

Brighton & Hove Admission Arrangements September 2026

School Bus Impact Review – Final Report



Background

- Brighton and Hove City Council have formally consulted on admission arrangements for September 2026, including the following changes potentially impacting transport:
 - Introducing an 'Open Admissions' criteria into the admission priorities to open a proportion of school places to those living in the Brighton Aldridge Community Academy (BACA), Portslade Aldridge Community Academy (PACA), Patcham High School (PHS) and Longhill High School (LHS) catchments.
 - Reducing the Published Admission Numbers ('PANs') at Blatchington Mill School, Dorothy Stringer School and Longhill High School.
 - Making changes to the catchment area boundaries between Varndean & Dorothy Stringer schools and Longhill High School
- These changes are expected to increase travel between catchments both from pupils in 'outer' catchments (PACA, PHS, BACA and LHS) taking up the opportunity, and from movement of pupils in the Varndean & Dorothy Stringer (VDS) and Hove Park and Blatchington Mill (HPBM) catchments that become oversubscribed as a result.

Review Purpose and Limitations

- This review has been requested by the Council to provide a high-level understanding of the potential impacts on the City's bus network resulting from the proposed introduction of Open Admissions, reductions in PANs and boundary changes, identifying the impacts to be managed and mitigated.
- In preparing the review, Jacobs has relied on:
 - Information and data provided by the Council on school admissions and bus service information provided by Brighton and Hove Buses
 - Reasonable assumptions around how applicants will respond to the changes with respect to demand for school places and travel behaviour
- The information and assumptions used are considered appropriate for the review purpose only and it is suggested that more detailed work would be needed to develop the management strategy and mitigations.

Estimating Changes to Place Uptake resulting from Open Admissions

- Analysis of changes to uptake of school places 'out-of-catchment' has built upon earlier work by the Council, adding detail on:
 - expected origin catchments for pupils taking up places in another catchment as a direct consequence of Open Admissions ('OA pupils')
 - expected destination catchments for pupils not offered their catchment area school as an indirect consequence of Open Admissions i.e. oversubscription in their local catchment
- The analysis relies on an assumption that pupils changing catchments will favour adjacent catchments and schools with more favourable Ofsted inspection outcomes; pupils not offered their catchment area school may also be limited by available spaces.
- For the Impact Review, analysis has been carried out for:
 - the 20% proportion for 'Open Admission' spaces consulted on;
 - an intermediate 10% option; and a
 - 5% option.

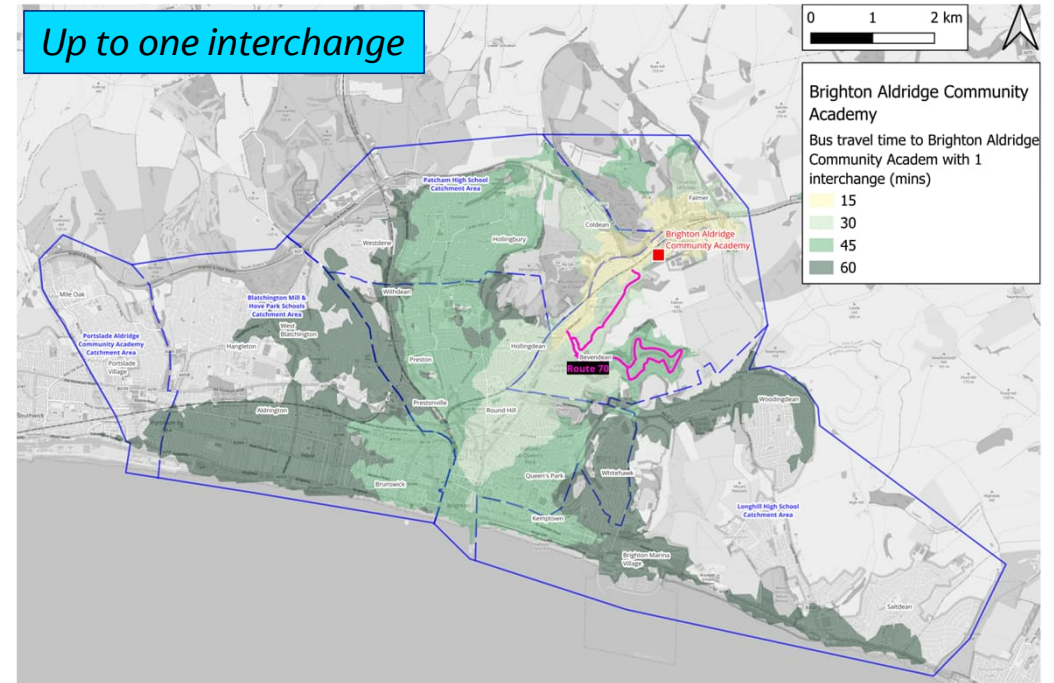
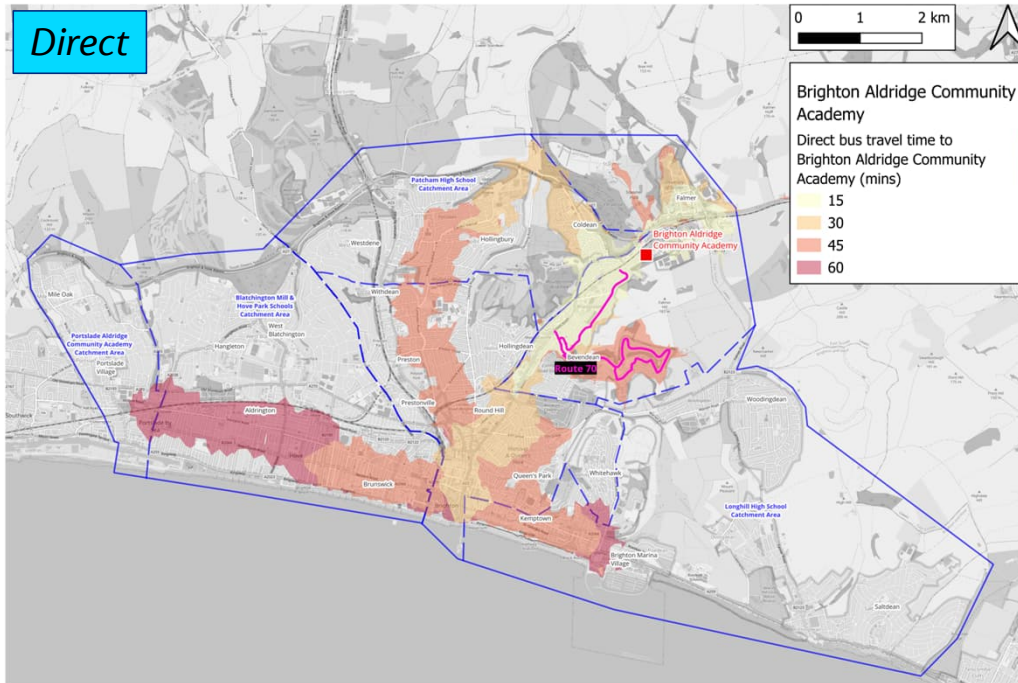
Impact Review - Capacity

