

Consultation Document



For a merger between Thurrock & Basildon College with South East Essex College of Arts and Technology

Consultation commences on 20th April 2009
Consultation ends on 29th May 2009



**Formal Public Consultation on the proposed changes to the
Further Education Infrastructure in South Essex.**

**Proposed Merger of Thurrock & Basildon College and South
East Essex College of Arts and Technology**

Consultation commences on 20th April 2009

Consultation ends on 29th May 2009

1. Introduction

This consultation document sets out the background and rationale for a proposal to merge Thurrock & Basildon College (T&B) with South East Essex College of Arts and Technology (SEEC) to form a single institution.

The East of England Regional Learning and Skills Council (the Council) will consider the responses to consultation, due diligence and full proposal from the colleges.

When considering a proposal for reorganisation, the full proposal will be assessed against the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) Criteria published in FE Colleges: Models for Success in August 2008 set out in Appendix E. The Council will make a decision on whether the proposal should proceed in light of the evaluation against the criteria and if content, recommend the proposal to the Secretary of State.

Under the current statutory framework, the final decision on proposals to merge is made by the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills. The process of a merger will be achieved by the Secretary of State laying orders to dissolve or establish Further Education Corporations.

The LSC have a statutory requirement to consult on merger proposals before making a recommendation to the Secretary of State. The consultation period must run for a minimum of one month. The period of consultation for the proposal to merge Thurrock & Basildon College with South East Essex College of Arts and Technology will commence on 20th April 2009 and end on the 29th May 2009. Organisations being consulted are detailed in Appendix A. Responses are invited by 29th May 2009 to the proposal set out in the

- Consultation Document
- Statutory Draft Proposal and
- Statutory Summary of the Draft Proposal

These documents are shown in Appendix B and Appendix C.

Please provide comments on the attached Pro-forma at Appendix D

Responses should be in writing and posted to

Terry Collin
Partnership Director
Learning and Skills Council Essex
Redwing House
Hedgerows Business Park
Colchester Road
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 5PB

Information is also available on the LSC website
www.lsc.gov.uk/regions/eastofengland/whatwedo

The final date for receipt of comments is 5pm 29th May 2009.

2. Executive Summary

The Learning and Skills Council currently has responsibility for planning and funding post 16 Education and Training with the exception of Higher Education. The LSC has a duty to ensure 'proper' and 'reasonable' Further Education facilities in the locality and thus has certain statutory duties in respect of proposals involving FE Colleges merging with other FE Colleges or Higher Education Institutions.

The East of England Learning and Skills Council has approved that the initial outline proposal for the merger of Thurrock & Basildon College (T&B) with South East Essex College of Arts and Technology (SEEC) should be subject to formal consultation. The consultation document sets out the background, rationale and vision for the proposal to merge Thurrock & Basildon College with South East Essex College of Arts and Technology to form a single institution. This document is intended to inform individuals and invite views from interested parties and the public on the proposal.

The proposal is to establish a joint institution by merging the existing colleges of Thurrock & Basildon College and South East Essex College of Arts and Technology. This would be achieved by the dissolution of Thurrock & Basildon College Corporation and the transfer of its respective property, rights and liabilities to South East Essex College of Arts and Technology. This is known as a Type B merger

The vision for the merged college is to 'transform the education and skills landscape of South Essex for the benefit of young people, adults and employers'. The merger of T&B and SEEC has been considered by the colleges in the context of the ambitious and radical change and regeneration planned for the area. The new college will play a key role in raising education participation and attainment and in meeting the skill needs of employers and industry in the region.

The proposal is based on an educational and business case. The five key messages on which the merger is based are:

1. More Choice
2. Higher quality provision
3. More specialist expertise available
4. A more coherent and comprehensive curriculum offer
5. Increasing participation and strengthening the skill base.

The governing body of South East Essex College of Arts and Technology is separately proposing to the Secretary of State that the name of the College be changed to reflect the changed nature of the institution. The new name proposed is South Essex College of Further and Higher Education.

The corporation of SEEC will increase its current membership to reflect and represent the interest of Thurrock, Basildon and Southend and the wider remit of the merged college.

3. Local Context

The Essex Area, including the unitary authorities of Southend on Sea and Thurrock, is a large and diverse county with a population of approximately 1.6 million. The population of Essex is predominantly concentrated in the largely urban South and around Colchester and Chelmsford. Essex accounts for 30% of the East of England population overall and 30% of East of England 16-18 population. Overall the population of Essex is set to grow between now and 2025.

The Thames Gateway is the largest regeneration project in western Europe extending 40 miles along the River Thames and has been designated by the Government as the UK's largest growth area and a national regeneration priority. The areas of Southend, Rochford, Castle Point, Basildon and Thurrock are located in the south of the county and form part of the Thames Gateway. It is anticipated that much of the growth planned for the Thames Gateway will take place in Essex.

Parts of Southend, Basildon and Thurrock are amongst the most deprived areas nationally. A key issue for the Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE) area is low participation especially at age 17. The 17 year old participation rate in Thurrock is the lowest in the country. Within Essex, Basildon has one of the largest volumes of 16-18 year olds but some of the lowest destinations into learning post 16.

Generally the 15-19 population is declining, but the adult working age population is set to increase.

The skills profile of South Essex is improving but it remains lower than regional and national averages.

There is a need to increase participation in the Thames Gateway area and reduce those Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET). The skill needs required to support the regeneration planned for the area also need to be addressed

4. Background

The proposal to merge Thurrock & Basildon College (T&B) with South East Essex College of Arts and Technology (SEEC) has been developed by both Colleges. The proposal is the outcome of a long period of review and discussion regarding the infrastructure of Further Education (FE) provision in South Essex beginning in 2004 with a Strategic Area Review (StAR).

Between 2002 and 2004, LSC Essex undertook a review of learning and skills in South Essex as part of the county wide Strategic Area Review (StAR) process announced by the Secretary of State for Education in Success for All, published in November 2002. The StAR recognised that FE provision in South Essex was not meeting the needs of learners, local communities or employers.

