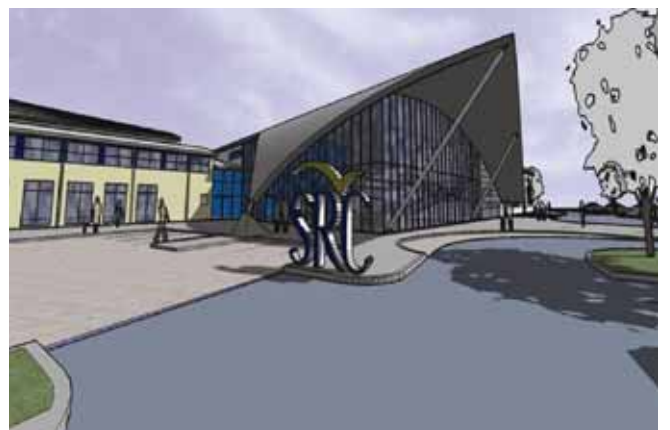


Consultation Document

for a merger between
Bede Sixth Form College
and Stockton Riverside College



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1. Introduction

This consultation document sets out the background and rationale for a proposal from Bede Sixth Form College and Stockton Riverside College that they should merge to form a single institution. The proposed merger, initiated by Bede College, would lead to the dissolution of Bede College Corporation and its incorporation by the larger Stockton Riverside College, with the property, rights and liabilities of Bede College transferring to Stockton Riverside College, which will maintain and develop Bede College's provision.

It is intended that the name of the continuing Corporation should remain as Stockton Riverside College.

Any merger proposal will require the formal approval of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) before it can be sent to the Secretary of State for a decision.

The Learning and Skills Council will consider the results of this consultation, due diligence studies, and the full merger proposal from the Colleges at a meeting of the LSC Council in January 2008.

There is a statutory requirement that proposals are subject to a consultation period of at least one month. A list of organisations being consulted is shown in Appendix A and the Statutory Draft Proposal and the Statutory Summary of the Draft Proposal are shown in Appendix B.

The criteria against which the LSC will judge the proposal are set out in Appendix B. The LSC will then decide whether to forward a merger proposal to the Secretary of State for his determination.

Your comments on the merger proposal and any information contained in this document are welcomed. It will be helpful if they are made on the pro forma attached at Appendix C.

Responses should be posted to:

Val Goodrum
Partnership Director - Stockton
Learning and Skills Council
Wynyard Park House
Wynyard
Billingham
TS22 5TB

Formal consultation on the proposed merger between Bede Sixth Form College and Stockton Riverside College commences 28 September, with a closing date for comments on 5 November 2007.

All responses will be acknowledged by the LSC Tees Valley.

Following this consultation, the LSC Tees Valley will consider the results alongside the outcomes of the due diligence reports, and the full proposal at their Council meeting in January 2008. It will consider the proposal against the nationally determined criteria set out in Appendix B. At that stage, it may be decided to support the merger and forward the proposal to the Secretary of State. Alternatively, they could choose to seek a revised proposal, which may require further formal consultation, or choose not to support the proposed merger.

We Welcome Your Views

2. Executive Summary

The full merger proposal is based on the voluntary commitment to merger, subject to satisfactory completion of the preparatory stages, of both colleges. The merger has been considered in detail by the respective Corporations who both fully support the recommendation. The proposed merger is being promoted by both colleges with equal enthusiasm and with strong local support from stakeholders. The Initial Outline Proposal was approved by both Corporations and by the LSC in September 2007.

There are valid drivers and a clear rationale for this merger to take place. The merger will create a stronger college, more able to respond to the falling demographic profile for 16-18 year olds in the medium to long term. It will secure the future of delivery on the Bede Sixth Form College campus and will re-establish a base for Stockton Riverside College in Billingham and a platform for strengthening and enhancing links with employers and the community. The mix of vocational provision and A levels, planned for the Bede Sixth Form College campus is responsive to the 14-19 agenda developments and new pathways for study and progression will be opened up.

Overall the merger of the two organisations will secure the future of sixth form provision in Billingham and reinforce the partnership approach to delivering learning in Billingham for the benefit of future learners.

The merger is being taken forward in such a way that it recognises the heritage of Bede Sixth Form College and preserves the sixth form brand.

The Type B merger will enable the financial support to be found for a new campus to be built in Billingham which otherwise could not happen. Stockton Riverside's increased financial commitment to the new build project will be balanced by the transfer of assets from Bede Sixth Form College as part of the merger. In parallel with developing a new campus in Billingham, Stockton Riverside College will rationalise its estate and enhance facilities on the campus in Stockton thus providing two centres of excellence for Stockton and Billingham learners.

In addition to all of these benefits it is planned that learners in Billingham will gain a new state of the art facility with an improved environment for learning and full access for learners with physical disabilities. This, combined with the sharing of best practice across the new organisation, will help increase participation and improve quality and standards even further.