- This Impact Review focused on expected capacity and coverage impacts for services to each school
- Capacity – risk of overcrowding or pupils unable to board buses has been considered.
 - This relies on loading data from Brighton and Hove Buses, mode splits from National Travel Survey data and journey planner / online bus maps for distribution onto services.
 - Only 'final leg' services known to be used by pupils to reach schools have been assessed – connecting 'first leg' services have not been considered (e.g. traveling from home to the city centre to connect with a school service).
 - The capacity assessment is sensitive to the proportion of spaces available to Open Admissions.
 - Results have been 'stress-tested' by considering peak vs mean loadings and vehicle sizes.
 - RAG assessment considers if the stress-testing indicates a high (R), medium (A) or low (G) risk of capacity issues.

Impact Review - Coverage

- Coverage – considered the risk that pupils placed through the 'Open Admission' criteria will struggle to use buses to get to their preferred school due to long or difficult journeys and either switch to car or be unable to take up the opportunity.
 - This has been assessed using isochrones showing the bus travel time to each school across the catchments (in bands showing 15, 30, 45 and 60-minute maximum journey times, including walk and waiting times).
 - This coverage assessment used Podaris, a widely-used and reliable software tool for accessibility analysis, based on data for the current bus network as a confirmed base for analysis.
 - Both direct journeys (typically preferred by pupils) and those requiring up to one interchange have been considered.
 - RAG assessment has considered if the accessibility analysis indicates a poor (R), partial (A) or acceptable (G) match of pupil flows to the coverage of the origin catchment.

