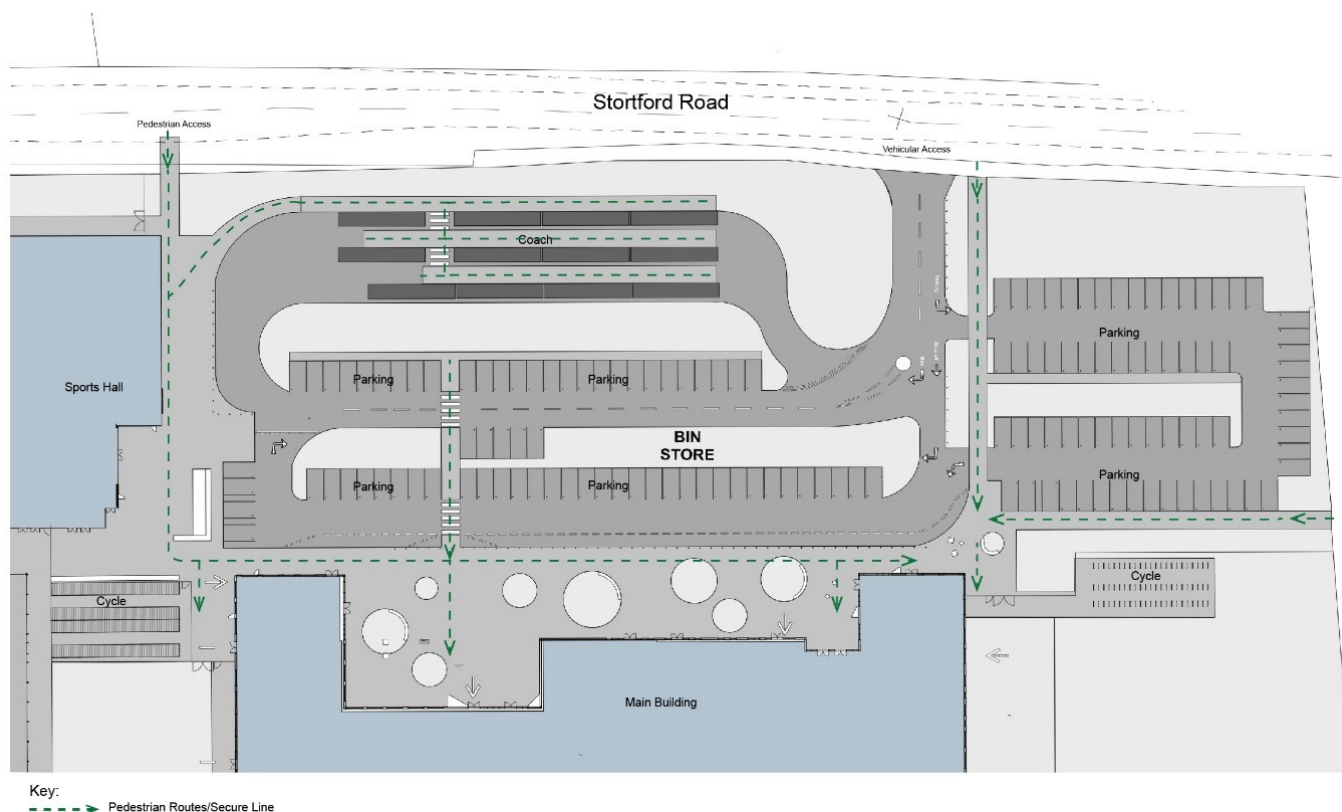
The diagram below illustrates our current draft proposed arrangements:



How easy will it be to walk and cycle to the site?

Footway and cycleway connections are being provided to the school site from adjacent areas. The final design of which are to be finalised. However, walking will be possible within 2km from most of Great Dunmow, and 5km cycle distances will cover the immediate settlement area. Cycle parking at the site is proposed to accord with Essex Parking Standards.

The diagram below illustrates our current draft proposed arrangements:



Is one point of access enough?

