



BACKGROUND

The redevelopment of Woldgate School & Sixth Form College forms part of the Department for Education's national School Rebuilding Programme. Located on the western outskirts of Pocklington, the existing site caters for students aged 11–18. The new development includes a state-of-the-art main teaching block, sports building, expanded car and coach parking, reconfigured sports provision, and modern landscaping. The majority of the existing school buildings are being replaced, with the exception of the Sixth Form building, which will be retained.

Wates Construction was appointed as the main contractor by the Department for Education, with Howard Civil Engineering awarded a £5.1 million contract to carry out enabling works, foundations, drainage, ground floor slabs and hard landscaping works over four distinct phases. The scheme is designed to be Net Zero Carbon in Operation (NZCiO), ensuring sustainability is a key consideration in the long-term operation of the school.

SCOPE OF WORK

Enabling Works (11 Weeks – Complete)

- This initial phase focused on preparing the site for main construction activities, and included:
- Site entrance works, temporary changing room and turnstile foundations
 - Temporary drainage and service connections for site cabins
 - Electrical and gas service diversions and capping of foul water drainage
 - Installation of drainage and attenuation tank
 - Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) formation

These works were undertaken with precision and speed to facilitate the main build schedule, while minimising disruption to the live school site.

Main Teaching Block (34 Weeks – Ongoing)

Currently in progress, the second phase includes a range of complex foundation and infrastructure works:

- Attendance for piling operations
- Installation of pile caps and ground floor slab (including pop-ups)
- Perimeter drainage and packaged foul water pumping station with rising main
- Formation of the substation and entrance
- Hard and soft landscaping to the perimeter of the new teaching block

All work is being carried out while maintaining a fully operational school site, requiring careful logistical planning and sequencing.

Sports Building and Surrounds (37 Weeks – Starting Jan 2026)

Due to commence in early 2026, this third phase will cover:

- Piling and groundworks for the new sports facility
- Deep drainage installation and landscaping around Building A (EFAI)
- Ducting for new services and formation of car park/drop-off points

Final Landscaping and Car Park Works (16 Weeks – Start TBC)

- The final phase includes reinstatement and extensive landscaping around the completed facilities, including:
- Hard and soft landscaping to the Sports Hall and eastern car park
 - Full reinstatement of the site compound

PROJECT CHALLENGES

Live School Environment

Maintaining uninterrupted access and safety for students during term time meant all works had to be meticulously planned and safely segregated.

Existing Services

Working around live gas, electrical, and drainage services required extensive use of vacuum excavation. These unplanned demands significantly exceeded tender allowances but were essential to completing works safely.

Restricted Working Areas

Perimeter drainage installation on the north elevation of the Main Building was challenged by minimal clearance between live buildings and hoardings. Shallow shoring systems and compact plant were used at +2m depths to ensure safety and efficiency.

Ground Conditions

High groundwater levels and bedrock posed serious difficulties during the foul water pump station installation and deep drainage works, necessitating ground water management including extensive overpumping.

Design Variability

Changes to the attenuation tank design mid-installation led to programme pressure, requiring weekend working to maintain sequencing with the MUGA contractor.

SPECIALIST EQUIPMENT AND TECHNIQUES

Deep Drainage Expertise

Installation of the 6m+ deep foul water pumping station involved specialist drainage gangs using sheet and frame methodology to navigate rock and groundwater.

Directional Drilling

A 125mm diameter rising main was installed via directional drilling through existing school grounds—minimising surface disruption and preserving programme flow.

HAVS Monitoring

Operatives used HAVS watches during pile breakdown activities to monitor exposure to vibration and ensure health and safety compliance.



OUTCOME

Howard Civil Engineering's role in the first two phases of the Woldgate School redevelopment demonstrated our ability to deliver complex infrastructure in challenging live environments. With high standards of health and safety, and the use of innovative techniques and collaborative planning, the team has ensured the project remains on schedule and within scope.

The works to date have laid the foundation for a cutting-edge educational environment that will serve the children of Pocklington and surrounding areas for generations to come.