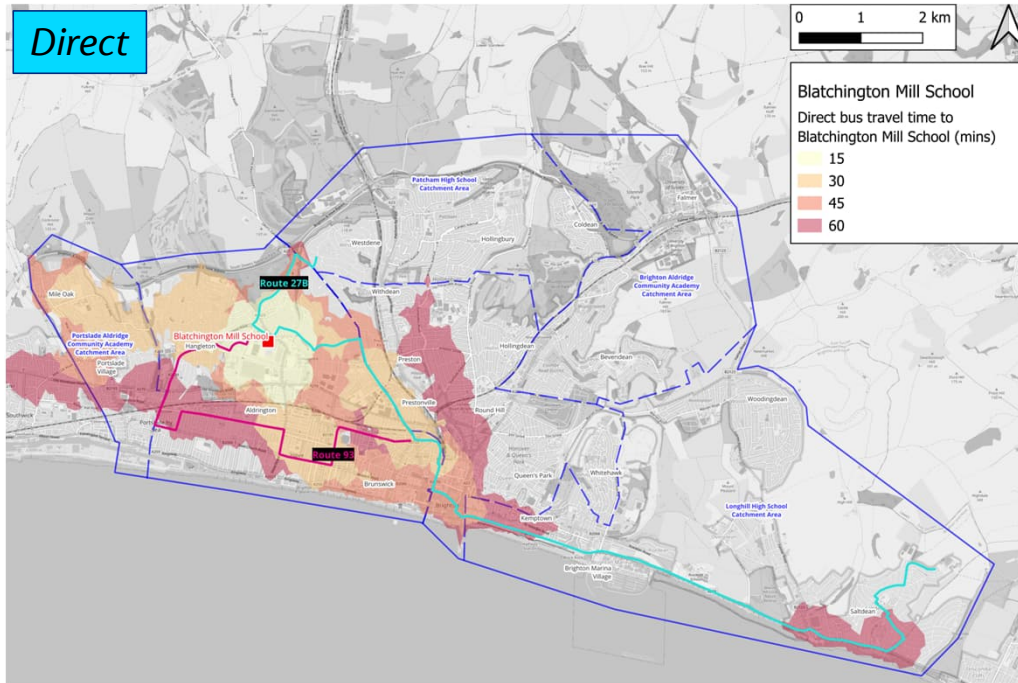
Brighton Aldridge Community Academy



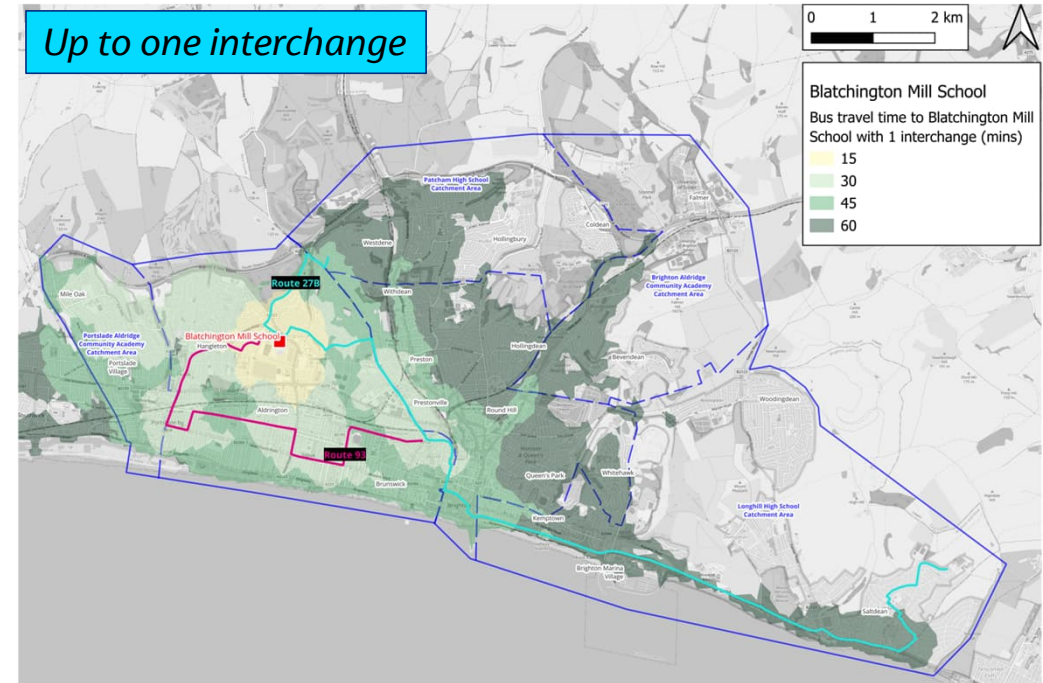
- Additional inter-catchment movements driven by pupils not placed in their Vardean and Dorothy Stringer (VDS) catchment schools.
- No school services from the VDS catchment, but fair coverage provided by general services.

- No data currently available on current general service loadings, but high frequency services provide very high capacity.
- Travel times of 30-45 minutes by bus for pupils in large parts of the VDS catchment, by a mix of direct and connecting journeys.

Blatchington Mill School

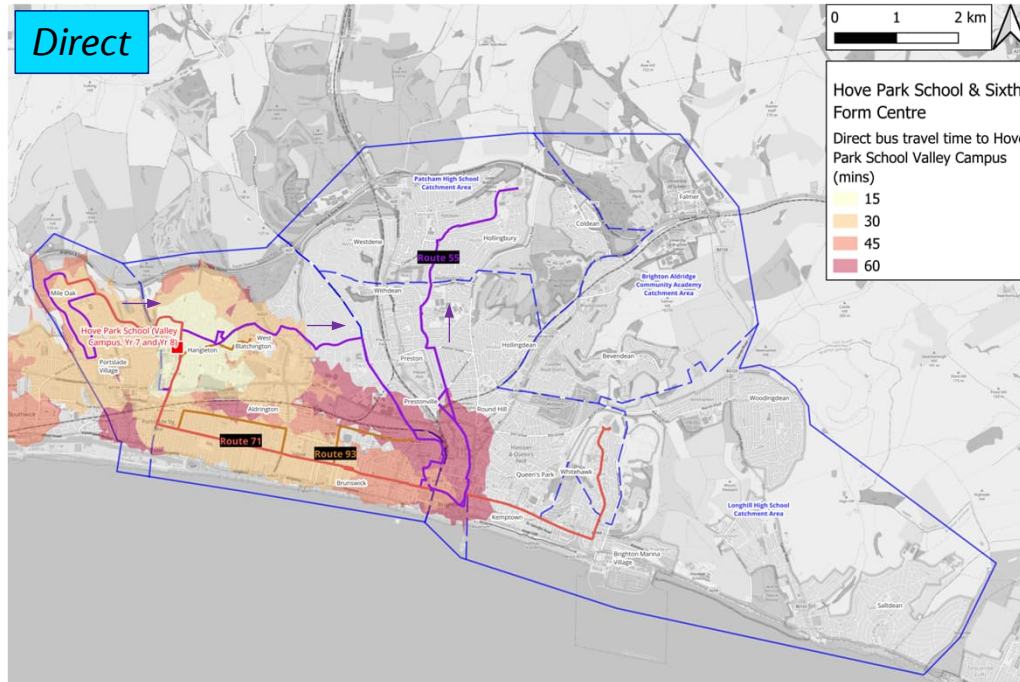


- OA pupils from Longhill, BACA and Patcham catchments are expected to substantially increase inter-catchment movements.
- School service 27B provides service from Saltdean and Kemptown in the Longhill catchment.

