

Firwood Academy proposed extension consultation

**Report by Consultation & Engagement Team
Bolton Council**

March 2024

Introduction & methodology

Objectives

- To consult stakeholders about the proposal to build an extension to Firwood Academy, potentially on land to the rear of the Jubilee Centre, Crompton Way.

Methodology

- An electronic questionnaire [appendix one] and background documents were available on the 'Active consultations' page of Bolton Council's website. Paper versions of all documents were available on request.
- The survey was promoted via social media and sent to eView [the council's consultation panel for residents]. Stakeholders [including local residents and business] were also informed about the consultation.
- A public drop-in session was held at the Jubilee Centre, to which centre members, local residents, local businesses and the general public were invited. The Jubilee Centre also ran their own engagement sessions with members.

Consultation responses

Analysis notes

- Results are presented in the questionnaire format, with 'don't know' type responses removed unless otherwise stated. Response options may be abbreviated and / or ranked in order of popularity.
- Verbatim sample extracts from comments are included in the report, allocated to themes where feasible. Each comment may fit into numerous themes.
- Total percentages may exceed 100% where multi-responses were allowed and / or when rounded. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Percentages are based on the number of respondents to a particular question; as bases are low percentages should be treated with caution.

Responses

- 96 questionnaires were returned.
- Two members of the public attended the drop-in session. Issues raised included parking and access concerns, on-going maintenance problems relating to the current site, a call for further investment and investigation of a more suitable site to better address a long-term growing need for SEND provision. Neither attendee wished to complete a questionnaire at the session, but intended to submit a questionnaire later.

Demographic summary

Detailed demographics are given in appendix two, but in summary:

- Respondents were primarily female [76%: Q10] female, aged 44 or under [56%: Q11], White British [91%: Q12]. 54% were from BL2 and 40% from the North neighbourhood area of Bolton borough [Q9].

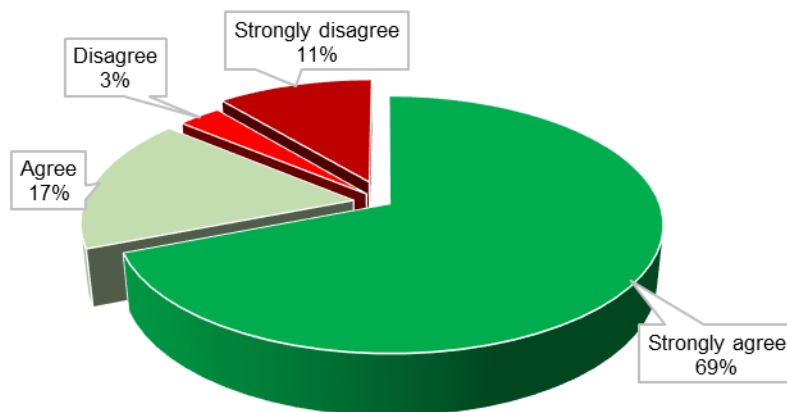
The questions

The proposal

Q1: How far do you agree / disagree that Firwood Academy should be extended to cater for more pupils?

- 86% [77] respondents agreed that Firwood Academy should be extended to cater for more pupils, with 69% [62] strongly agreeing.

Firwood Academy expansion
Q1 How far do you agree / disagree that Firwood Academy should be extended to cater for more pupils

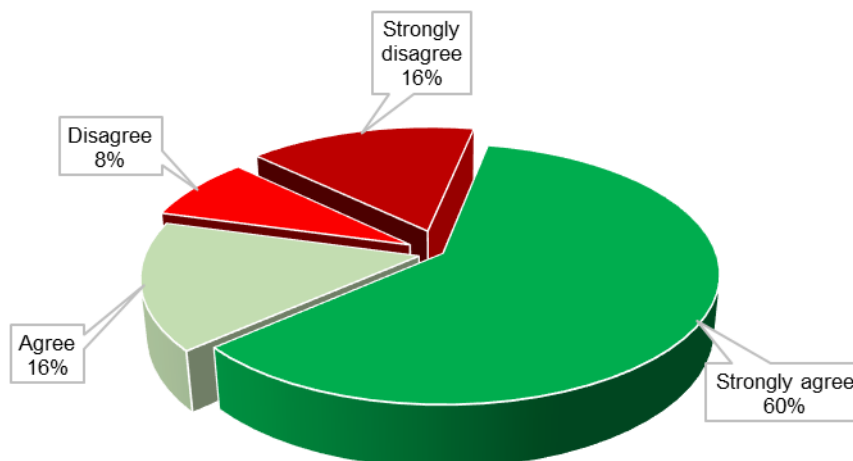


Q1:Base 90

Q2: How far do you agree / disagree that the Crompton Way site would be a suitable location for a proposed extension to Firwood Academy Special School?