The final capacity analysis of the scheme is being prepared, which will set out junction capacity of the access point. One access is considered suitable as per many school sites. This is the subject of further discussion with Essex County Council as highway authority.

Education

How does a through school work and what are the social impacts of this? Can it cause problems?

'All through schools' (ATS) provide the continuation from primary education through to secondary (and post 16) education on the same campus, with the same Academy (or Trust), with the same ethos and learning opportunities. The proposed school would provide a 2 form entry primary school (up to 60 pupils per year group) together with a 9 form entry secondary school (up to 270 pupils per year group).

It means that a family does not have to apply for a secondary place if their child is already attending the primary phase (it almost guarantees that place, without the risk that the child will not get in). Pupils will also join the ATS secondary phase in Year 7 from other local primary schools, as they do now.



Frequently Asked Questions

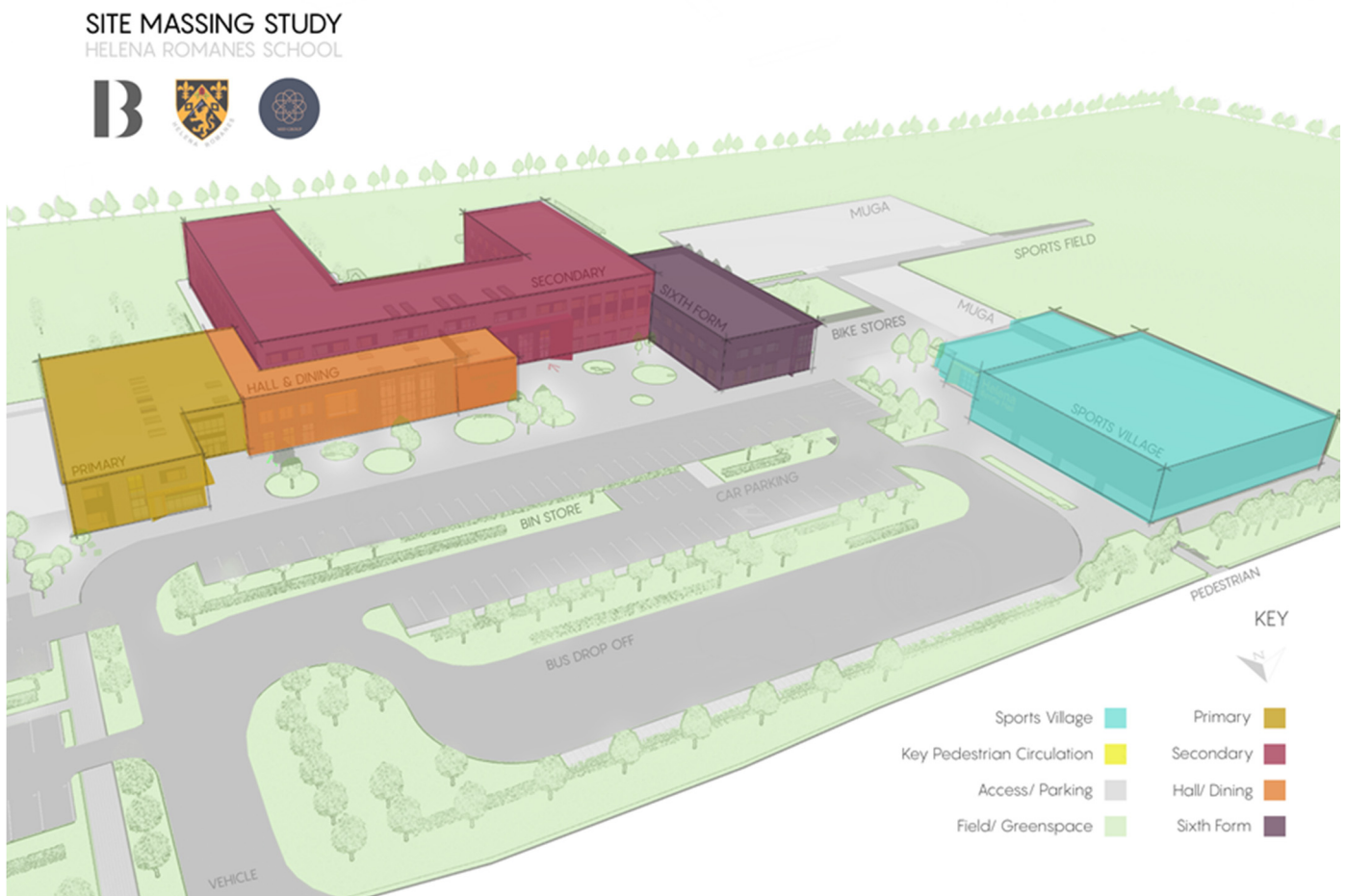
There are many benefits associated with ATS, notably children attending the primary phase would get all of the benefits of being in a 'traditional' primary school, whilst also gaining access to a wide range of facilities. They would find transition to secondary education easier, as they already know the campus and methods of teaching. Additionally, it provides primary school pupils access to specialist teaching areas and specialist teachers. They would also have access to specialist sporting and arts facilities on a daily basis.