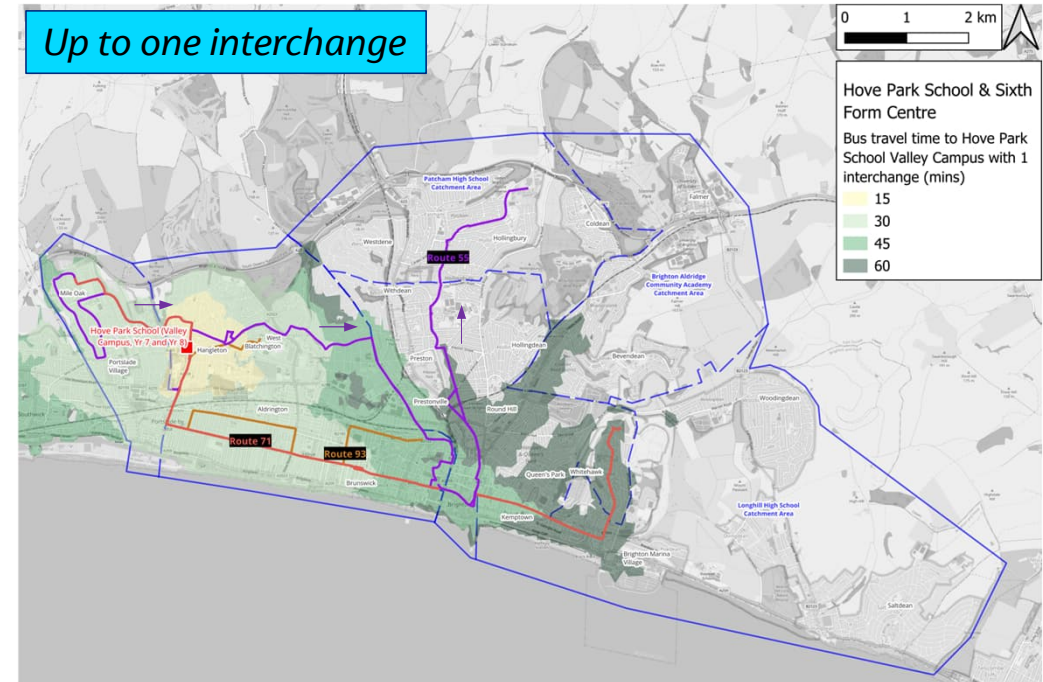


- Analysis of loading data for route 27B indicates potential capacity issues at all OA proportions.
- Travel times of at least 45 minutes by bus for pupils in most parts of the origin catchments, with substantial areas taking more than 60 minutes and very limited availability of direct journeys.

Hove Park School

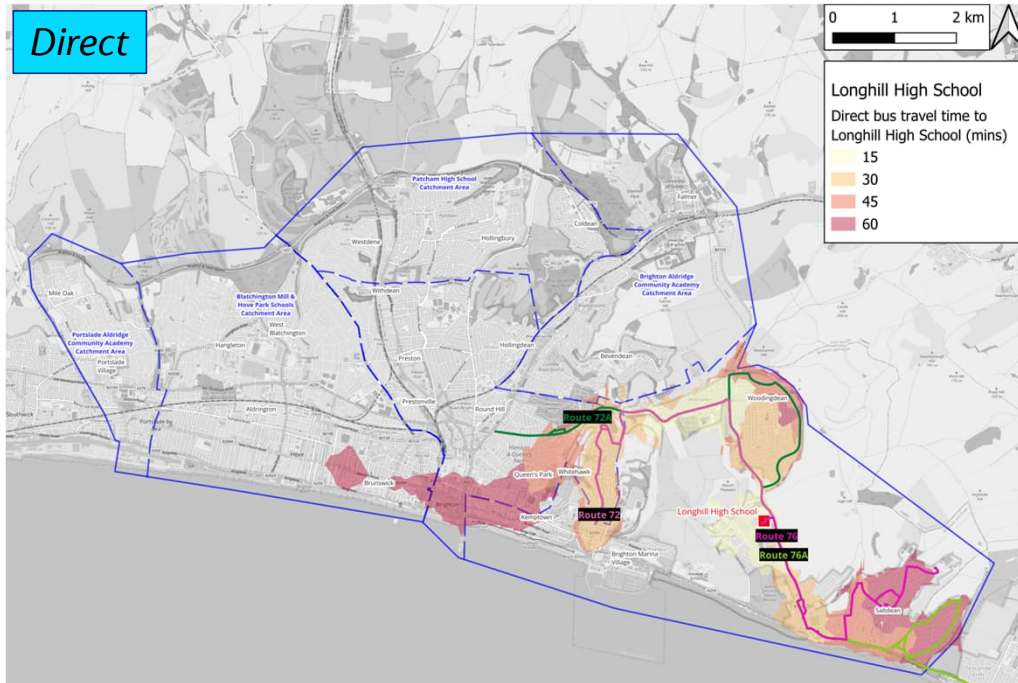


- Pupils from the Longhill, BACA and possibly Patcham catchments admitted under OA are expected to drive a substantial increase in inter-catchment movements.
- School service 71 provides service from Kemptown in the Longhill catchment.