In August 2005 a Joint Review Group was established comprising of Corporation Board Chairs and Principals of three colleges in South Essex (excluding SEEC). The remit for the group was to review and oversee any subsequent changes in arrangements for FE funded provision in South Essex. A review was undertaken and resulted in the agreement by the group that a reconfiguration of the FE infrastructure across South Essex was needed. However, no consensus could be achieved on the way forward.

In 2007, following consultation with wider strategic partners including the local authorities, district councils, local and regional regeneration agencies and sector skills councils, the LSC commenced two 16-19 competitions for additional FE provision in the areas of Basildon and Thurrock. The additional provision was to tackle low aspirations and address issues outlined within the StAR relating to vocational provision and economic drivers. The successful competition applicants were the Basildon Consortium led by SEEVIC College which includes SEEC (Basildon) and the Thurrock Consortium led by SEEC (Thurrock).

In 2008 Thurrock & Basildon College requested support from the LSC to conduct a review to consider the college's long term viability and how it could best meet the needs of the community, identifying and assessing possible strategic options. The review was undertaken by Tribal Consulting between February and June 2008.

The Strategic Options Review (SOR) assessed a range of options from the status quo, a change in leadership and management to a number of merger options and provided a recommended way forward.

The merger options considered were as follows:

- T&B to be 'de-merged' and Basildon provision merged with SEEVIC College, Thurrock provision merged with SEEC
- merger with SEEC
- merger with SEEVIC College
- merger with Palmers College
- merger between Thurrock & Basildon College, South East Essex College and SEEVIC College – resulting in one general further education college serving the Thames Gateway
- T&B to be 'de-merged', with Thurrock becoming a stand alone college and Basildon incorporated within SEEVIC College.

The review took account of the possible impacts of the Machinery of Government changes that are proposed and a number of key stakeholders were interviewed to ascertain views on current and possible configurations. The review concluded that a merger option represented the best option for learners in both the Basildon and Thurrock areas.

Following consideration of the SOR, the corporation of T&B in June 2008 decided to seek a merger with SEEC and agreed to progress to the development of an initial outline proposal. The decision to merge with SEEC was based on complementary curriculum, high quality provision, location and a history of joint working. The corporation of SEEC also considered the outcomes and agreed in July 2008 to proceed in considering the merger proposal in more detail.

T&B and SEEC subsequently commissioned a feasibility study into the proposal to merge, to consider and develop both the educational case and business case. The feasibility study was concluded in September 2008 and considers the strengths and opportunities presented by the merger in the context of learning, participation and success alongside key issues for the colleges to consider as they progress their proposal. The feasibility study also considered the new criteria published by DIUS in August 2008 against which the proposals will be evaluated. The study stated:

"...the detailed evidence in the feasibility study supports a strong case for the merger proposal meeting the new criteria in that it clearly will enhance and increase not reduce choice; it will improve quality of provision whilst retaining clear local identities in Thurrock, Southend and Basildon and it will underpin plans for the TGSE area and, in doing so, improve links with employers in the region."

Following the outcome of the feasibility study which supported the educational and business case for a merger, the two colleges have jointly developed an initial outline proposal. The initial outline proposal was approved by both corporations prior to its submission to the LSC.

The East of England Learning and Skills Council considered the initial outline proposal and have approved that the outline proposal for the merger of T&B with SEEC should be subject to formal consultation. This decision has also been confirmed by the Department for Innovation, University and Skills.

5. The Two Colleges

Thurrock & Basildon College

T&B is a large General Further Education College formed in 2001 following the merger of Basildon College and Thurrock College. The college serves the areas of Basildon District Council and Thurrock Council located in South Essex.

T&B has two main campuses one in Grays (Woodview) approximately 2 miles from the town centre and one in Basildon (Nethermayne) approximately 0.4 mile from the town centre. The college also has three learning centres based at Thurrock Lakeside Retail Park (Thurrock), Eastgate Shopping Centre (Basildon) and Canvey Island (Castle Point).

The T&B curriculum is entirely vocational following the decision to cease offering GCE, A and AS levels in 2006/07 due to low success rates. The college offers programmes in all subject sector areas. The college has two Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in Logistics & Transport and Electrical & Electronic Engineering in partnership with Chelmsford College.

The College has signed 3 Skills Pledges with local key employers and has won 3 Business Awards in successive years – in 2007 Training & Development, 2008 Excellent Customer Services and 2009 in Education & Lifelong Learning.

FE learner numbers for the last four years are shown below:

	16-18			19+			Total Number of Learners
	Full Time	Part Time	Total	Full Time	Part Time	Total	
2004/05	1,966	367	2,333	416	3,747	4,163	6,496
2005/06	1,839	533	2,372	407	3,589	3,996	6,368
2006/07	2,042	410	2,452	309	2,788	3,097	5,549
2007/08	1,666	448	2,114	261	2,613	2,874	4,988
<i>Source: Colleges Final Claim 2004/05 – 2007/08</i>							

Approximately 60% of the learners attend the Grays (Thurrock) Campus and 30% attend the Basildon Campus.

T&B is one of the 15 providers in the NOVA consortium and the Thames Gateway Train to Gain Consortium both led by SEEC delivering Apprenticeships and Train to Gain. T&B in addition also offers HE provision at their campuses working in partnership with University of East London and Anglia Ruskin University. The College HE provision includes foundation degrees, degrees, Higher National Certificates and Diplomas.

T&B was inspected in May 2007 with an overall outcome of satisfactory. Six curriculum areas were inspected with five being judged as satisfactory with Health and Social Care graded as inadequate.