The current curriculum of Bede Sixth Form College will continue and be enhanced through the delivery of vocational courses in Film and Television and E media creating a centre of excellence for media in Billingham. In total the numbers of full time 16 – 18 year old learners at Bede Sixth Form College will increase from Full Time Equivalent (FTE's) 433 to 775 FTEs through the transfer of vocational learners from Stockton Riverside College to Bede Sixth Form College. The strategic planning of post 16 developments in Stockton and the Tees Valley will continue to take place in partnership through the different forums that already exist and which are in place to avoid competition and wasteful duplication.

The current Principal of Bede Sixth Form College will continue to lead developments at Bede Sixth Form College whilst the Principal of Stockton Riverside College will head up the newly merged organisation. The governing bodies of both Corporations intend to merge and work is already well underway with regard to joint planning across all aspects of governance and management.

Continuity of staffing is achievable in the merger due to the complementarity of the curriculum. Bede Sixth Form College Staff will transfer to Stockton Riverside's staffing establishment under Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulation 2006 (TUPE) legislation.

The case for merger is felt to meet the criteria under which proposals for re-organisation are judged in that:-

- the proposal is likely to extend participation, learning and training
- the proposal is likely to result in raised learner achievement
- the proposal is likely to result in raised standards of education and training delivered
- the proposal is likely to address over or under provision in an area
- adequate consultation has been undertaken and proper consideration has been given alternative options
- the proposal is financially viable, affordable, cost-effective and successfully managed
- the proposal is consistent with any area-wide inspection report published

3. Context

The proposal acknowledges the realisation by Bede Sixth Form College that the funding opportunities are not available in the medium term to allow the college to grow as an independent organisation. Quite simply, the college, on its own, no longer has the environment and the critical mass required to be able to identify and allocate resources towards improving the breadth and quality of the local learner experience.

In March 2007 an Options Appraisal was commissioned by Bede Sixth Form College. It considered 5 options in relation to securing its future. The report's concluding recommendation was that discussions should take place with regard to a merger between Bede Sixth Form College and Stockton Riverside College. This recommendation has been considered and accepted by both college Corporations and a feasibility study has been undertaken which identified valid drivers and a clear rationale for this merger to take place.

As the largest provider of FE in Stockton-on-Tees, Stockton Riverside College is well placed to take a lead in reshaping FE provision in the region in support of current national and regional strategy and intent.

4. Justification for the Re-organisation

The new merged college will provide learners with enhanced opportunities at post-14 in both vocational and academic pathways, in "state-of-the-art" premises that are fit for the needs of 21st century learning.

By bringing these two organisations together, it is believed that an even stronger organisation can be created, which will retain the best features of the individual institutions, but also bring added value and synergies for the benefits of learners and employers in the region. In addition, merger would rationalise existing curriculum overlap between the two colleges and support greater coherence and progression opportunities. It will enhance capacity and capability for delivering the new Diplomas and open up new pathways for study and progression. The merger will provide facilities for Stockton and Billingham learners equal to those planned in neighbouring areas.

The key rationale for the proposed merger of the two colleges is to achieve developmental growth together with a theme of harmonisation of services and support. One of the key drivers towards the success of the merged college is to produce a more streamlined, efficient operation, able to release increasing resources to effect further improvements in quality, participation and learner outcomes.

In addition to all of these benefits it is planned that learners in Billingham will gain a new state of the art facility with an improved environment for learning and full access for learners with physical disabilities. This, combined with the sharing of best practice across the new organisation, will help increase participation and improve quality and standards even further.

The college is mindful that other new builds in the post 16 sector are planned in the area including at Stockton Sixth Form College, and in Hartlepool and Middlesbrough. Without the capital developments for Stockton and Billingham proposed in this merger Stockton Riverside College believes that there would be increased outward migration of local learners, jeopardising the future for comprehensive post 16 learning provision locally.

Included in the overarching goals for the amalgamated college is a continuing need to widen and increase participation and a strong recognition of its community role. However, the college will be mindful of the curriculum offer of other existing providers and will seek to operate in a spirit of collaboration and partnership in the best interests of its learners and further development of the learner voice. Effective links with its local schools will remain a priority and the merged colleges propose to continue to be represented on the Stockton Head teachers and Principals Group and the 14 – 19 Stockton Partnership.

5. Background of the Institutions

Bede Sixth Form College, Billingham

Bede Sixth Form College, situated in the north east of Billingham town centre, is the smallest sixth form college in England. It serves a geographic area centred on Billingham which is on the northern outskirts of the borough of Stockton-on-Tees. In addition to Bede Sixth Form College, post-16 education and training is provided in the borough by Stockton Riverside College, Stockton Sixth Form College, two 11-18 schools, and two independent 11-18 schools. In 2006, the proportion of pupils in the borough gaining five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grades A*-C including English and Mathematics was 41.2%, compared to the national average of 45.8%.

Bede Sixth Form College's mission statement is:

'For those who choose Bede Sixth Form, the college aims to provide a quality learning environment which supports every individual's unique needs'

Bede Sixth Form College offers provision in 12 of the 15 QCA subject/sector areas. It offers 29 General Certificate of Education (GCE) subjects at Advanced Subsidiary level (AS) and Advanced level (A level) and two vocational courses at both intermediate and advanced level. The majority of students are aged 16-18 and study at level 3.