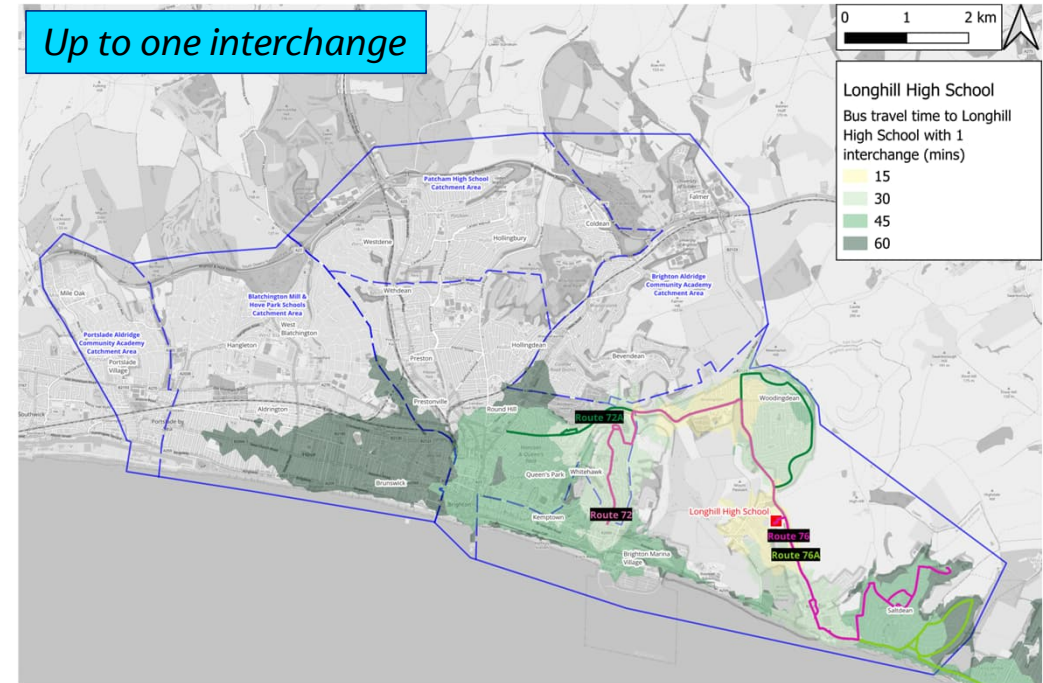


- Analysis of loading data for route 71 indicates potential capacity issues at all OA proportions.
- Travel times of more than 60 minutes by bus for pupils in most parts of the origin catchments, with no direct journeys available.