	Grades
Effectiveness of provision	3
Capacity to improve	3
Achievements and standards	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Equality of opportunity	2
Curriculum Areas:	
Health, Social Care and Childcare	4 (Re-inspection April 08 = 3)
Engineering	3
Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy	3
Information and communication Technology	3
Foundation Programme	3
Business administration and Finance	3

The feedback from the Ofsted monitoring visit in October 2007 was that reasonable progress was being made in all areas. Health and Social Care was also re-inspected in April 2008 and was judged as satisfactory.

South East Essex College of Arts and Technology

SEEC is a large general Further Education College. The college serves the area of Southend and attracts learners from across the Thames Gateway to Thurrock and towards mid Essex. In 2004, SEEC moved into a new campus in Southend town centre. The college also has 7 satellite sites – 5 in Southend and 2 in Thurrock.

The college offers programmes in all subject sector areas. The college has two Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in Media Technology and Information & Communication Technology Solutions in partnership with ITEC Learning and Colchester Institute.

FE learner numbers for the last four years are shown below:

	16-18			19+			Total Number of Learners
	Full Time	Part Time	Total	Full Time	Part Time	Total	
2004/05	2,672	232	2,904	577	3,960	4,537	7,441
2005/06	3,027	227	3,254	541	3,760	4,301	7,555
2006/07	3,250	177	3,427	418	3,304	3,722	7,149
2007/08	3,608	194	3,802	476	2,775	3,251	7,053
<i>Source: Colleges Final Claim 2004/05 – 2007/08</i>							

SEEC is the lead partner in the NOVA Consortium which delivers Apprenticeships and E2E and leads the Thames Gateway Train to Gain Consortium across the Thames Gateway South Essex area.

The college is also a partner in an Adult learning consortium in Southend which consists of 4 other providers Southend Adult Community College, Southend Association of Voluntary Services, NOVA and the University of Essex. The Adult Learning Consortium has been developed to assist in delivering a local adult offer in Southend.

SEEC has substantial HE provision and works in partnership with the University of Essex. The college's HE provision includes foundation degrees, vocational honours degrees, post graduate certificate and Edexcel validated Higher National Certificates and Diplomas.

SEEC was inspected by Ofsted in 2008 with an overall outcome of Good with a number of outstanding features. Six curriculum areas were inspected with four judged as good, one judged as satisfactory and Leisure tourism and sport graded as outstanding.

The table below is a summary of the Ofsted inspection grades awarded to the college in 2008.

	Grades
Effectiveness of provision	2
Capacity to improve	2
Achievements and standards	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Equality of opportunity	1
Curriculum Areas:	
Arts, media and publishing	2
Business administration and Law	3
Health, public services and care	2
Information and communication Technology	2
Leisure, tourism and sport	1
Preparation for life and work	2

SEEC was successful in the two 16-19 competitions that were run in 2007. The College leads the winning consortium in Thurrock and is a member of the winning Consortium in Basildon led by SEEVIC College.

Estates

There are capital proposals currently being developed for multi provider campuses in Basildon and Grays which link with T&B. These campuses will replace the existing campuses of T&B as plans are that T&B provision will be moved to and delivered from these sites by T&B or the new merged college. The proposals for the multi provider sites are being developed by the consortium leads of the two successful 16-19 Competitions SEEVIC in Basildon and SEEC in Grays.

Part of the proposal is that the merged college will, by 2012, deliver learning in three new iconic town centre campuses in the Thames Gateway area – Southend, Grays (Thurrock) and Basildon. Each delivery centre will have *'its own 'Network of Learning' and will sit firmly within its local community relating to local schools, training providers and employers' (Initial Outline Proposal)*. The merged college would own

and manage the proposed campuses in Grays and Southend and deliver from the proposed Basildon Campus.

The colleges have proposed a phased approach to the opening of the campuses and transfer of learners as part of the merger transition planning to minimise disruption for learners. The proposal anticipates that the opening of the town centre campuses will increase choice and reduce travel to learn time making it more convenient to study.

In light of The Foster Review, 'A Review of the Capital Programme in Further Education' (March 2009) which was published in April 2009; the LSC is working with the colleges and stakeholders in the Thames Gateway South Essex to progress plans in line with the recommendations from this report.

6. Post 16 Provision in Basildon and Thurrock

The following is a summary of providers who are currently offering provision in the areas of Basildon and Thurrock.

Basildon

- Basildon Consortium (16-19 Competition winner) delivering additional 16-18 provision from September 2008.
- Thurrock & Basildon College – Ofsted Grade 3 (Satisfactory) (May 07)
- There are five 11-19 schools in the Basildon Area
 - Beauchamps School (Wickford) - Ofsted Grade 1 (Outstanding) (December 2006)
 - Bromfords School (Wickford) - Ofsted Grade 3 (Satisfactory) (May 2008)
 - The Billericay School (Billericay) - Ofsted Grade 2 (Good) (March 2008)
 - Mayflower School (Billericay) - Ofsted inspection due to be undertaken shortly
 - Chalvedon School (Basildon) – Ofsted Grade 2 (Good) (February 2007). There is a proposal for this school to become a 14-19 Academy
- There are four 11-16 schools
- Learners from the Basildon area also access SEEVIC College in Benfleet, Palmers College in Thurrock and SEEC. SEEVIC College is a designated Sixth Form College but has a large vocational offer. SEEVIC College leads the winning consortium in Basildon. Palmers College is a designated Sixth Form College.