The broad range of GCE AS and A levels and the small number of appropriate vocational courses meet the needs of most learners who enrol at Bede Sixth Form College. Open University modules are available to provide a challenge for more able learners. The timetable is structured to allow the majority of learners to follow their chosen combination of subjects. Learners on vocational courses are provided with relevant work experience. A good range of subject enrichment is provided and learners are provided with good opportunities to make a positive contribution to their community through fundraising for charity, volunteering and assisting with local cultural events.

In 2006 success, retention and pass rates on long courses for learners aged 16-18 were around the national average for similar colleges.

Strengths of Bede Sixth Form College are high success rates at GCE A level and key skills, effective partnership working with schools and the local community, a caring and welcoming college environment and a good range of opportunities to help learners make a positive contribution.

Stockton Riverside College, Stockton-on-Tees

Stockton Riverside College is an ambitious, forward-looking, values driven and dynamic college which endeavours to be innovative and inclusive in meeting the complex needs and demands of its learner communities. The college is dedicated to delivering high quality provision and meeting or exceeding national educational and occupational standards in preparing learners for employment, enterprise, higher education, independent living or enhanced lifestyles.

Its key objectives are:

- To enable and empower learners to realise their potential and achieve success
- To promote and sustain excellence
- To develop and practice commitment to social responsibility and to be an inclusive and flexible institution
- To develop and sustain internal and external relationships based on trust and integrity
- To provide strategies for innovation, enterprise and skills development
- To provide a safe, welcoming, stimulating and engaging environment for students, staff and visitors
- To maintain the financial viability of the college

Having successfully increased student numbers by 30% since 2001 the college has demonstrated its capacity to successfully achieve and sustain growth and wishes to continue to respond to and support learner needs in the area in line with its key strategic aim to "Achieve responsive and sustainable growth".

The College opened a new campus (on time and on budget) in 2003, they augmented this facility with an additional 2,500 m² new build in 2006 (also on time and on budget).

At the time of inspection in May 2006 there were 2,404 learners aged 16 to 18 and 7,530 adult learners on courses leading to externally accredited qualifications. Around 224 learners aged 14 to 16 from local secondary schools were following a vocational course at the college. The college offers a small apprenticeship programme and runs E2E and Train to Gain programmes. Nearly 400 pupils are benefiting from the Increased Flexibility programme, including 30-40 pupils who access college provision through individual referrals. The college offers a wide range of qualifications at entry/foundation, intermediate and advanced levels – including NVQs, first, national and higher certificates/diplomas, accredited specialist courses and a range of subjects at GCSE, AVCE and GCE Advanced level. The majority of learners are enrolled on entry level, level 1 and level 2 courses with around 21% of full-time equivalent learners on level 3 or higher.

Stockton Riverside College is committed to the strategy of local HE for local people and works in partnership with two universities to deliver a range of higher education courses including Foundation Degrees and Teacher Education qualifications to over 290 learners. The college has a detailed HE Development Plan outlining its plans to 2012.

Courses are offered in 13 of the 15 QCA Subject and Sector Areas and broad curriculum areas include Performing Arts, Early Years and Childcare, Health and Social Care, Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy, Computing and ICT, Administration and Secretarial, Business and Management, Media, Hospitality and Catering, Public Services and Pre-Uniformed Services, Leisure and Tourism, Technology, Humanities and Social Studies, Electrical Installation, PC Technology and Networking, Holistic Therapy, Sports and Recreation, Skills for Life, personal development programmes and European and community work experience. The provision is responsive within a framework of local and national LSC and RDA strategic priorities and takes into account local social, economic and cultural needs, demands and expectations.

The college has a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status for Performing Arts. It is one of the only two CoVEs nationally within this area of further education provision. The college is continuing to develop its areas of specialism across its three CoVEs:

- Performing Arts
- Early Years and Childcare (in partnership with North Tyneside and Bishop Auckland colleges)
- Adult Social Care (in partnership with Middlesbrough and Bishop Auckland colleges)

6. Other Post 16 Providers

Stockton-on-Tees has the following Post 16 education and training providers:-

Stockton Sixth Form College is located in the borough of Stockton-on-Tees on a single site around two miles from the centre of Stockton. It primarily provides courses for learners aged 16 to 18, the majority of whom enrol on advanced level courses. The largest numbers are in science and mathematics. Around 20% of enrolments are on level 2 courses. The college enrolls around 1,000 full-time learners aged 16 to 18 annually, the majority of whom are from the Stockton area.