Longhill High School

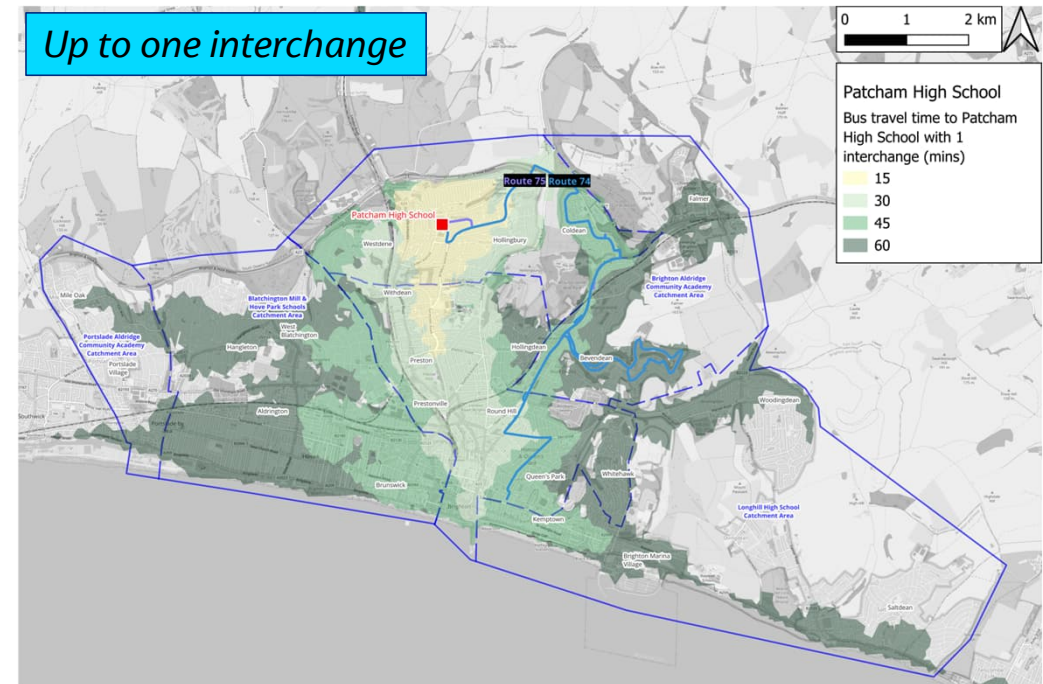
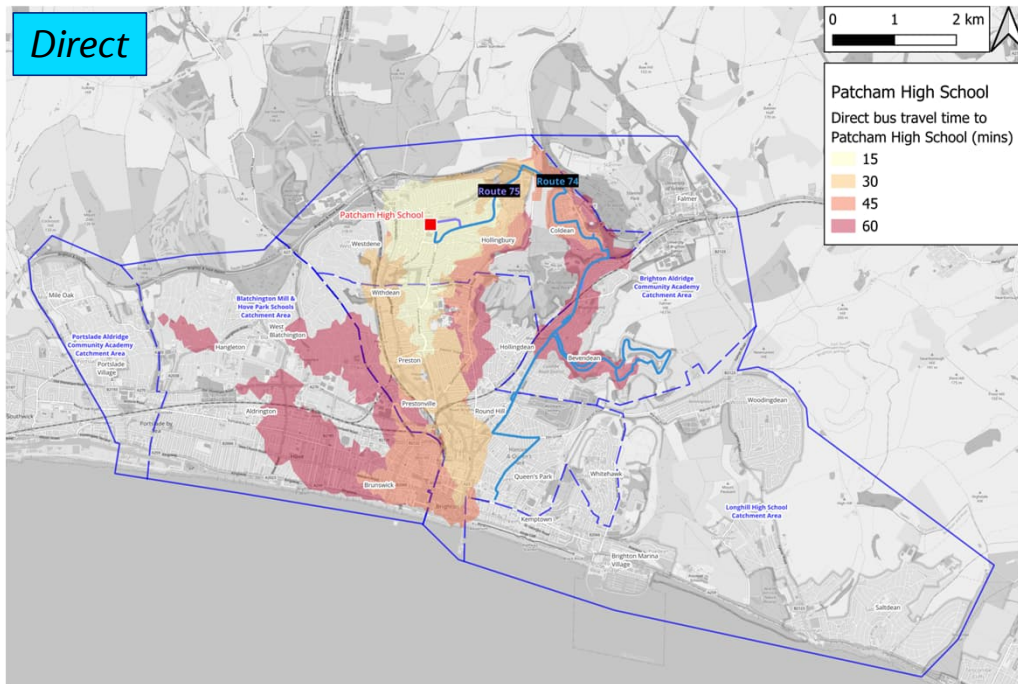


- Impacts from pupils not placed in their Varndean and Dorothy Stringer catchment schools, and from the Hove Park and Blatchington catchment at 20% OA – in substantial numbers at 10%+ OA.
- No school services from the origin catchments, and limited coverage is provided by general services.



- Analysis of loading data for routes 72 and 72A indicates potential capacity issues at higher (10% and 20%) OA proportions.
- Travel times of 30-45 minutes by bus for pupils in parts of the origin catchments, but large areas taking more than 60 minutes. Direct journeys only available from Queens Park and Whitehawk.