- 76% [69] respondents agreed that the Crompton Way site would be a suitable location for a proposed extension to Firwood Academy Special School, with 60% [55] strongly agreeing.

Firwood Academy expansion
Q2 How far do you agree / disagree that the Crompton Way site would be a suitable location for a proposed extension to Firwood Academy Special School?



Q2:Base 90

Alternatives to the proposed extension of Firwood Academy Special School at Crompton Way

Q3: Please use this space if you would like to suggest any alternatives to the proposal, including any other sites we should consider

21 comments were received, however only 9 respondents suggested specific alternatives.

- **Alternative sites**

- Former autism centre Breighmet
- Old Claredon School site
- Falcon View
- Land near Birtenshaw school [potential supermarket / leisure site]
- Old Red Lane Church site on Winchester Way / Thicketford Brow
- Land opposite Seven Acres car park
- Spider Park
- Old Jubilee Centre site
- Old Top o'th Brow primary school site
- Undeveloped land adjacent to Calvin Street.

- **Site unsuitable**

7 respondents said that the proposed site was unsuitable for various reasons, primarily because of the perceived effect on the respondent, which are covered in Q4 but included:

- parking, access, congestion [6 respondents]
- site too small or proposed development too big [4 respondents]
- the effect on wildlife [2 respondents]
- lowering property values [2 respondents]
- noise and disruption that may come during building and running a school [2 respondents].

2 of these respondents did suggest that the extension could be built elsewhere, with one saying on *"any other waste land in Bolton or disused buildings, there are enough in the town centre and outskirts"* and one saying *"find somewhere else to build a school, there is plenty of wasteland around Bolton, not near a conservation area."* .

- **In favour**

4 respondents didn't give an alternative as to they were in favour of the proposal going ahead.

Effect of the proposal

Q4: How would you / your family be affected if the proposal to build a new extension to Firwood Academy Special School on Crompton Road goes ahead?

24 comments were received; 2 of these were from respondents who said they would be affected but didn't describe how, and not all comments were concerned with the effect.

2 respondents would like need detail on the proposal so that they could determine exactly how they would be affected.

- **Traffic / parking / access – adverse effect**

This was the prime area of concern, raised by 13 respondents.

Traffic had already *“increased due to the jubilee centre”* and was *“horrendous outside our property at peak times”*; with the feeling that *“a school for 100 more would cause compete chaos”*

A Jubilee Centre staff member said it would be *“busier when coming to work or leaving”*. There were worries about *“increased traffic on Crompton Way”* especially *“at school times when the road is already grid locked”*, and *“even with pupils being transported on council buses there will be added traffic congestion and relative pollution”*.

The limited parking available was raised, such as *“loss of parking for staff and customers of the Jubilee Centre”* and *“less parking availability”*.

Access issues – it was *“already difficult entering either lane at peak times”*.

- **Noise / disruption**

10 concerns around noise and disruption were raised. Whilst some of these seemed to be limited to the development phase *“noise and mess whilst it's being built”*, and *“noise and inconvenience from the build as was during the building of the new Jubilee Centre”*, they also included potential noise that might emanated from a school: *“noise and disruption from a high school.”*

Children could be adversely affected, *“my son has learning difficulties, He may well be affected due to more crowding and disruption...large no. of extra people around causing more stress”* and *“noise pollution already affects us and we have had to complain to the jubilee centre regarding this, the extension will add to this which will keep our young children up at night”*.