Thurrock

- Palmers College (Sixth Form College) - a Beacon College (Ofsted Grade 1 (Outstanding) and a member of the winning consortium in Thurrock for the 16-19 Competition
- Thurrock Consortium (16-19 Competition winner) led by South East Essex College (SEEC) delivering additional 16-18 provision from September 2008
- Thurrock & Basildon College - Ofsted Grade 3 (Satisfactory) (May 07)
- Thurrock Adult Community College – due to be re-inspected in the near future following a failed inspection in early 2008

- There are currently no 11-18 schools but plans are proposed for the Gateway Academy to open a sixth form in 2009. Planned provision is limited to vocational programmes in engineering but provision will be expanding as the Academy develops. There are also plans for a sixth form to open at Gable Hall School in 2009 following the achievement of sixth form presumption status in 2007.
- There are nine other 11-16 schools

Southend on Sea

- South East Essex College of Arts and Technology – Grade 2 (Good) (2008)
- There are ten 11-18 schools in the Southend Area
 - Shoeburyness High School (Shoeburyness) – Ofsted Grade 3 (Satisfactory) (January 2007)
 - Southend High School for Girls (Southend-on-sea) – Ofsted Grade 1 (Outstanding) (January 2007)
 - Cecil Jones College (Southend-on-sea) – Ofsted Grade 2 (Good) (June 2007)
 - Southend High School for Boys (Southend-on-Sea) – Ofsted Grade 1 (Outstanding) (February 2006)
 - St Bernard’s High School and Arts College (Westcliff-on-Sea) – Ofsted Grade 2 (Good) (October 2006)
 - Chase High School – Fresh start school with sixth form delivering vocational 16-18 provision from September 2008.
 - St Thomas More School (Westcliff-on-sea) - Ofsted Grade 2 (Good) (September 2008)
 - Westcliff High School for Girls (Westcliff-on-sea) – Ofsted Grade 1 (Outstanding) (February 2008)
 - Westcliff High School for Boys (Westcliff –on –sea) - Ofsted Grade 1 (Outstanding) (November 2007)
 - Eastwood School (Leigh-on-Sea) - Ofsted Grade 3 (Satisfactory) (December 2007)
 - Belfairs School (Leigh-on-Sea) – Ofsted Grade 3 (Satisfactory) (November 2006)
- There is currently one designated 11-18 school which only offers provision to 11-16 year olds. Plans are proposed for this school to open a sixth form in the future.

Basildon, Thurrock and Southend

- NOVA - Work based learning Consortium consisting of 15 providers operating across Southend, Basildon, Castle Point, Rochford and Thurrock. Ofsted Grade 2 (Good) with a number of outstanding features (July 2008). SEEC is the lead for the NOVA Consortium. T&B and SEEVIC College are also members of the NOVA Consortium.
- SEETEC – Work Based Learning provider - Ofsted Grade 2 (Good) (July 2007)
- Thames Gateway Train to Gain Consortium – operating across Southend, Rochford, Castle Point, Basildon and Thurrock. Ofsted Grade 2 (Good) (July 2008). SEEC is the led for the Consortia and T&B is also a member of the consortium.

7. The Proposal

The proposal is to establish a joint institution by merging the existing colleges of Thurrock & Basildon College and South East Essex College of Arts and Technology. This would be achieved by the dissolution of Thurrock & Basildon College Corporation under section 27 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and the transfer of its respective property, rights and liabilities to South East Essex College of Arts and Technology. This is known as a Type B merger.

The governing body of South East Essex College of Arts and Technology is separately proposing to the Secretary of State that the name of the College be changed to reflect the changed nature of the institution. The new name proposed is South Essex College of Further and Higher Education. It is proposed that each campus will also be referenced in the title, for example South Essex College of Further and Higher Education in Thurrock. It is anticipated that the new name will attract more people into both Further and Higher Education and raise aspirations by providing greater opportunities / progression routes.

The initial outline proposal states *'the two colleges are clear that the primary driver of the proposed merger is the educational benefits that will accrue as a result of bringing the two colleges together'*. It is believed that by bringing the two organisations together there will be added value and synergies retaining the best features of both organisations for the benefit of learners in the area. The reorganisation will minimise curriculum overlap and provide greater choice and progression routes and opportunities.

8. Vision and objectives for the merged College

The strategic vision for the merged college is *'to transform the education and skills landscape of South Essex for the benefit of young people, adults and employers'* (Initial Outline Proposal).

The vision is for the merged college to be an outstanding college within 3 years.

The colleges have considered the proposal in the context of the *'ambitious and radical change and regeneration planned for the area'*. *'The merged college will play a key role in raising education participation and attainment and meeting the skills needs of employers and industry in the Region and sees its capacity to undertake this role in full is stronger than if the two colleges remained separate entities'* (Initial Outline Proposal).

The colleges have identified five key messages on which the merger is based:

1. More choice: to provide more opportunities for education, training and skills
2. Higher quality provision for all: the merged college is committed to be outstanding. It will focus on meeting needs and improving the quality of learning and teaching
3. More specialist expertise available: the merger will combine resources, specialist education and training expertise; opening new learning and career opportunities.
4. A more coherent and comprehensive curriculum offer: providing clear pathways for progression to HE and employment.

5. Increasing participation and strengthening the skills base to help regeneration in South Essex: the merged college will aim to increase participation and strengthen the skills base.

The colleges state that the merged college will plan strategically around five key priorities linked to the Framework for Excellence:

1. Learner success
2. Raising aspirations and participation
3. Meeting skill and community needs
4. A 21st Century learning environment
5. Working in effective teams and partnerships

The colleges are proposing the following key educational and business objectives for the merged college:

- To grow learner numbers and participation; reducing outward migration in Basildon and Thurrock, improving retention and reducing low skill levels.
- To raise the standard of provision and achievement
- To provide learners and employers with more choice and opportunities by increasing provision and developing progression routes across all subject sector areas. This will also include increasing Apprenticeships and Train to Gain
- To respond to and be driven by the needs of the local and regional economy providing a unified voice to employers
- To further develop links with Higher Education and increase pathways and progression into Higher Education
- To support the development of National Skills Academies in retail, creative and cultural skills and financial services and manufacturing and support the development of an initiative for a new skills academy around logistics
- To further develop strong partnerships with other post 16 providers in the Thames Gateway area and bring a unified voice to sub regional 14-19 planning
- To improve information, advice and guidance services
- To achieve a scale of operation which will give the merged college long term resilience and the capacity to develop the curriculum and invest for the future.

