

Stronger Together

Proposed Merger Consultation Feedback



Palmer's
COLLEGE



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Foreword



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We would like to thank all those who directly contributed to the five week public consultation on the proposed merger between Seevic College and Palmer's Sixth Form College.

We are very pleased to note that the majority of respondents support our merger proposal and the feedback we have received has reaffirmed our ambition to complete the merger in readiness for 1 August 2017.

We have reviewed the positive, negative and neutral comments made during our consultation period and all comments will feed into our on-going detailed planning.

We recognise that this is just a starting point and we have much work to do to ensure the merger is implemented successfully and we believe that this exciting new partnership is the best way to achieve our goals.

Introduction

As part of the type B merger process, Palmer's Sixth Form College held a formal public consultation into proposals to merge the two colleges.

The consultation period ran from 23 March to 30 April 2017. The document was seen by both Boards as an opportunity to explain the rationale behind the merger and the benefits of a merged college for both areas.

The consultation document included a Statutory Notice of the intention to dissolve Palmer's Sixth Form College. The Statutory Notice was also published in one local newspaper, the Thurrock Gazette, and one national newspaper, The Times.

Stakeholder feedback

There were 13 replies to the consultation, the results of which are broken down as follows:

Respondent	No. of replies
Education providers	9
Local residents	3
Other	1 (Sponsor)

The number of responses to the consultation was relatively small, but the majority who responded were extremely supportive and said:

- They believed a merger would positively impact on opportunities for students and address the needs of employers in the region.
- They understood the need to widen the range of provision for future students and increase local participation rates, resulting in improved quality and success.
- They understood the merger would provide better value for money and public benefit.

Concerns raised

Concerns were expressed by two local residents, one education provider and one university employee, as follows:

Increased competition in the local area

The education provider had concerns that “The merger would result in a second General Further Education College in Thurrock, increasing competition in a small geographical area. The merger document talked about maintaining a broad ‘A’ Level offer but also the introduction of new Level 2 programmes and expanding financial services, health, digital and creative industries, all presently offered locally. It made little reference to the recommended outcome from the Area Review which stated: “Palmer’s College and Seevic College to merge developing a coherent offer that will meet local learner and employer needs, provide a high quality academic offer in Thurrock and lead to rapid quality improvement across both campuses”.”

Student numbers

Would the merger impact negatively on student numbers?

Palmer’s identity

Concern was expressed that Palmer’s Sixth Form College would lose its distinctive identity.

Ofsted

Taking into account both college’s current Ofsted rating, how were the merged colleges intending to create a ‘high quality provision’?

Courses

Would courses be relocated or stopped as a result of the merger?

Responses to the concerns raised

Increased competition in the local area

We will continue to offer a broad range of A-Levels as we have done in the past. Over 40% of the current Palmer's provision is vocational work at Levels 2 and 3 which includes BTEC Media, Art & Design, Performing Arts, Health & Social Care, Business, Science and ICT, as well as a range of Business Technology and Secretarial courses. The note from the Area Based Review urged Palmer's College to provide a high quality academic offer and this is something the merged college plans to continue. Merging with Seevic College will enable further curriculum development to meet the needs of the students, whilst also working in partnership with other providers.

Student numbers

The merger is driven by our aspiration to increase student numbers at the Palmer's campus and this will be achieved through the increased financial resources available which will be usefully deployed in curriculum development and quality improvement. The merger is a sound business proposal intended to secure the future of Palmer's College.

Palmer's identity

The two college campuses will both retain their distinct brands and identities. The unique historical contribution made by The William Palmer Trust to the local community has been fully considered throughout the merger process and the Trust has been involved as a key stakeholder.

Ofsted

The proposed merger creates real opportunity to build strong high-quality academic and professional pathways. Both colleges recognise that their most recent Ofsted inspections indicate that they need to make further quality improvements. The new merged college will have a transformational strategy around improving teaching and learning, with the aim of securing 'good' or better Ofsted inspections outcomes within three years.

Courses

No current students will be affected by these proposals. All students will be able to complete their courses at Palmer's College and will not be expected to travel between the campuses.

Finally, both colleges are grateful for those who have taken the time to respond and we will take on board the comments made as we continue the preparation for the merger.