Egglescliffe School is a large 11 to 18 mixed secondary school with approximately 1,408 pupils including 277 in the sixth form. A significant number of pupils progress to the sixth form after they receive their GCSE results. Egglescliffe is a highly effective school with outstanding leadership and management. (Ofsted 2005)

Conyers School is a mixed 11 – 18 secondary school and is larger than most secondary schools with approximately 1,637 pupils, including 264 in the sixth form. A significant number of pupils progress to the sixth form after they receive their GCSE results. Conyers is a good school and the effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are good. (Ofsted 2007)

Abbey Hill School Technology College is a specialist secondary school for students with a wide range of special educational needs (11 - 19). The Schools aim is to develop the full potential of all of their students. Abbey Hill "Sheraton" Building provides extended education for students transferring from the main school building. Students have a range of special educational needs and strong pastoral structure and careful curriculum organisation ensures that the varying needs of all students are met.

Teesside High and Yarm School are Independent 11 - 18 schools, the former is all girls whilst the latter is co-educational. Both schools are high performing with students progressing to Oxbridge.

There are a number of Work Based Learning providers either located in or delivering to Stockton residents. A wide range of occupational areas are provided as well as Entry to Employment.

Queen's Campus, Stockton is Durham's modern waterfront location in Stockton-on-Tees. It combines the prestige and quality of a Durham degree with state of the art facilities and a thoroughly contemporary subject range.

The University of Teesside is a dynamic modern university dedicated to delivering quality programmes of study demonstrating a commitment to social inclusion and widening participation and contributing to the success of the community it serves.

7. Local Demography

Working together the two colleges will be stronger and more able to respond to falling demographics and changing patterns of learner enrolment. Whilst this is important for Stockton Riverside College it is of particular relevance to Bede Sixth Form College, which is the smallest Sixth Form College in England, and is particularly vulnerable to changes in learner numbers.

Stockton is the largest borough (in population terms) in the Tees Valley. According to National Statistics its population in 2005 was 186,000. Local population estimates from the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit put the 2007 population at approximately 186,300. Minority ethnic groups make up 2.8% of the Tees Valley population compared with 9.1% nationally. Deprivation is evident within the communities served by both Stockton Riverside College and Bede Sixth Form College with 17.3% of its population living in the 10% most deprived areas in England.

In Stockton on Tees 14.3% of the adult working age population possess no qualifications compared with 15.6% in the North East. Based on 2005/06 data 10,804 learners in Stockton attend FE providers of which only 57.4% attend providers based in Stockton.

The greatest proportion of Stockton's employment is in the service sector. Under this broad heading, the highest level of employment is in public administration, followed by distribution and hotels, and then banking and finance. Stockton has little employment in primary industries but higher than average employment in Manufacturing and Construction.

8. How the Merger will be Achieved

The merger of Bede Sixth Form College and Stockton Riverside College will be achieved through a type 'B' merger under the provisions of Section 27 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. This will involve the dissolution of the Corporation of Bede Sixth Form College. A Model 'B' merger has been chosen, as these tend to be less complicated than a Model 'A' merger, where both Corporations are dissolved and a new entity created. It is felt that, overall, this will create fewer feelings of uncertainty for staff and students and it will provide both partners with the opportunity to influence the shape and development of the merged institution. It is important to note that the proposed dissolution was voluntarily and unanimously entered in to by the Corporation of Bede Sixth Form College.

Changes will be made to the governance arrangements of Stockton Riverside College to take into account the more diverse geographical and educational interests of the new enlarged General Further Education College. The property, rights and liabilities of Bede Sixth Form College will transfer to Stockton Riverside College.

The Corporation of Stockton Riverside College will seek to increase its current membership to reflect the geographic, economic and business interests of the two merging colleges. This change in membership will be facilitated by adding a number of members of the Corporation of Bede Sixth Form College to an expanded Corporation of Stockton Riverside College.

An indicative merger timetable is shown in Appendix D.

9. Curriculum

Provision will be split between Billingham (Bede campus) and Stockton (Teesdale campus).

The current curriculum offer by Bede Sixth Form College will be continued and augmented by the addition of vocational subjects. Bede Sixth Form College currently offers 29 subjects at AS level and 26 subjects at A2 across 12 QCA sector subject areas and two vocational courses at advanced and intermediate levels in Health and Social Care and Business.

The Intermediate Level 2 courses in Business and Health and Social Care from Bede Sixth Form College will transfer to Stockton Riverside College Teesdale campus in 2007-08. New courses in Music Technology and Economics will be introduced at the Bede campus in the same academic year, which will complement and add to the media and cultural industries courses which will transfer to the Bede campus in 2009.

The new vocational courses which will be introduced into Bede Sixth Form will complement the range of AS/A2 courses already being delivered. These courses will link through to the Performing Arts courses on the Teesdale site, taking full advantage of Stockton Riverside College's CoVE status for Performing Arts. Short adult courses will be delivered largely through evening provision, in areas such as web design. The new long courses in e-media, film and television and short courses in web-design will also contribute to addressing the needs identified in the LSC-Tees Valley Annual Plan 2007/2008, which identifies emerging digital/media industries as one of the key economic sectors for the future.

In addition, the new campus will also have a suite of science laboratories which will expand Stockton Riverside College's capacity to develop science-based courses. Plans for the future are to focus on bio-science courses linking in to the science park developments at Middlehaven with well-defined progression routes into HE through Teesside University.