- **Pupils / staff – beneficial effect**

Only 6 respondents mentioned a beneficial effect, and this was around the positive aspects of the proposed extension for staff and pupils. Respondents in this category had a current or former SEND pupil, or worked at a SEND school. They suggested that *“any improvement to the school as a whole can only benefit children now and in the future”*, felt *“it would help a lot of families in the area”* and would enable their son to *“stay in further education”*. Another – again with a child at Firwood Academy said *“if there was a site closer to where I reside that would be great but to have this site is better than having no site”*.

One staff member said *“Firwood academy is amazing school & sixth form for young people & they*

need all the support they can get... a new building would be one of the many ways to help this happen”, and another said “we desperately need the extension to be able to cater for the higher demand of students we receive year on year.”

- **Aspect / garden**

6 respondents commented on the loss of the view, light and open aspect they had from their properties, as *“houses on Hartwell Close in particular will lose their open outlook”; “the views of all Hartwell Close will be severely impacted if the build goes ahead”, and the loss of open land “immediately behind our property to the jubilee site.”*

The proposed development could be *“an eyesore for local homeowners”* with *“a massive school right upto my back garden.”*

Residents could also be affected by loss of *“available sunlight... building will yet again affect the usage of our garden and outside space... We’re also concerned about our large trees in our garden with the building coming so close to them.”*

- **Property value**

5 respondents felt that their property would *“decrease in value”,* and the proposal could *“ultimately negatively affect the house prices here”.*

- **Loss of wildlife / habitat**

4 respondents expressed concerns regarding the loss of habitat for wildlife [including protected species such as Great crested newts] especially when *“assurances were given when the Jubilee Centre was consulted on that the land behind would remain for wildlife”.* One said *“so many animals will lose their natural habitat. We had deer coming onto Ashdown Drive during the last build there as they were so confused. It was sad to see”.*

Another respondent said *“The land has always been a green space adjoining Firwood lodges and a home for wildlife/ nature since I moved here in 1978. I have had badgers, ducks, foxes, sparrow hawks, herons, owls and many other birds in my garden over the years.”*

Support

Q5: What, if any, support would you need if the proposal goes ahead?

As only 11 relevant comments were received these have not been coded, but are described below.

There were calls for an ecological survey / habitat protection *“suitable license proven to show the correct precautions are in place regarding the safety of the great crested newts”,* and a request for *“compensation for home value loss”,*

Noise and disruption should be kept to a minimum, with mitigations such as *“higher wooden fencing to be fitted on my property to block out the site of the extension & building work”* and *“limited construction times”* suggested.

One respondent said *“when the new Centre was being built we could often feel the vibrations whilst drilling in my house, I would need reassurance that there would be no damage to my land and property including trees”*; similarly *“repairs to possible damages to property caused by nearby construction activity”* and *“a survey relating to the stability and possible damage to the trees in our garden”*.

There was a request for *“more parking for staff and public”* and support regarding traffic, including *“controlled access to existing roadway near site entrance”*.

Further information and updates were requested to allow respondents to assess what support may be required; one respondent was *“unsure”* whilst another said *“we would need to fully understand the impact on our property and how close it comes to our boundary!”*. There was a need *“to see the extent of the plans”* and a request for *“regular updates and visuals”*.

Overall

Q6: Is there anything else Bolton Council should take into account when looking at this proposal?

25 comments received

- **Traffic // transport / parking / access**

This was again a prime concern and mentioned by 14 respondents. There was a thought that the proposed development would *“impact on the traffic in the area during school drop off times”*, with an increase in *“pollution particularly for the houses on the main road and surrounding areas from moving and stationary traffic.”*

One respondent felt that the use of connected public transport and active travel should be encouraged.

Parking concerns included *“lack of parking”* and *“there is not enough on street parking available* Access was a consideration; *“no suitable access to the site behind the jubilee centre for vehicles to enter and exit behind properties”* with one suggestion of *“a traffic light system in place or mini roundabout to facilitate getting off the car park safely particularly if needing to turn right”*.

- **Will be good for pupils**

6 respondents felt the proposed development would be good for SEND pupils. Comments suggested that *“Bolton needs the extra special school”* and *“a child thrives within an environment they feel comfortable in”*. There was a feeling that it was *“imperative that pupils with SEND are able to be educated within the town that they live”*. The proposed development would allow pupils to *“continue their education in a familiar environment and receive continuous support from familiar professionals”*.