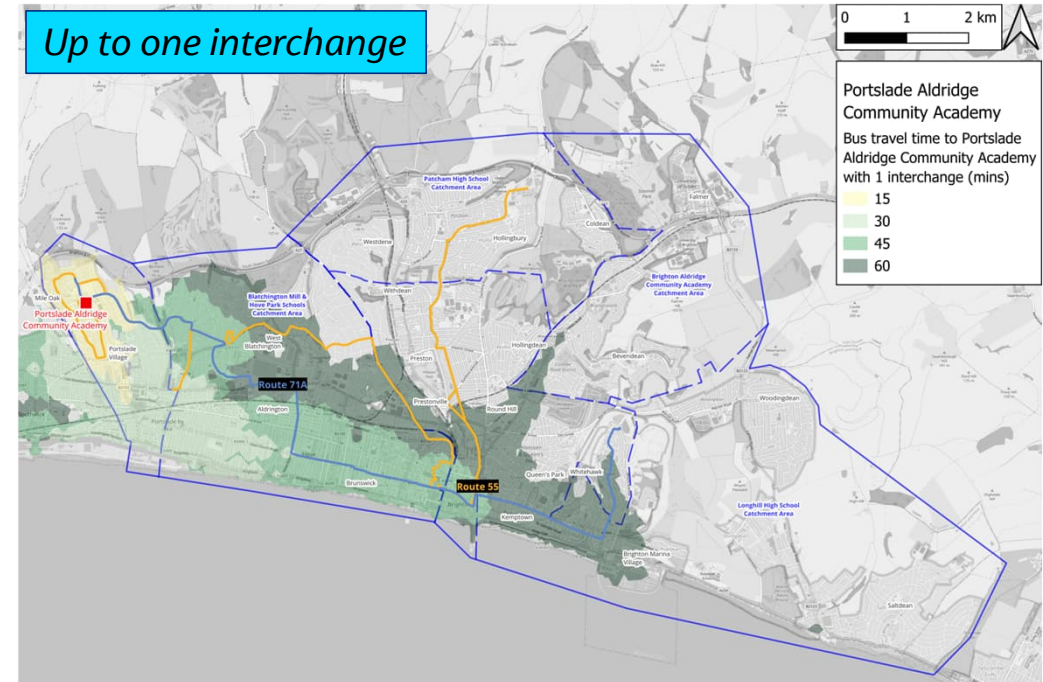
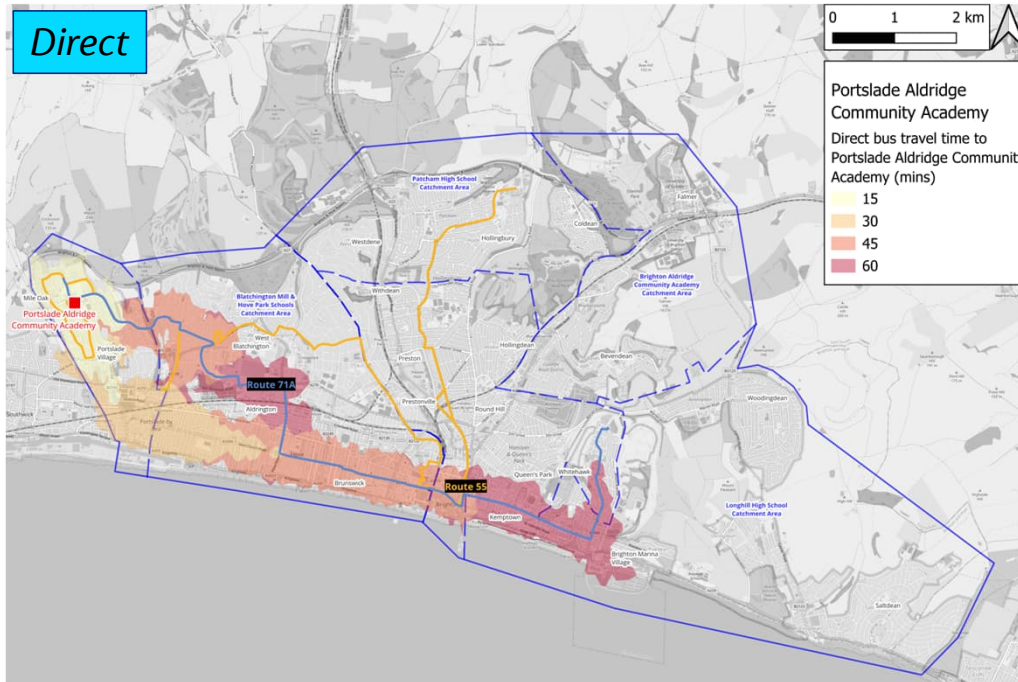
Patcham High School



- Substantial numbers of pupils not placed in their Varndean and Dorothy Stringer (VDS) catchment schools and OA pupils from BACA and Longhill provide substantial extra demand, and from the Hove Park and Blatchington catchment at 20% OA.
- School services 74 and 75 provide service from Kemptown in the Longhill catchment. General bus network provides alternatives.

- Analysis of loading data for routes 74 and 75 does not suggest potential capacity issues at any OA proportions (up to 20%).
- Direct bus travel times of less than 30 minutes from most of the VDS catchment, but access is poorer from the other origin catchments with connecting journey access 30-60 minutes or longer.