On an attainment level, an ATS would be able to start introducing secondary elements of learning to the primary curriculum (if appropriate), therefore allowing an easier transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3.

Will the primary and secondary parts of the school be separate?

The primary school phase would be physically 'separate' from the secondary phase element, although they would be both housed in the same building. Both phases will have separate entrances, play areas, etc. However, there would be a range of resources and areas that would be shared (e.g. the theatre). This is to ensure that all pupils benefit from the purpose built, world class facilities.

The diagram below illustrates how the core elements of the school:





Is the primary school needed?

The primary schools in Dunmow are full and demand for places continues to grow. A new primary school is needed urgently to reduce pressure on the other local primary schools. Therefore, Helena Romanes School (working with the Local Authority) will ensure that sufficient pupil places exist within Great Dunmow from September 2021 to meet this immediate requirement.

Is this the best location for the primary school? Isn't there a greater need for a primary school on the other side of the town?

It is recognised that there are aspirations for a new primary school to the east of the town as the existing primary schools (Dunmow Primary and Dunmow St Mary's) are already located to the west and this proposal would place a third primary school to the west of the town. However, there is an immediate requirement for primary school places in September 2021 and no available capacity to meet the needs of Great Dunmow within the existing system. There is also no alternative land immediately available to the east of the town that can be used to provide primary provision within the timescales required. The Smiths' Farm site has been delayed for many years and there is no opportunity to delay the provision of a new primary school further to wait for other land to become available.

When will the exiting Helena Romanes School close?

It is anticipated that (subject to planning permission being granted on the existing school site and the sale of the existing site) the existing school building would close in July 2022. The secondary phase on the new site would open in September 2022.

When will the new school open?

The primary phase will open in September 2021, whilst the secondary phase will open in September 2022.

How many children will the new school accommodate?

There will be no change to the existing admission numbers of the secondary and post-16 phases at Helena Romanes School. This will remain at a nine form entry secondary school (1,350 pupils) together with a 250 pupil sixth form.

In addition, up to 420 pupils would attend the primary school once it is fully occupied over a seven year period of admitting pupils between 2021 and 2027. This is the same size as the other two Great Dunmow Primary Schools and would be two form entry (eg. two classes per year group).

Will all existing children at the current Helena Romanes School move to the new school site?

Yes, pupils (and staff) would simply transfer from the old school site to the new one for the start of the 2022-23 academic year.

Will there be any new/enhanced facilities for the secondary school pupils?

Secondary school pupils will benefit significantly from the new and improved facilities. As well as studying in state of the art, specialist and general classrooms, they will be able to access new, cutting edge facilities (including a floodlit 4G pitch, an eight court sports hall and a theatre).

The school's impressive, new resources would also be accessible by the other local primary schools and community groups.

Sporting facilities at the new school will be a significant improvement from those at the current site.