There are also plans to develop and enhance sports facilities at the Bede campus and deliver some of the sports provision currently on the Teesdale site at Billingham.

Partnerships with the three 11-16 schools in Billingham are good and the transfer of vocational provision alongside academic provision on the Bede campus will improve the potential for the delivery of 14-16 link work, strengthen progression routes and pathways and contribute to the development of the specialised Diplomas.

Each local 11-16 school has a specialism which the merged college will be in a strong position to take forward in partnership. The nearest school, Billingham Campus, has specialist status for Creative Arts and Media and is ideally placed to develop 14-16 links into the Bede campus curriculum. St Michael's School has specialist status for science and strong links already in place with cross-teaching and shared lesson observation. The Aimhigher classes for the gifted and talented will be continued and developed further. Sports links with Northfield School will be improved as a result of the proposed strategies for development of the playing fields.

Stockton Riverside College are planning growth in the following curriculum areas:-

- Health, Public Services and Care;
- Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies;
- Construction, Planning and the Built Environment;
- Arts, Media and Publishing; and
- Preparation for Life and Work.

It is the intention of the College to establish sustainable HE provision through the delivery of a broad range of opportunities for individual and professional development. The college will continue to build upon strengths and expand HE programmes in a range of areas, including Post 16 Education and teacher training, Health & Care, Science, Professional Qualifications, Performing Arts, Art and Design, Complementary Therapies, Engineering, Computing and Travel and Tourism.

10. Learner Access

It is recognised that, as plans for merger between the two colleges progress, detailed consideration will need to be given to the transport links and general accessibility between the college buildings in Billingham and Stockton-on-Tees.

The overall transportation policy for the merged college is being developed alongside an updated Green Travel Plan, in consultation with Stockton Borough Council. The two campuses of the newly merged college are approx 6 miles apart, separated by a major arterial route (the A19).

It is anticipated that minimal transportation disruption for students will be caused by the merger. Specialist centres will be created at both the Teesdale and Bede campuses, with the main focus of students' studies being centred around these venues. The redeveloped Bede campus will lead on A Level, Media and Sport provision, with most other vocational specialties being concentrated at Teesdale. Essential operational travel between sites will be supported through the use of the college mini-bus fleet.

Concomitant with the provision of a new build campus will be improved access for learners with physical disabilities. The current buildings of Bede Sixth Form College are not fully DDA and SENDA compliant and, where access is possible, spaces are cramped making movement around the buildings difficult for those with mobility restrictions.

Delivering learning in a new building with full disabled access and with the needs of learners with visual and auditory impairment catered for will open up further opportunities for learners in Billingham to access the Bede Sixth Form campus provision. The good links to Bishopgarth School will be used to encourage more students with disabilities to study in Billingham. Every advantage will be taken of Stockton Riverside College's knowledge and experience in working with LLDD learners and their status as lead partner in the Tees Valley for sensory impairment.

11. Learner Numbers

The merged college is planning to grow, in student numbers, turnover and the range of provision on offer, all the time maintaining the character and values upon which the colleges have built their current success.

Bede Sixth Form College recruits mainly from three 11-16 schools in Billingham. In 2005-06 Bede Sixth Form College had 503 FTE learners the majority of whom were aged 16-18 years studying at Level 3. Without investment in new buildings and absorbing the impact of forecast demographic decline Bede Sixth Form College numbers would not sustain an independent college by 2011-12.

Having already increased student numbers by 30% since 2001 and achieved three year development plan targets in the first year in 2003/04, Stockton Riverside College has demonstrated capacity to grow - capacity which it will enhance and build upon.

Growth overall will be modest in recognition of the falling demographic profile for 16-18 year olds but it will be ambitious in its aim to reduce the number of 16-18 Year olds who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET), address the basic skills needs of adults and encourage greater participation in the skills agenda from employers. However, learner numbers on the Bede Sixth Form campus will be augmented by the addition of vocational learners from the Teesdale campus. In addition there will be 14-16 learners on campus linked to the specialised Diplomas in Health and Care, Sport, IT and Creative and Media.

Learner numbers on the Bede Sixth Form campus will be increased by the addition of vocational learners from the Teesdale campus. A final number of FTEs is being planned for the Bede Sixth Form of 785 FTEs, an increase of 79% in Billingham by 2012, as follows:

Current Sixth Form College learners 16-18 full-time	433 Fte
Vocational learners transferring from SRC 16-18 full-time	342 Fte
Adult learners	10-20 Fte (140-200 learners)

Predicted Learner Numbers of Merged College

Learners							
Learner Numbers	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
14 – 16	127	127	159	323	380	405	430
FTE							
16-18	1996	1997	2075	2175	2275	2275	2275
19+	1907	2204	2204	2204	2204	2204	2204
WBL	21	25	27	30	62	126	158
HE	165	351	372	457	485	485	485
Total	4216	4704	4837	5189	5406	5495	5552
GLH	2409472	2434581	2511512	2663997	2894333	2999738	3123293

12. Quality

The merged institution will be subject to external scrutiny by the Learning and Skills Council through Annual Planning Review and the Office for Standards in Education [OfSTED] for 16-19, work-based learning and adult provision. The Quality Assurance Agency [QAA] is responsible for HE provision.