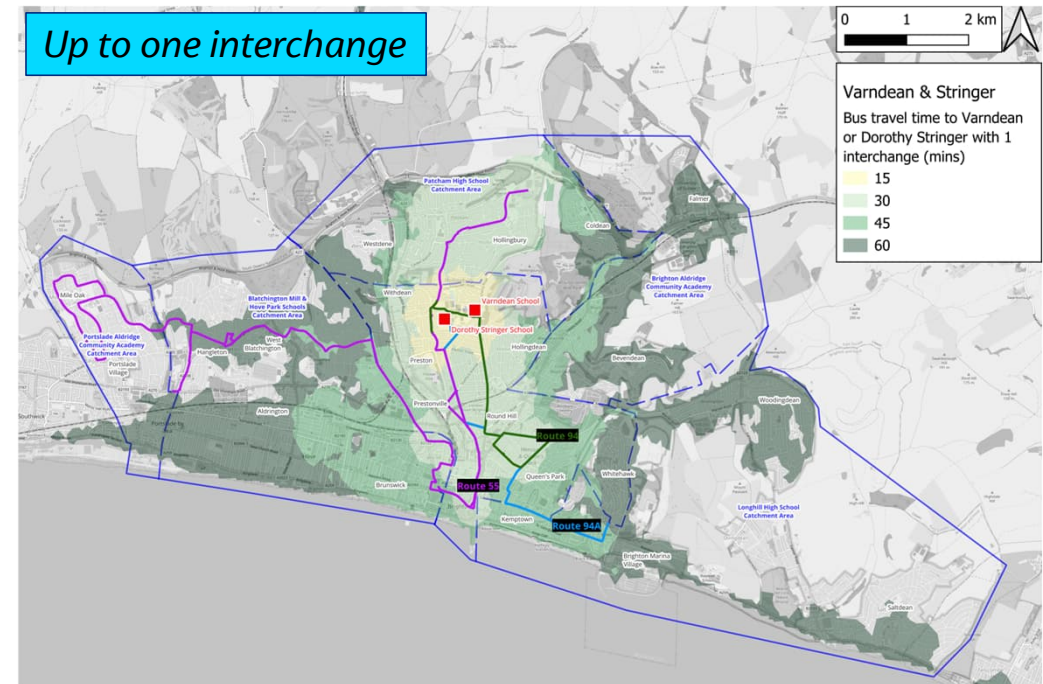
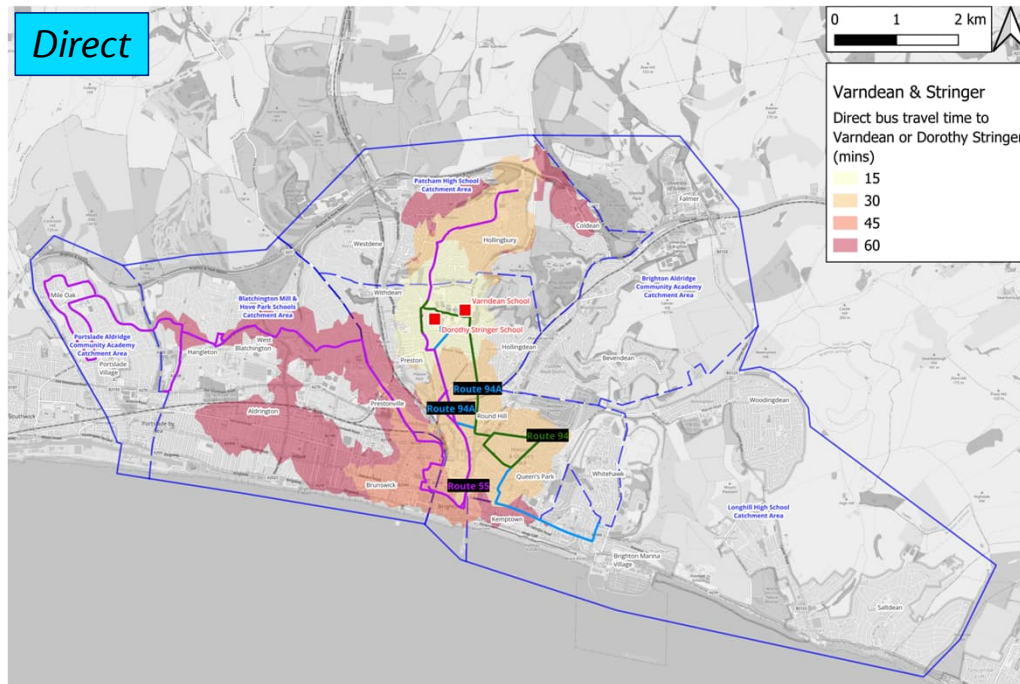
Portslade Aldridge Community Academy



- Limited numbers of pupils not placed in their VDS catchment schools are expected at PACA; in addition to those from the HPBM catchment for the 20% OA scenario.
- School service 71A serves the south of the origin catchments. Loading data for this route indicates existing moderate capacity issues, potentially becoming more serious at higher (10%+) OA.

- Direct bus travel times are around 30-60 minutes from southern parts of the origin catchments, with connecting travel times of 45-60 minutes available from areas south of Prestonville and West Blatchington (inclusive). Access is poorer in substantial areas elsewhere in these catchments, with connecting journeys lasting more than 60 minutes.

Varndean & Dorothy Stringer Schools



- OA pupils from Longhill, BACA and Patcham catchments expected to provide substantial additional demand.
- School service 94A serves Kempton in the Longhill catchment, with connections to services 55 and 94 available in the centre. Analysis of loading data does not suggest potential capacity issues

- A mix of direct and connecting options provide bus travel times of less than 60 minutes from most of the Patcham catchment, but access is poorer from the other origin catchments with some connecting journeys taking 45-60 minutes, but often longer.

Summary

School	PAN	5% Open Admission RAG			10% Open Admission RAG			20% Open Admission RAG		
		Places	Capacity	Coverage	Places	Capacity	Coverage	Places	Capacity	Coverage
Brighton Aldridge Community Academy	180	0			0			0		
Hove Park & Blatchington Mill	480	24			48			96		
Longhill High School	210	11			21			42		
Patcham High School	225	12			23			45		
Portslade Aldridge Community Academy	220	0			0			0		
Varndean & Dorothy Stringer	600	30			60			120		

- The Impact Review has found that as shown above, there are a range of potential impacts on the City's bus network resulting from the proposed introduction of Open Admissions, reductions in PANs and boundary changes.
 - These impacts are predominantly issues with coverage potentially limiting affected pupils' use of bus to get to and from their school, particularly for OA pupils at the central catchment schools.
- Potential issues with capacity have also been identified, particularly at higher OA proportions.
 - It should be noted that RAG scoring is high-level and there can be material differences in impact severity within the same RAG score.
 - As more information emerges about the specific details and context for updated admissions arrangements, there will be scope to carry out more detailed work to assess pupils' needs and to develop a management strategy and mitigations.

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