- Other comments included those suggesting facilities that would be required, including EV charging points on the car park, *“a community facility / meeting rooms for local residents to have access to especially evening and weekends when school is closed”* and *“access to safe outdoor space for*

students” along with “options for the school to extend the offer for post 18 students”.

As has been previously suggested, there was a need to consider the adverse affect on wildlife and gardens. Trees could be planted, and steps taken to ensure that existing ones were protected.

The amount of noise and disturbance from construction and from the operation of a school were another concern, not only for local residents but for Jubilee Centre users.

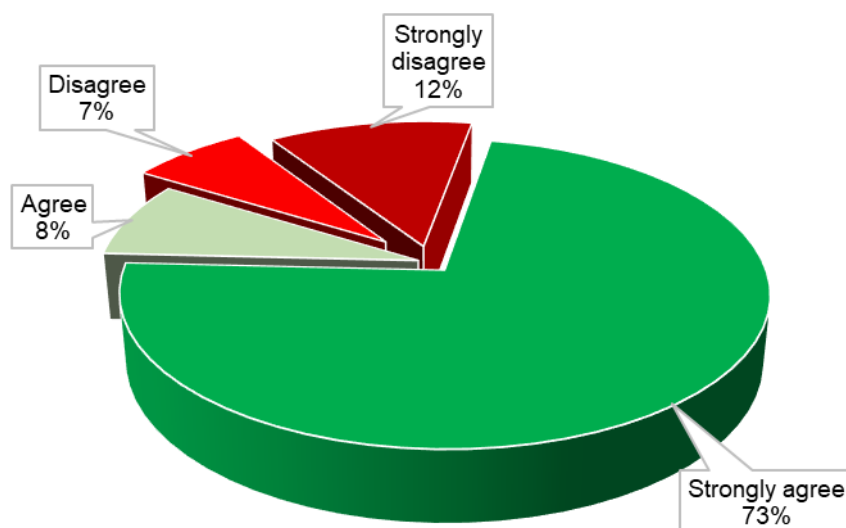
There was a call for more information as “the pre plans are also wishy washy and vague, and there is no actual evidence to support the need for additional school places. Where has the figure of an additional 100 pupils been arrived at?”

Whilst some respondents suggested choosing a different place to build, others felt that it “makes sense to have an extension of the school in close proximity to the main school building” and the proposed site was a “a great location”. However it was felt to be important that “the proposal isn’t too intrusive for neighbours in the surrounding area”, and to take into account the views of those who would be most adversely impacted when considering if the proposed development should go ahead or not.

Q7: Thinking overall, how strongly do you agree / disagree with the proposal to build an extension to Firwood Academy on the Jubilee Centre site at Crompton Way?

- 81% [68] respondents agreed with the proposal, with 73% [61] strongly agreeing.

*Firwood Academy expansion
Q7 Thinking overall, how strongly do you agree / disagree with the proposal to build an extension to Firwood Academy Special School on the Jubilee Centre site at Crompton Way?*



Q7:Base 84

Firwood Academy - proposed extension consultation

Consultation closes on 19 February 2024

What are we proposing?

Bolton Council are looking to support the expansion of Firwood Academy Special School by building a new extension.

This would be built alongside the Jubilee Centre on Crompton Way, Bolton and provide additional capacity for secondary and sixth form pupils. The existing school on Stitch mi Lane would stay open and offer more space for pupils.

Background

Firwood Academy is one of five Special Schools in Bolton borough that meets the needs of some of our most vulnerable children. They provide specialised education for pupils with Special Education Needs and Disability [SEND]. Firwood Academy is part of the Woodbridge Trust and attracts pupils aged 11-19 from many areas of our borough.

We're looking to increase the number of special school places so that the increasing numbers of children with SEND can continue to be educated in our borough. If we can't do this, we will have to fund places elsewhere. Out of Borough education is significantly more costly and may mean that vulnerable children have to make long journeys to receive good quality education.

Firwood Academy has already seen significant expansion at its site on Stitch mi Lane in Harwood. It's felt that further expansion on this site would be very difficult and costly, as the remaining land is steeply sloping. Any expansion here could only be at the expense of already limited outdoor space which pupils use for play, sports and recreation.