9. Governance and Management

Both Colleges have developed the proposal to merge. The colleges have formed a joint merger steering group to plan and manage the process. This group has equal membership from both colleges and meets regularly to plan and discuss the proposal and its implementation. This group has overseen the feasibility study and initial outline proposal which has led to this consultation stage. The joint merger steering group reports to the corporation of each college.

It is proposed that the corporation of Thurrock & Basildon College will dissolve. The corporation of SEEC will increase its current membership to reflect and represent the interest of Thurrock, Basildon and Southend and the wider remit of the merged college. This will be achieved by inviting representatives from the former Thurrock & Basildon College Corporation to join the expanded South East Essex College Corporation. Membership will be increased to ensure skills, experience and

expertise are harnessed. It is proposed that the current Chair of the Corporation of South East Essex College will continue to be the Chair and lead the Corporation of the merged college with the chair of Thurrock & Basildon College being a member of the corporation.

It is proposed that the merged college corporation will have the following sub groups:

- Policy and Resources
- Audit
- Remuneration
- Search

An academic board will meet twice yearly to report to the corporation on all academic and organisational performance matters.

A Joint Merger Senior Management Group has been set up to assist in planning and preparing for the proposed merger. This group will oversee the Strategic Management Group that will operationally manage the process of the proposed merger.

A proposed management structure has been outlined to support the locations and full range of functions of the merged college which is being developed. It is proposed that the current Principal and Chief Executive of South East Essex College will be the Principal and Chief Executive of the proposed merged college accountable to the corporation for the leadership and management of the college. Plans are in place to focus additional resources to manage HR going through the merger, if approved.

10. Curriculum

The proposal for the merged college is to *'provide local learning experiences for local learners, at least up to level 2, in most sector areas whilst allowing greater flexibility and the opportunity to specialise at level 3 and above'* (Initial Outline Proposal). The merged college with its integration into the consortia of the recent 16-19 competitions will improve opportunities, learner choice and access. A complementary curriculum will open up more pathways and choice for learners and will optimise the sharing of good practice between the two colleges. The plans are to ensure that learners have increased choices as the colleges deliver more curriculum pathways across more subject sector areas.

The aim will be to ensure a coherent, collaborative and complementary curriculum offer across South Essex for the benefit of learners and employers.

11. Consultation

The Learning and Skills Council Essex is now formally consulting on the proposed merger of Thurrock & Basildon College and South East Essex College of Arts and Technology. The consultation will run for a period of six weeks closing on the 29th May 2009. All responses should be sent to the Learning and Skills Council Essex and will be copied to both colleges.

The East of England Regional Learning and Skills Council will consider the responses to consultation, due diligence and full proposal from the colleges. The full proposal will be considered against the Department for Innovation, Universities and

Skills (DIUS) Criteria published in FE Colleges: Models for Success in August 2008 set out in Appendix E. The Council will make a decision on whether the proposal should proceed in light of the evaluation against the criteria and if content recommend the proposal to the Secretary of State.

The final decision on the proposal to merge will be made by the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills. The proposed date for the merger to take effect is the 1st January 2010.

Responses are invited by 29th May 2009 to the proposal set out in the

- Consultation Document
- Statutory Draft Proposal and
- Statutory Summary of the Draft Proposal

Please could comments be provided on the attached document at Appendix D

Responses should be in writing and posted to

Terry Collin
Partnership Director
Learning and Skills Council Essex
Redwing House
Hedgerows Business Park
Colchester Road
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 5PB

Information is also available on the LSC website
www.lsc.gov.uk/regions/eastofengland/whatwedo

The final date for receipt of comments is 5pm 29th May 2009.

Appendix A

A following is a summary of the stakeholders that will be included in the consultation process:

- 14-19 Area Planning Groups
- Association of Colleges
- Association of Learning Providers
- Awarding Bodies
- Business Link
- Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS)
- Department for Children Schools and Families
- Federation of Essex Colleges
- Higher Education Funding Council for England
- Job Centre Plus
- Local Authorities / District Councils
- Local Adult Community Colleges
- Local Councillors
- Local Employers
- Local Further Education Colleges
- Local Learning Partnerships / Local Strategic Partnerships
- Local Members of Parliament
- Local Schools
- Local Training Providers
- National Union of Students (NUS)
- Ofsted
- Regional Development Agencies
- Sector Skills Councils
- Sixth Form College Forum
- Teaching and Staff Unions
- Voluntary organisations
- Universities

Appendix B

Statutory Draft Proposal

DRAFT PROPOSAL UNDER SECTION 51 (1) (C) OF THE FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION ACT 1992 (THE ACT) FOR THE DISSOLUTION OF THE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION OF THURROCK & BASILDON COLLEGE UNDER SECTION 27 OF THE ACT

NAME OF THE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION AND INSTITUTION:

Thurrock & Basildon College

ADDRESS: Woodview Campus
Grays
Essex
RM16 2YR

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE EDUCATION PROVIDED AND THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS AT THE INSTITUTION:

Thurrock & Basildon College has campuses located in the local authority areas of Thurrock Council and Essex County Council in the area of Essex Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The college's two main sites are located in Basildon approximately 0.4 mile from the town centre and Grays approximately 2 miles from the town centre. The college has learning centres in Eastgate Shopping Centre (Basildon), Lakeside Retail Park (Thurrock) and Canvey Island. During 2007/08 the college had 2,114 learners aged 16-18 of which 79% were full time and 2,874 learners aged 19 or over of which 91% were part time, a total of 4,988. The College offers full and part time vocational courses and training across all subject sector areas. The college has two Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE's) in Logistics & Transport and in Electrical Installation and Electrical & Electronic Engineering (in partnership with Chelmsford College). The College is a partner of the NoVA Consortium delivering Apprenticeships and the Thames Gateway Train to Gain Consortium.

REASON FOR PROPOSING DISSOLUTION OF THE CORPORATION:

The governing body of Thurrock & Basildon College is proposing to merge with South East Essex College of Arts and Technology. This would be achieved by the dissolution of the existing further education corporation of Thurrock & Basildon College and the transfer of its property, rights and liabilities to the further education corporation of South East Essex College of Arts and Technology.