Will there be any changes to the sixth form?

No, sixth form provision will continue as normal. However, the sixth form will be situated in a brand new, purpose-built area.

Will there be enough school spaces?

Yes. The current 10 year forecasts confirm there will be sufficient spaces for both primary & secondary demand.

How will the school be funded?

The new school will be entirely funded through the sale and redevelopment of the existing Helena Romanes School site along with some Local Education Authority funding for the primary element of the proposal.

The proposal for redevelopment of the existing site is the main source of funding for the new school to be built. All proceeds from the sale of the existing site will go towards the construction costs of the new school.

Ecology

Are there any species on the site and will they be protected?

The majority of the site is currently in arable use and of low ecological value. The habitats, including wide field margins and boundary trees have potential to support protected species including widespread reptile, breeding birds, badger, bats (roosting, commuting and foraging). However, with the exception of removal of a small number of trees to create access to the site these features will largely be retained and therefore protection ensured alongside mitigation.

Will there be any impact on wildlife sites in the area?

Suitable ecological buffer zones are incorporated to protect habitat within the Flich Way Local Wildlife Site (LWS), which is located on the southern side of the site.

High Wood SSSI is located approximately 100 metres north-west of the site. There is no access into this woodland and deer exclusion fencing prevents unauthorised access (e.g. from children). The site has no hydrological connections to the High Wood SSSI and is separated by Stortford Road. No significant effects are therefore expected. However, this would be confirmed following completion of the Environmental Impact Assessment and reported within the Environmental Statement that will be submitted with the planning application.



Flooding and Drainage

Is the site at risk of flooding?

According to the Environment Agency's indicative mapping, the site is classified as being in Flood Zone 1, at low probability of fluvial and/or tidal flooding (less than 1 in 1,000-year (<0.1%) in any year.) The mapping also indicates that the site is not susceptible to pluvial/surface water flooding for the medium-risk scenario (1:100-year event).

Furthermore, borehole records available on the British Geological Surveys website indicate that the site is not at risk of any groundwater flooding.

Sustainable drainage systems will be used to control runoff from the site to a greenfield discharge rate to mimic the existing scenario ensuring the development does not increase flood risk off-site.

The on-site surface water drainage infrastructure will be designed to comply with national and local policy and be able to withstand the impact of a 1:100-year (plus climate change) rainfall event.

Further detail will be set out in a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment that will be submitted with the planning application.

Energy Efficiency and Climate Change

What energy efficiency measures will be used?

The new school will follow the following energy hierarchy:

- Be Lean – minimise energy use by implementing passive design measures, e.g. improve fabric U-values and minimise air permeability;
- Be Clean – all systems which use fossil fuels, i.e. gas, oil, coal or electricity, must utilise these fuels at optimum efficiency;
- Be Green – any remaining energy demand should be produced with as much renewable technology as practically/financially possible.

How will climate change be taken into consideration?

The school travel plan seeks to encourage all of its users to walk and cycle to the school where possible and will ensure appropriate connections and linkages are made with existing infrastructure to allow for this. Public transport will also be promoted.

Renewable energy in the form of solar panels will be provided to reduce the carbon footprint of the school and future running costs of the school and community centre.



Contamination

Is the site contaminated?

An initial appraisal of the site has been undertaken. This indicates that the risk of ground contamination is low and the risk from ground gas is considered to be very low. Further investigation will be undertaken prior to construction. Should any contamination be identified, this would be remediated in line with legislative requirements. A gas main marker and an oil pipeline marker were recorded at the south eastern corner of the northern field associated with an intermediate gas pipe running parallel to the Flitch Way. However, no built development is proposed within 3m of this pipe.

Environmental Impact Assessment

Will the environmental impact of the proposals be assessed?

Yes. An Environmental Statement will be submitted with the planning application so that Essex County Council can undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment of the proposals. The key issues covered by the Environmental Statement will be ecology, transportation and access, noise and vibration, air quality and landscape and visual assessment. This will be available on the Council's website once the application has been submitted.