The Jubilee Centre

The Jubilee Centre moved to Crompton Way in May 2023 to cater for adults with special needs alongside the wider public. Having an educational facility on the same site will bring unique opportunities for both the school and the adult day care centre.

If the proposal to build an extension on this site goes ahead, there would be some temporary disruption whilst the new Firwood Academy unit was being built. However we would work very hard to keep this to an absolute minimum and Jubilee Centre users should not be affected once development was completed as the proposed new educational facility would share the existing entrance with the Jubilee Centre, but have its own parking area and safe outside space.

Your views

We invite you to give your views on the proposal to develop a new Special School extension for pupils at Firwood Academy, which is outlined in this questionnaire.

Please read the background documents for more information.
www.bolton.gov.uk/directory/13/consultations/category/195

Your views will be considered alongside other information to help Bolton Council decide whether to go support the proposal or not.

If the proposal is agreed in principal by Bolton Council, the development would still have to go through the normal planning application process before it could go ahead.

Your response - keeping your data safe

Most questions are optional; just miss out any that you don't want to answer.

The results of this consultation may be made public. If you're responding as an individual you won't be identified in any report as your responses will be anonymised and grouped with those from other people.

If you're responding in an official capacity your response may be published but no personal details will be included.

Any personal data you provide will be held securely, in line with our retention schedule and privacy policy www.bolton.gov.uk/data-protection-freedom-information/privacy-notice

We use Snap Surveys professional software to collect and process your data. Their privacy policy can be found here www.snapsurveys.com/survey-software/privacy-policy-uk/. Snap Surveys Ltd. follow the UK General Data Protection Regulation.

The proposal

Bolton Council are looking to support the expansion of Firwood Academy Special School by building a new extension.

This would be built alongside the Jubilee Centre on Crompton Way, Bolton and provide additional capacity for secondary and sixth form pupils. The existing school on Stitch mi Lane would stay open and offer more space for pupils.

1. **How far do you agree / disagree that Firwood Academy should be extended to cater for more pupils?**

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

Proposed location

The Jubilee Centre is located within the area outlined in blue on the map below (located at 324 Crompton Way, Bolton BL2 3AF). The proposed location of the Firwood Academy extension would be within the area outlined in red on the map below (rear and side of the Jubilee Centre).

Detailed plans have not been prepared at this stage but if the proposal is agreed, then these will be progressed, with a view to submitting for planning approval. Further consultation will then take place with residents and stakeholders.



2. How far do you agree / disagree that the Crompton Way site would be a suitable location for a proposed extension to Firwood Academy Special School?
- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

Alternatives to the proposed extension of Firwood Academy Special School at Crompton Way

3. Please use this space if you would like to suggest any alternatives to the proposal, including any other sites we should consider

- Don't wish to suggest any alternatives

Effect of the proposal

4. How would you / your family be affected if the proposal to build a new extension to Firwood Academy Special School on Crompton Road goes ahead?

- I / we will not be affected

Support

5. What, if any, support would you need if the proposal goes ahead?

- No support needed

Overall

6. Is there anything else Bolton Council should take into account when looking at this proposal?

- No comments

7. Thinking overall, how strongly do you agree / disagree with the proposal to build an extension to Firwood Academy on the Jubilee Centre site at Crompton Way?

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

Your interest

8. Which one of the following best describes you / your family's interest in the proposal to expand Firwood Special School to the Jubilee Centre site on Crompton Way?

- Pupil at Firwood Special School or their parent / family / guardian
- Former / current Special School pupil or their parent / family / guardian
- Work at Firwood Special School
- Attend the Jubilee Centre
- Work / volunteer at the Jubilee Centre
- Live in Bolton borough [Bolton Council area]
- Work in Bolton borough
- Study in, or have children at school / college in Bolton borough
- Visitor to Bolton
- Official response from Parish / Bolton borough Councillor / Elected Member
- Official response from a business / organisation / community group. You must have their permission to submit an official response on their behalf.
- None of the above - please explain below

Please say what your interest is

Please say which ward, business organisation or community group you represent

Please say what your role is - in what official capacity do you represent the business, organisation or community group?

About you

Your answers in this section help us to make sure we are getting views from different types of people.