At its most recent Ofsted inspection in March 2007 Bede Sixth Form College was awarded Grade 3s in the five areas of Effectiveness of Provision, Capacity to Improve, Achievement and Standards, Quality of Provision and Leadership and Management.

Stockton Riverside College is a Beacon college. The 2006 OfSTED inspection confirmed that the College's 16-19 and 19+ further education provision is good with many outstanding features. The college's strategy for engaging with learners, schools, employers and partner institutions and communities was judged excellent. The overall performance, teaching and learning provision, the quality improvement system and processes have been judged to be effective and fit for purpose. It was judged Outstanding for Leadership and Management.

Currently, the two colleges have their own quality systems, which are intended to assure themselves and others of their ability to manage the quality of their academic and training provision and to be responsive to the external agenda for quality and standards. Harmonisation will take place to ensure that the systems adopted are efficient and effective in providing the Corporation, senior managers, and course teams with accurate information and evidence about the quality and standards of teaching and learning. Both colleges provide well for learners in Stockton and Billingham and plan, through the merger, to build upon the strengths identified in recent inspections.

The two colleges endorse a common commitment to a culture of self-assessment for quality improvement. Both institutions have sound strategic planning and quality assurance systems, teaching effectiveness programmes, and course and programme area reviews that drive the curriculum planning, development and delivery process. The best features of the existing systems and protocols will be harmonised to create a single quality system.

Bringing the two institutions together will create an even stronger single organisation that will have the opportunity to create financial surpluses which can be re-invested into the curriculum and ensure the quality of resources as well as teaching and learning. This should ensure continuous and sustained success in the overall quality of learning and training experience within the new college.

13. Governance and Management

The Governors of both colleges have approached the merger in a spirit of openness and collaboration. Joint committees dealing with both Governance and Management issues are already in place and both colleges have officer and governor representation as appropriate. Preparation for the merger is already well underway and the two colleges are demonstrating their ability and desire to work closely together. The governing bodies of both Corporations have agreed not to recruit external new governors once vacancies occur on their respective boards. It is the intention in 2008 to merge the membership of the two Governing bodies. The current Chair of Bede Sixth Form College has already filled the first vacancy on the Stockton Riverside College Board.

The merged institution will form a single Corporation that will seek to serve the vision and mission of the enlarged Further and Higher Education College. The Corporation of Stockton Riverside College will increase its current membership to reflect the geographic, economic and business interests of the two merging colleges. This change in membership will be facilitated temporarily by expanding the Corporation of Stockton Riverside College to include appropriate representation from Bede Sixth Form College Governing Body.

The approach to future governance and management of the newly merged college has been described as one of "evolution not revolution" The current Principal of Stockton Riverside College will remain in post and head the merged organisation. The current Principal of Bede Sixth Form College will head up Bede Sixth Form.

The newly merged college will have a management structure designed to ensure coherent cross college development whilst, at the same time, ensuring teaching and learning and student support remain at the core. The management structure will be developed to reflect the wider geographical and community spread of the newly merged college and will have as one of its main precepts the strong leadership and management of those areas of the college that focus on its main business, i.e. learning and training and quality assurance.

14. Human Resources

The Corporations of both colleges recognise that their staff are the key resource for the new merged college and hence all staff will be crucial to its development. It is also felt that developing this merger will create greater opportunities for staff career development with a larger institution which offers greater breadth and depth to the curriculum offer.

The commitment and effectiveness of the staff of the merged college will be central to its success.

There are differences in the terms and conditions of staff in the two existing organisations. Whilst there may be an opportunity to harmonise some conditions of service when the merged college is established, the requirements of TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings and Protection of Employment) rights will apply, and the Governing Body will be mindful of the obligations of the college under the European Acquired Rights Directive.

An early priority will be to promote clarity and certainty for staff through communication and consultation across a range of channels including recognised trade unions. To this end, preliminary discussions with the recognised trade unions will begin in mid 2007.

15. Collaboration and Partnership

Both colleges have a rich tradition of working in partnership and collaboration with education and training organisations and other institutions that have a stake in seeing these remain strong and active. The merged college represents an opportunity to build upon the good work which is currently being undertaken to ensure that the new organisation further develops collaborative approaches and works in partnership with the key stakeholders in Stockton-on-Tees and surrounding area particularly the post 16 partnership group.

The delivery of Stockton Riverside College's vision is dependant upon building strong partnerships and working collaboratively with partners locally and regionally to deliver the college's ambitions for learners in the 21st century.

The merger with Bede Sixth Form College strengthens both colleges and the complementarities of the curriculum will widen opportunities for learners and improve the potential for developing the 14-19 agenda in Stockton and Billingham.