The governing body of South East Essex College of Arts and Technology is separately proposing to the Secretary of State that the name of that College be changed to reflect the changed nature of the institution. The new name proposed is South Essex College of Further and Higher Education.

The principle benefits advanced by the governors of the colleges in support of the proposal are:

- To grow learner numbers and participation reducing outward migration in Basildon and Thurrock, improving retention and reducing low skill levels.
- To raise the standard of provision and achievement

- To provide learners and employers with more choice and opportunities by increasing provision and developing progression routes across all subject sector areas. This will also include increasing Apprenticeships and Train to Gain.
- To respond to and be driven by the needs of local and regional economy providing a unified voice to employers
- To further develop links with Higher Education and increase pathways and progression into Higher Education.
- To support the development of National Skills Academies in retail, creative and cultural skills, financial services and manufacturing and support the development of an initiative for a new skills academy around logistics.
- To further develop strong partnership with other post 16 providers in the Thames Gateway area and bring a unified voice to sub regional 14-19 planning
- To improve Information, advice and guidance services
- To achieve a scale of operation which will give the merged college long term resilience and the capacity to develop the curriculum and invest for the future.

The Learning and Skills Council will consider the proposal in light of the Department for Innovation, University and Skills (DIUS) Criteria shown below

- the proposal is likely to address the needs of learners and employers
- the proposal is likely to increase opportunities for the learner to exercise choice and encourage diversity in the education and training available.
- the proposal is likely to increase local participation rates and result in improved quality and success
- the proposal is likely to develop innovation and improve access to learning for the community
- the proposal ensures the embedding of all aspects of equality and diversity
- the proposal is likely to promote effective community cohesion through community presence and reputation within governance structures; and
- the proposal

DATE PROPOSED FOR THE DISSOLUTION OF THE CORPORATION:

1st January 2010

EDUCATIONAL PROVISION TO BE MADE FOR THOSE STUDENTS WHO HAVE NOT COMPLETED THEIR COURSES ON THAT DATE:

Provision will be made for those students at Thurrock and Basildon College who have not completed their courses by the date of the dissolution to complete their courses at the joint institution.

Appendix C

Statutory Summary of the Draft Proposal (Notice)

FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION ACT 1992

THE LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL

Thurrock & Basildon College,
Woodview, Grays, Essex RM16 2YR

The Learning and Skills Council (the Council) hereby gives notice in accordance with the provisions of section 51 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (the Act) of the draft proposal that the Secretary of State under Section 27 of that Act should by order provide for the dissolution of the further education corporation of **Thurrock & Basildon College** and the transfer of the property, rights and liabilities of that corporation.

Dissolution of the corporation is proposed, at the request of the corporation of **Thurrock & Basildon College**, in order that the college may form a joint institution with **South East Essex College of Arts and Technology**. It is proposed that the property, rights and liabilities of the corporation should be transferred to the corporation of **South East Essex College of Arts and Technology**.

The date proposed for the establishment of the corporation is 1st January 2010

The governing body of South East Essex College of Arts and Technology is separately proposing to the Secretary of State that the name of that college be changed to South Essex College of Further and Higher Education to reflect the changed nature of the institution.

Provision will be made for all students at Thurrock & Basildon College who have not completed their courses of study by the date of the proposed dissolution to complete their studies under the joint institution.

A copy of the consultation documentation is available free of charge from the council and will be sent to any person who requests it.

In accordance with the provisions of Section 51 of the Act, representations may be made to the Council by 5pm on 29th May 2009. Representations should be made in writing to:

Terry Collin
Partnership Director,
Learning and Skills Council, Essex
Redwing House, Hedgerows Business Park, Colchester Road,
Chelmsford, CM2 5PB
www.lsc.gov.uk/regions/eastofengland/whatwedo

Date of publication: 14th April 2009

Signed:



Janice Logie
Area Director, Learning and Skills Council, Essex

Appendix D

Consultation Response Pro-forma

Responses are invited by 29th May 2009 to the consultation document on the proposed reorganisation of Thurrock & Basildon College with South East Essex College of Arts and Technology

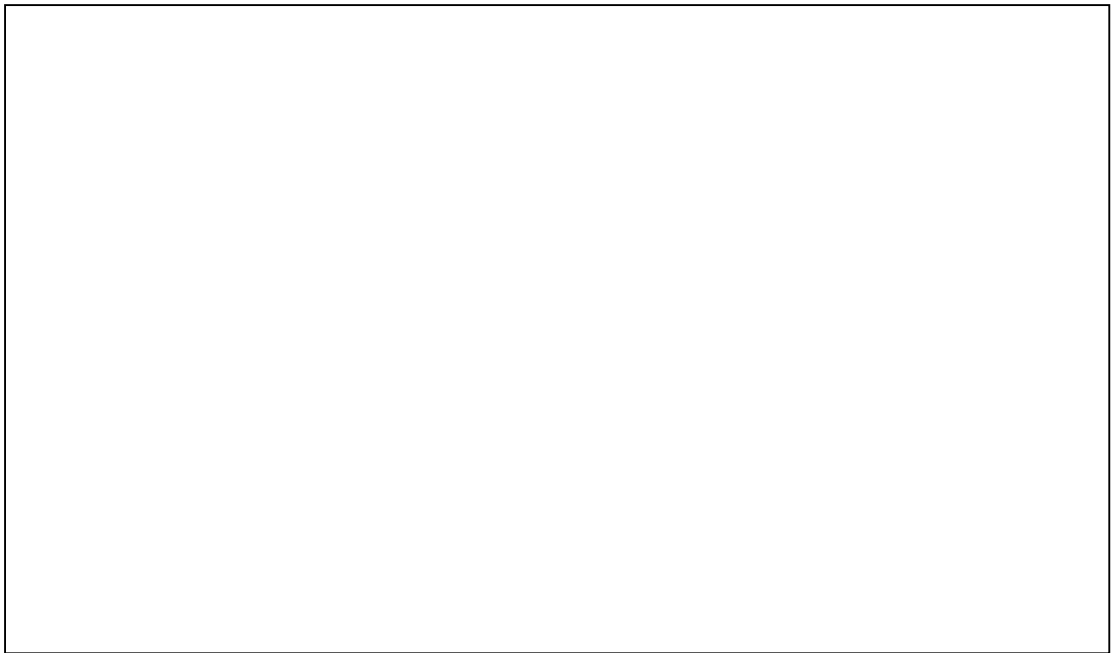
Please provide your comments in the appropriate space below and append additional sheets as necessary. Please indicate whether your comments are directed to the colleges involved, to the Learning and Skills Council or to all parties, in order that the appropriate party may respond where necessary.