They won't be used to contact or identify you.

9. Please give your full postcode

10. Are you...?

Female

Male

Identify in another way

11. **Which age group are you in?**

- Under 11 18 - 24 35 - 44 55 - 64 75 - 84
 11-17 25 - 34 45 - 54 65 - 74 85 or over

12. **What is your ethnic group?**

- White British Asian or Asian British
 White other Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
 Mixed or Multiple ethnic group Other ethnic group

Thanks! Please click 'submit' to send your response through to us

Appendix two

Detailed demographics

Q8. Which one of the following best describes you / your family's interest in the proposal to expand Firwood Special School to the Jubilee Centre site on Crompton Way?

- 28% [27] of respondents were answering as borough residents, with an additional 2 residents selecting 'none of the above' as they wished to be recorded as residents who bordered the proposed site.
- 26% [25] respondents worked at Firwood Academy, and 12% [11] were either pupils or family members / guardians of Firwood Academy pupils.
- 12% [11] attended the Jubilee Centre and 5% [5] worked or volunteered there.
- 1 response from a Councillor [Little Lever & Darcy Lever].
- Further 'none of the above' responses included a respondent who worked "*with children who would benefit from continuity of care*" and the daughter of a Firwood Academy staff member.
- Other responses are included in the table
- There were no responses from visitors to the borough, or official responses from a business, organisation or community group.

Firwood Academy expansion	
<i>Q8 Which one of the following best describes you / your family's interest in the proposal to expand Firwood Special School to the Jubilee Centre site on Crompton Way?</i>	% of respondents
Live in Bolton borough	28%
Work at Firwood Academy	26%
Pupil at Firwood Academy, or family / guardian	12%
Attend the Jubilee Centre	12%
Work / volunteer at Jubilee Centre	5%
Work in Bolton borough	5%
Former / current special school pupil, or family / guardian	4%
Study in / have children at school / college in Bolton borough	1%
Official response from Councillor	1%
None of the above	5%
<i>Base</i>	95

Q9. Please give your full postcode

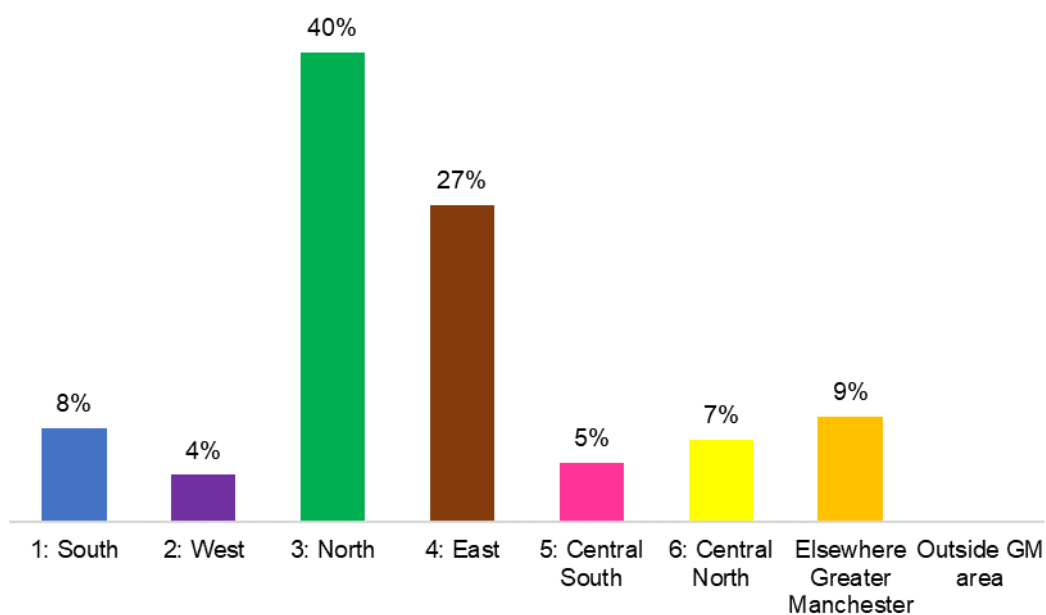
- Over half of respondents lived in the BL2 postal area [54%, 38 respondents].