The newly merged college is determined to offer learners in Stockton and Billingham the opportunity to study locally in good modern facilities with a curriculum portfolio covering pathways from Entry level to Level 4 locally across most Sector Subject Areas (SSA's). A range of partnerships are in place which are intended to reduce competition, improve collaboration and rationalise delivery for the benefit of the learner. In this way it is hoped that the impact on any partner of new developments will be minimised and new developments can be taken into account in strategic plans. This approach also applies conversely in that Stockton Riverside College sees its new developments at Stockton and Billingham as offering Stockton and Billingham learners real choice to study locally in first class facilities rather than having to travel further to access high quality new buildings and resources.

The college will continue to work closely in partnership with the other major providers of post 16 learning in Stockton-on-Tees through Stockton Colleges Strategic Initiative to eliminate duplication and focus the future utilisation of resources and stimulation of growth through complementary provision.

The three colleges in Stockton and Billingham have a positive history of partnership working and it is intended that this will continue after the merger reduces the number to two. In partnership, the three colleges have had Memoranda of Understanding around increasing post-16 participation and achieving flexibility and choice for learners. In this partnership Stockton Riverside College focuses on vocational work whilst Bede Sixth Form and Stockton Sixth Form colleges undertook to plan for A-levels and re-sits. This partnership working to rationalise provision will continue and a new Memorandum will be drawn up between Stockton Riverside College and Stockton Sixth Form College which takes into account the provision at Bede Sixth Form College and developments with schools over delivery of the new Diplomas.

The two institutions will continue to work together in liaison with the Local Authority and Headteachers on the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme in order to ensure that the colleges are part of an infrastructure which avoids unnecessary duplication. There are no plans to create a new sixth form in Stockton and the two existing sixth forms at Egglecliffe and Conyers are not set to increase numbers. The merged college in partnership with Stockton Sixth Form College will ensure an appropriate and adequate volume of high quality provision into the future for learners throughout Stockton.

Links with schools, local sixth forms and partnerships are very good with a pro-active strategic involvement in the Stockton-on-Tees 14-19 vision and implementation, including a Safeguarding Children's Board. The principal and strategic managers meet regularly at strategic level with stakeholders and partners and have very effective external networks locally, regionally and nationally. There are strong collaborative links across the general further education colleges in the Tees Valley through FE Plus. Employer engagement is good and there are many excellent examples of responsiveness to employer needs though the CoVEs in specific curriculum areas, the college's Employer Training Pilot and in the developing Foundation Degrees. A 14-19 partnership group involving schools and colleges is already in existence and a post-16 group of Principals and Headteachers, together with the LSC, is meeting monthly to plan strategy in the area.

Stockton Riverside College has been actively engaged in Higher Education programmes for a number of years, actively built around two working partnerships with two universities but primarily with the University of Teesside. Further growth and development of HE provision is planned including Foundation Degrees and Teacher Education qualifications.

Stockton Riverside College enjoys positive working relationships with a number of Sector Skills Councils. This ensures employer involvement in the design and implementation of training solutions. Employer forums are used, particularly through CoVE provision, this has led to the design and delivery of bespoke training to employers and employees.

16. Financial Indicators

Though financially well managed, Bede Sixth Form College's financial situation without a merger of some kind, is challenging. Sole reliance on income from a small cohort of 16-18 learner numbers, in a competitive environment with falling demographics, makes a No Change situation untenable and would almost inevitably lead to the discontinuation of academic provision in Billingham in the near future. Against a background of declining learner enrolments there is no financial capacity for Bede Sixth Form College to finance the building of a new campus.

Stockton Riverside College is prudent in its financial management and is a Category A college following two new build projects in the past five years. Stockton Riverside College, therefore, judges itself as strong enough financially to move forward with the proposed Capital build at Billingham and on the Teesdale site and, overall, will benefit from the enhanced asset base it will inherit from the merger.

The two colleges believe that a merger will create a more financially sound institution. This, in turn, will enable an application to be made to the LSC for the capital monies for a new campus in Billingham adjacent to the current Bede Sixth Form College which otherwise could not have been made by Bede Sixth Form College alone. This will see the continuance and preservation of academic provision in Billingham by ensuring the presence of a new campus on the Bede Sixth Form College site.

LSC funded provision will closely match LSC priority areas to protect the current funding levels and enable the college to be well placed to respond to commissioned mainstream growth and targeted non-core funds. Opportunities for growth in non-LSC provision will be pursued, particularly in higher education.

The key rationale for the proposed merger of the two colleges is to achieve developmental growth together with a theme of harmonisation of services and support. One of the key drivers towards the success of the merged college is to produce a streamlined, efficient operation which can then release increasing resources to make a positive impact on the teaching and learning experience of all learners, no matter where they attend.

17. Campus Developments

Bede Sixth Form College's accommodation is in poor physical condition. The minimum costs of addressing the key elements of the fabric of the building would cost some £1.2m and, to bring the buildings up to modern standards would cost £4.49m. The accommodation is classed as not meeting the needs of learners in the 21st century. Teaching spaces lack flexibility and have grown piecemeal so that related specialist facilities are often located in different parts of the campus e.g. Media Studies equipment is in three separate locations thus making for inefficiencies in delivery and disadvantaging learners. Specialist music areas are not available so poor sound insulation leads to overspill of noise into general classroom teaching areas. The learning centre is viewed as being too small.