Noise

Will the site be impacted by road noise and, if so, what will be done about this?

A noise survey has been undertaken and this indicated that the dominant noise sources were noted to be the road traffic from the A120 and Stortford Road. The Flitch Way provides a natural barrier from road traffic noise from the A120.

The building would be designed to ensure suitable internal noise conditions and where necessary acoustic barriers or landscaping would be used to ensure suitable external noise conditions.

Air Quality

Does the site have a good level of air quality?

The site is not located within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and there are none in the vicinity. The closest air quality monitoring location to the site is located to the west of the A120 along Stortford Road, Little Canfield and based on these nearest monitoring results and given that the Council has not declared an AQMA in the local area, existing air quality conditions are therefore considered to be relatively good. An assessment of air quality will be submitted as part of the planning application.



Landscape and Visual Assessment

What will the visual impact of the development be?

The development has been carefully designed to minimise landscape and visual effects by concentrating built elements to the eastern portion of the site, maintaining the enclosed nature of the site and further boundary and internal planting. While there will be some landscape and visual effects, these are limited to few visual receptors and these are expected to reduce when vegetation is in leaf.

It should be noted that outline planning permission has been granted for development north of Stortford Road, which will change the character of the immediate landscape of this site. In addition, applications have been submitted for further dwellings to the east and west of the site.

A landscape and visual impact assessment which considers both the application on its own and cumulatively alongside the above applications is being undertaken and will be submitted as part of the planning application.

Additionally ecology and landscape buffer will be created along the western and southern boundaries to ensure that the 'Flitch Way' nature reserve and 'High Wood' ancient woodland are unaffected by the proposals and the setting of protected structures does not deteriorate and can be enhanced.

Why is the building three storeys in height and is this acceptable?

The three-storey building makes efficient use of the site and consolidates the footprint of the building into a small part of the site. The school building will be part 2 and part 3 storey with some secondary school facilities provided over three floors. This will allow for a wider landscape buffer between the footpath and listed structures to the west. The building is flat roofed and every effort has been made to reduce the scale and height of the building.

The landscape and visual impacts of the scheme are being assessed as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and will be reported in the Environmental Statement (ES) which will be submitted with the application.

The initial assessment indicates that the landscape and visual effects are limited to a small number of visual receptors. The visual effects would be mitigated through boundary planting. It should also be noted that the site to the north of Stortford Road has planning permission for 780 dwelling and applications have been submitted on land to the east and west of the site. This will see the school development within the context of a built environment rather than a rural environment.



Heritage

Will the development affect listed buildings or conservation areas?

The closest listed buildings are Highwoods Farmhouse and Brady's Barn to the west of Buttley's Lane and the Round House south of the Flich Way.

The siting of the proposed school building to the east of the site, with sports fields to the west and south would retain a sense of open, green space adjacent to Highwood Farmhouse and Brady's Barn. It is noted that the listed barn, which is directly adjacent to Buttley's Lane has been converted into residential use, with several windows facing east. As such, to ensure the privacy of the property, planting would be used along the western boundary of the site to ensure a natural landscape setting. With this mitigation in place the effect on the Highwood Farmhouse and Barn would not be significant.

The proposed school building will have a limited impact on the setting of the Grade II listed Roundhouse, positioned to the south of the site as the Flich Way provides a visual barrier between the proposed school buildings to the north and the listed building.

Archaeology

Is the site important for archaeology?

The site for the proposed new school is not located within any areas of identified archaeological potential. The northern part of the site fronts onto a known Iron Age and Roman Road – Stane Street (now known as Stortford Road).

An archaeological assessment has been undertaken which has identified that site has a moderate to high archaeological potential for the Iron Age and Roman periods, a moderate archaeological potential for the Medieval period, with a low potential for all other phases of human activity. However, any remains are likely to be of no more than local significance and agricultural use of the study site is considered likely to have had a negative impact on any potential archaeological remains.

An archaeological investigation will be undertaken prior to construction to ensure any archaeology identified is recorded.