

BOA DIGITAL – Frequently Asked Questions

Why has this site been chosen?

This site has been selected based on its location close to the city centre meaning it is accessible by sustainable modes of travel (bus, train, walking and cycling) for pupils and staff, and because of its close proximity to the existing Birmingham Ormiston Academy (BOA) (off Jennens Road), which is located a 10 minute walk away.

The site was previously owned by Birmingham City Council (and is now owned by the Department for Education), and has an established history of being used for education related purposes.

What type of school is proposed? Where will the pupils come from?

The academy will be known as BOA Digital and will specialise in digital technologies. It will be the sister school to the Birmingham Ormiston Academy (BOA).

BOA Digital will be a relatively unique school in respect of its admissions policy and criteria, which will be based on 'the Fair Banding Test'. This allocates places to pupils based on achieving a balanced and equitable intake across a range of abilities, rather than being based on a more traditional 'distance to the front door' model. Therefore BOA Digital will be a regional academy admitting students from across Birmingham, with a proportion also coming from the wider West Midlands.

How many pupils and staff will there be?

BOA Digital will cater for 11-18 year olds, with 600 pupils in Years 7-11 and 300 pupils in the Sixth Form. It is anticipated that there will be approximately 90 staff members.

When will the school open and close?

It is envisaged that the site gates will open at 6am, with staff arriving from 7am. The gates will then be closed to secondary school aged pupils at 9:15am. The gates will then be opened again at 4:15pm for the departure of secondary school aged pupils. The gates will then be closed and managed by security to accommodate after school/evening activities and closed for the night at 7:00pm if there is no specific later school use required.

How close will the building be to the houses on Barrack Street?

At its closest point, the building will be 16.4m away from the residential properties. This element of the school building is the main hall, drama studio and activity studio, and it is 1.5 storeys high. The sports hall part of the building is 20m away from the residential properties at its closest point, and it is 2.5 storeys high. The remainder of the building is over 22m away from the residential properties.

The building has been carefully designed to ensure that its massing is broken down along the Barrack Street frontage, and that there will not be classrooms directly adjacent to the site boundary.

How tall will the building be?

At its lowest (where the building is closest to Barrack Street), the building is 1.5 storeys high (approximately 7m above the level of Barrack Street). At its highest, the building is 4 storeys high (approximately 20m above ground level). The highest elements of the building are set the furthest back into the site.

Where will staff park?

It is anticipated that all of the teaching staff will travel to the site on public transport, as they do when travelling to work at the school's sister site – the BOA, located nearby off Jennens Road.

There will be 14 parking spaces within the site for those staff who do need to drive to work, and the car parking arrangements will be subject to careful management by the BOA Digital Leadership Team.

It is anticipated that residents only parking restrictions will be introduced along the west side of Barrack Street to ensure that there remains adequate parking available for residents. Parking on the east side of Barrack Street will be subject to different restrictions to prevent the existing substantial commuter parking, but to allow for parent drop-off and pick-up and for coaches to stop for school trips.

[Please note that we have discussed the proposed parking restrictions with Birmingham City Council and we are currently awaiting their feedback and agreement. They may, therefore, be subject to change.]

Where will pupils be dropped off?

As per the staff travel arrangements, it is also anticipated that the vast majority of pupils will travel to the site on public transport, as they do when travelling to the school's sister site – the BOA.

It is anticipated that a limited number of pupils will be dropped off and picked up by car, and the BOA Digital Leadership Team will actively discourage this mode of travel to the site, as well as seeking to manage the location and method of drop-off and pick-up as far as possible.

We have also reviewed the opportunities for drop-off and pick-up to take place on the surrounding highway network. On Barrack Street, we are proposing to introduce parking restrictions to the east side of the street to prevent the existing substantial commuter parking, allowing for the limited amount of anticipated parent drop-off and pick-up, and also allowing for coaches to stop for school trips. There is also space for further drop-off and pick-up on other nearby streets if this is needed.

To inform this strategy, we have undertaken extensive parking count surveys to fully understand the existing patterns of parking and what spaces there are available on-street. We undertook surveys both before and during the Covid-19 lockdown.

[Please note that we have discussed the proposed parking restrictions with Birmingham City Council and we are currently awaiting their feedback and agreement. They may, therefore, be subject to change.]

Where will buses stop?

There will be no dedicated school buses. Public service buses transporting staff and pupils will stop at the existing bus stop network in and around the area.

In order to accommodate a new pedestrian crossing point on Vauxhall Road immediately to the east of the junction with Barrack Street (to accommodate pedestrian movements to the westbound bus stop and movements to/from the city centre) an existing bus stop will likely need to be relocated to the west of the junction and improvements to the crossing of St James' Place made.

Coaches for school trips will be able to stop for the short periods required on the east side of Barrack Street where new parking restrictions will be put in place to allow this.

[Please note that we have discussed the proposed parking restrictions with Birmingham City Council and we are currently awaiting their feedback and agreement. They may, therefore, be subject to change.]

How many parking spaces will be provided?

There will be 14 parking spaces provided on site. This will include 12 standard parking spaces, 1 electric vehicle parking space, and 1 accessible parking space that also has an electric vehicle charging point.

We will also be providing cycle parking on the site with capacity for approximately 80 staff and pupil bicycles.

What sports provision will there be at the site?

There will be a dedicated sports hall with 3 marked courts, and associated changing rooms. There will also be an activity studio inside the building. Externally, the hard court (MUGA) will cater for multiple sports, including basketball and 5-a-side football.

How will construction traffic, noise and dust be managed?

We will agree a demolition and construction management plan with Birmingham City Council as part of the planning application process. We are also liaising with the City Council to utilise an additional area of the park to the rear of the site to place our site cabins on, and to ensure that we have space within the construction site to manoeuvre our delivery vehicles. We will also agree delivery hours and routes with the City Council as part of the management plan.

Noise and dust management measures will also be set out within the construction management plan, and will include measures such as covering and securing loose materials, washing wheels of vehicles, using modern equipment, monitoring noise levels, and working within permitted construction working hours.

How long will the construction take? When will the school be open?

The school will be open in 2022 (subject to receiving planning permission). We are currently working towards this being timed for the start of the 2022/2023 academic year in the September.

The demolition stage of works is anticipated to take approximately 12 weeks and predicted to run from January 2021 to March 2021.

The main construction phase of works is anticipated to take approximately 65 weeks and predicted to run from April 2021 to August 2022.

Why will there be two planning applications?

We will be submitting two applications (at the same time) during mid-late October 2020. One of the applications will seek approval for the demolition of the existing buildings on the site, and the other will be a full planning application for the proposed academy.

Submitting two separate applications will allow us to prepare for and start the demolition process as early as possible as the separate demolition approval application can be dealt with more quickly than the main application by the City Council (the statutory process is shorter). This will give us the best chance of completing the construction of the main school building within the planned timescales as the site clearance works will have been undertaken in readiness for the main building phase.