Please note all responses will be considered both by the colleges and the Learning and Skills Council

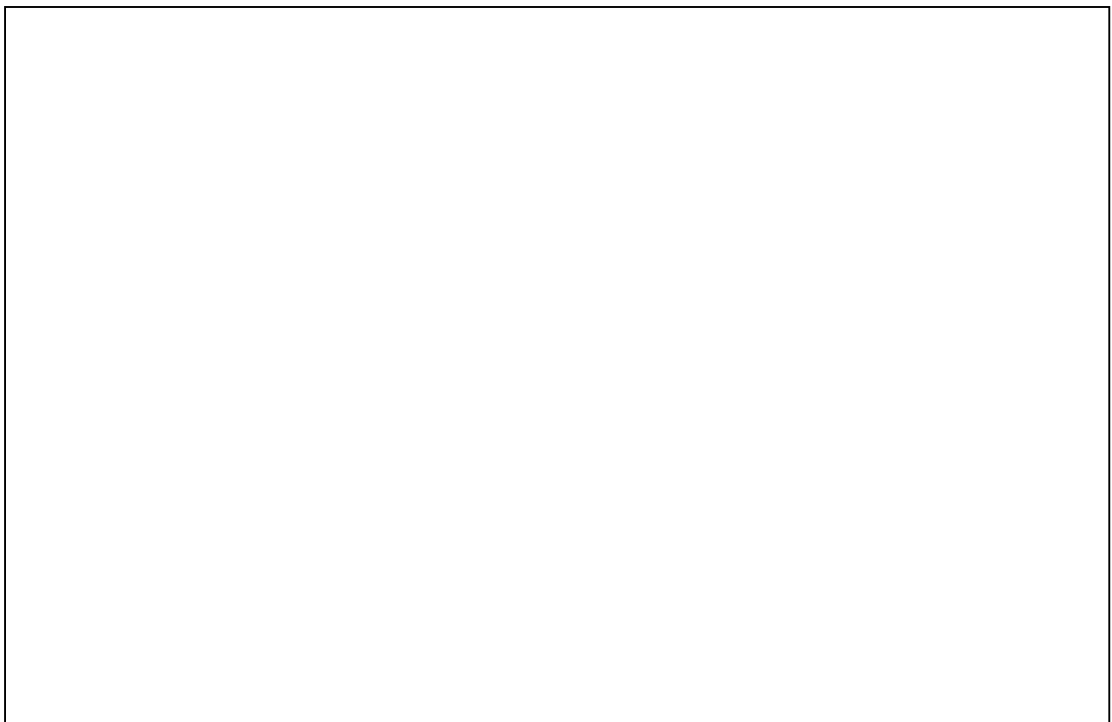
Comments on the objectives of the merger proposal

Comments on any potential impact on learners arising from the merger proposal

Comments on any curriculum issues arising from the merger proposal

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for providing comments on curriculum issues arising from the merger proposal.

Comments on any governance, management or resource issues arising from the merger proposal

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for providing comments on governance, management or resource issues arising from the merger proposal.

Proposed name change. Please indicate your support for the proposed name or suggest another.

South Essex College of Further and Higher Education

Other Suggestions

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.....
.....
.....

Any other relevant comments

The above comments are directed to:

- Thurrock & Basildon College and South East Essex College of Arts and Technology
- Learning and Skills Council
- Thurrock & Basildon College, South East Essex College of Arts and Technology and the Learning and Skills Council

Name:
Organisation: (If applicable).....
.....
Address:
.....
.....
Signature:
.....
Date:

Please return this document to:

**Terry Collin
Partnership Director,
Learning and Skills Council, Essex,
Redwing House,
Hedgerows Business Park,
Colchester Road,
Chelmsford,
Essex, CM2 5PB**

Deadline Date: 5.00pm on 29th May 2009

Appendix E

MERGER CRITERIA FOR FE COLLEGES – August 2008

Criterion	Coverage of assessment for criteria (where relevant)	Evaluation – what are we looking for?
<p>1. The proposal is likely to address the needs of learners and employers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of learner and employer need in the locality • Consideration of needs identified in local authority 14-19 plan overall and specifically <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Diploma developments ○ School partnerships/vocational pathway developments • Consideration of relevant employer research/presence • Development of employer engagement • Site expansion • Programme development at different locations and different levels • HE strategy • OLASS • Relevant research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear interlinking with local authority 14-19 plan, including collaboration to deliver eg, Diplomas, provision to prevent/reduce young people from becoming NEET • Clear analysis of employer presence in the locality – and understanding of education and training levels required by employers • Plans to develop on any new sites – to reach which communities and with what programmes? • Planned expansion of or into HE delivery – collaborative links with Universities or HEIs • Current and planned involvement in OLASS delivery • What partnerships are under development with relevant local third sector organisations?