Firwood Academy expansion	
Q9 Postcode distribution within BL postal area	
Postal area	% of respondents
BL1	17%
BL2	54%
BL3	10%
BL4	9%
BL5	3%
BL6	1%
BL7	6%
Base	70

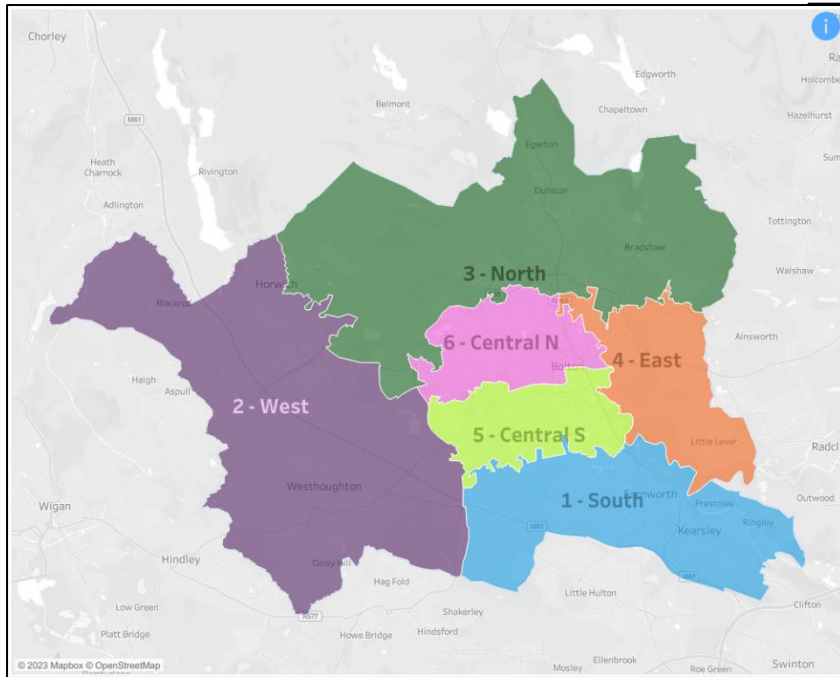
The following chart shows respondent postcodes split by neighbourhoods of Bolton borough, and elsewhere in Greater Manchester.

- 40% [31] of respondents were from North of Bolton borough, with 27% [21] of respondents from East. 9% [7] came from elsewhere in Greater Manchester, 8% [6] South, 7% [5] from Central North, 5% [4] Central South, 4% [3] West, with none from outside Greater Manchester.

Firwood Academy expansion
Q9 Postcode / location



Q9: base: 77



*Neighbourhoods are a local geography for integrated health and social care; all have a population of around 50,000 residents.

Q10. Are you...?

- 77% of respondents were female and 23% male. No-one selected 'identify in another way'.



76%
[71 female]



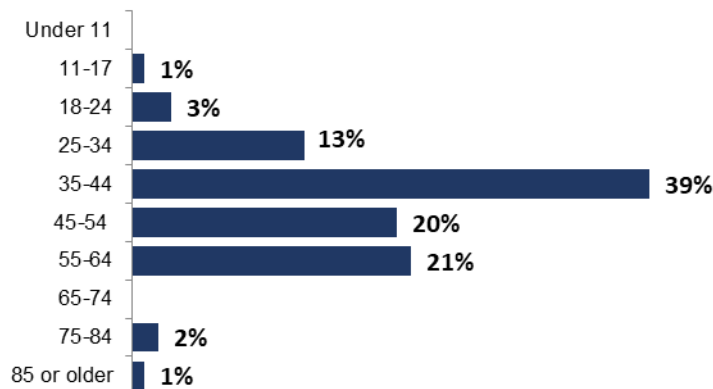
24%
[23 male]

Q10: base 94

Q11. Which age group are you in?

- 56% [53] respondents were aged 44 or under, 4 respondents were 24 or under.

Firwood Academy expansion Q11 Age



Q11: base 95

Q12. What is your ethnic group?

- 91% [81] respondents were White British, 4% [4] Asian or Asian British, 3% [3] White Other and 1% [1] Black, Black British, Caribbean or African.

Firwood Academy expansion Q12 Ethnicity