Criterion	Coverage of assessment for criteria (where relevant)	Evaluation – what are we looking for?
<p>2. The proposal is likely to increase opportunity for the learner to exercise choice and encourage diversity in the education and training available</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear mapping of existing provision, • Evidence of impact of proposed changes elsewhere within FE or schools sector • Curriculum plans • Capital plans • Transport plans – Travel to Learn analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the proposals complement and/or duplicate provision available in the locality? • Does the proposal offer a different style of delivery (in comparison to existing offer, for example within school sixth form/sixth form centre/GFE environment) • Does the proposal offer different programmes within similar subject areas? (academic and vocationally based options within programme areas) • Does the transport infrastructure/travel to learn planning support the proposed developments and facilitate learner choice? • Does the proposal offer a choice of attendance pattern? (full time/part-time/distance learning)

Criterion	Coverage of assessment for criteria (where relevant)	Evaluation – what are we looking for?
<p>3. The proposal is likely to increase local participation rates and result in improved quality and success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans to engage new and existing learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 16-18 ○ Adults ○ Employers/T2G • Current inspection profiles • Any relevant area, local authority or themed inspection reports • Quality strategy post-merger (enrolments, quality of delivery, performance against minimum levels of performance, framework for excellence, success rates, progression routes, outcomes etc) • Achievement of standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Training Quality Standard ○ Beacons ○ CoVEs ○ Others • Major capital rebuild/relocation providing better quality facilities • Engagement/joint planning with Connexions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will new learners be bought into the system? • What analysis is there of achievement rates on leaving school, level 2 or 3 at 19, NEET group etc.. What are the priority groups for the merged college – how will their needs be met (curriculum plans, location plans etc)? • Analysis of current inspection profiles – how do the cross-college strengths complement each other? How will they build on curriculum area strengths? How will the joint quality strategy, post-merger, move the college forward? What is the capacity to improve? What are their ambitions and is there a realistic plan in place to reach those ambitions whilst addressing any areas of weakness? What strategies are there to address any gaps/mismatch in MLP of FfE? • What quality marks do each of the college’s currently have? How will they build those strengths into the merged college – what are their ambitions to achieve new standards? • How will the merged college work with local community groups to support the engagement of new learners?

Criterion	Coverage of assessment for criteria (where relevant)	Evaluation – what are we looking for?
<p>4. The proposal is likely to develop innovation and improve access to learning for the community</p>	<p>Group response separately in terms of 14-19, adults and employers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • current offer – programme areas, levels, mode of delivery etc • changes post-merger <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New and discontinued programme areas ○ New and discontinued locations of delivery ○ New and discontinued delivery partnerships • reshaping style of provision offer – creation or removal of sixth form centres or adult/community centres • capital developments supporting innovation • impact assessment of changes on other post-16 providers in the locality in terms of reduction/increase in choice, impact on recruitment, collaborative planning etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a clear definition of the community the college will serve post-merger? • Is there a clear identification of areas within the community where participation is low, and an analysis of what is needed to upskill? • How will the college use innovation to meet community needs? • Bring out the community impact for each element of proposed change and clarify opportunities for increased participation, where discontinuation is to address duplication, and where it is a removal of provision completely, what evidence underpins all these decisions • Are there any plans for collaborative working, with other providers or voluntary/community groups, to support access to new provision? • What is the capital plan for the merged college? If it involves relocation, why has the new site been selected – what community impact will it have? Where any major capital injection is planned, what opportunities for innovation will it bring? How will this enable the learning delivery to change? What impact will it have on the learner? Will there be infrastructural savings (eg maintenance, running costs etc)? • Plans should not be detrimental to other post-16 providers. What new collaborative arrangements will support existing post-16 networks – or what networks are planned? Are there any academies, competitions or presumptions that will impact on the FE proposals?

Criterion	Coverage of assessment for criteria (where relevant)	Evaluation – what are we looking for?
<p>5. The proposal ensures the embedding of all aspects of equality and diversity</p>	<p>Full E&D impact assessment (if identified by initial screening) Targets for priority groups demonstrating improved access to provision for under-represented or under-achieving groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities • young people (Raising of Participation age/NEETS) • adults without I2 or I3 • Skills for Life • specific local issues? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the outcomes of the EIA – does it have a differential or adverse impact on different groups of existing and potential learners? And on areas of the community? • What is the proposed impact on specific local issues? • How have the colleges taken account of the learner voice in planning for the merged college? And how will this be continued post-merger? • Are voluntary and community groups engaged/collaborating to support learner engagements? • Does the capital plan, and plans for programme delivery, have clear strategies for increasing accessibility of programmes? • Has the curriculum review identified areas where the college could improve its programme offer in terms of equality and diversity?

Criterion	Coverage of assessment for criteria (where relevant)	Evaluation – what are we looking for?
<p>6. The proposal is likely to promote effective community cohesion through community presence and representation within governance structures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access for deprived communities to improve participation • Local branding • Capital development • Provision targeting • Model B – how the governance structure will be amended to effectively represent the new communities it will serve • Model A – details of recruitment (appropriate search committee, criteria for selection, processes etc) to ensure appropriate representation of the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the proposals target under-represented groups? By programme and/or location of delivery? • What will any capital developments bring in terms of community opportunities? • Has the corporation considered the outcomes of legal due diligence and taken account of any relevant recommendations in the development or revisions to existing governance structures? • Is the voice of the community (as redefined by the merger) effectively represented on both the governing body, and within college governance structures? • Is there a clear marketing strategy, with engagement from local stakeholders, to ensure there is clear branding (as required) for separate sites of the provision post-merger?
<p>7. The proposal is likely to provide better value for money</p>	<p>Evaluation of affordability, cost effectiveness and viability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economies/efficiencies of scale • current and forecasted financial health • capital developments bringing higher levels of cost-effectiveness • reduction of duplication • exceptional funding required to support the merger proposal • evaluation of financial Due Diligence report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If one partner currently has poor financial health, how will improvements be supported? • Are all merger costs clearly identified and has all appropriate support been sought, approved and planned? • What issues are brought out by the Due Diligence report? How will the merged corporation address these? • What cost savings are identified post-merger – are they realistic? Do they have any side-effects?