A new phase of capital build activity is beginning at Stockton Riverside College which will both accommodate the planned merger with Bede Sixth Form College and see development in Billingham and expansion on the Teesdale site to accommodate growing 14-16 work, HE expansion and the transfer onto the campus of learners from offsite premises.

Stockton Riverside College will, through the new campus development at Bede, be honouring its commitment to Billingham learners to ensure provision of learning - a commitment made when the college moved to its Teesdale site. This new development will not only re-establish Stockton Riverside College's presence in Billingham but will also provide for new vocational provision to be delivered on the site.

The new campus on the current Bede Sixth Form College site will ensure:

- A continued presence of Bede Sixth Form for learners in Billingham
- A re-establishment of a Stockton Riverside College presence in Billingham
- The provision of world class facilities for all learners in Billingham

The new campus, which will occupy space on the playing fields of the current Bede Sixth Form College, will have modern flexible spaces with specialist facilities grouped together for efficiency and effective teaching. The current accommodation drawbacks affecting teaching and learning will be eliminated through good design.

18. Marketing

In order to improve and enhance participation levels in the area, which is a major element of the proposal, it is essential that a well-structured marketing strategy be adopted. Consequently a clearly defined marketing strategy is proposed which will be developed and deployed for the newly merged organisation, taking into account relevant catchment areas, different community needs, and associated local, sub regional and national agendas. Clearly identified stakeholder and focus groups will be widely consulted in the development of new marketing strategies. There will also be initiatives aimed at improving working relationships with existing partners. The establishment of new stakeholder relationships will at the same time add to the potential for new market opportunities. Labour market intelligence, demographic trends and patterns and the current market share of the existing separate organisations will be utilised fully to develop these strategies further.

19. Re-Branding and Re-Positioning

Consideration will be given to the re-branding and re-positioning of the proposed merged organisation. Image and perceptions will be researched, challenged and addressed in relation to customer confidence. The new college experience, building upon existing good practice, will be a major focus for post merger communications to potential stakeholders.

20. Portfolio Development

A major consideration for the newly merged organisation will be to review the curriculum portfolio to ensure the development of growth opportunities including courses suitable for new and existing students. It will be important to ensure that a suitably wide range of programmes is offered which positions the newly merged organisation effectively in targeted and niche markets for developed growth. Focused curriculum development will be based on gaps in progression routes both internally and externally, and a complete offer will be constructed to provide an attractive whole college experience for potential learners. The product portfolio will be clearly segmented to meet the needs of a variety of learners.

21. Consultation and the Merger Process

The Learning and Skills Council is now formally consulting on the merger proposed between Bede Sixth Form College and Stockton Riverside College. Consultation commences 28 September 2007 with a closing date for comments on 5 November 2007.

All responses will be acknowledged by LSC Tees Valley and copied to the two colleges.

The LSC will consider the results of the consultation alongside the outcomes of the due diligence report and the full proposal at their Tees Valley Council meeting in January 2008. They will consider the proposal against the nationally determined criteria set out in Appendix B. At that stage, it may be decided to support the merger and forward a proposal to the Secretary of State. Alternatively, they could choose to seek a revised proposal, which may require further formal consultation, or choose not to support the proposed merger.

On receipt, the Secretary of State may approve the formal submission, or reject the proposal. If accepted, the proposal will be laid before Parliament with a view to the merged institution becoming incorporated from 1 April 2008.

All consultation responses will be included in the file sent with the proposal to the Secretary of State.

Appendix A

CIRCULATION LIST

A summary of the circulation list can be seen below:

Members of Parliament and MEPs
Emergency Services
Higher Education Funding Council for England
Other Colleges
Work Based Training Providers
Association of Colleges
National Union of Students
Trade Unions
Association for College Management
Sixth Form Colleges Forum
Department for Innovations Universities and Skills
Local Learning Partnerships
Chambers of Commerce
Employers
Local Authorities
Local Education Authorities
University Partners
Schools with Post-16 provision
11-18, 11-16 Schools
Voluntary Organisations
Connexions Service
Sector Organisations
The Sector Skills Development Agency
Sector Skills Councils
Exam Boards
Regional Development Agency
Job Centre Plus
Association of Teachers & Lecturers
NASUWT

Appendix B (i)

STATUTORY DRAFT PROPOSAL

SINGLE DISSOLUTION MERGER

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 BEDE SIXTH FORM COLLEGE UNDER SECTION 27 OF THE ACT

NAME OF THE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION AND INSTITUTION:

BEDE SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

ADDRESS:

Hale Road, Billingham, Stockton-on-Tees, TS23 3ER

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

Bede Sixth Form College is located in the Stockton-on-Tees Local Authority and in the area of the Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley. Its main campus at Hale Road is located in Billingham.

In 2005/06, Bede Sixth Form College had 483 full-time and 20 part-time students, a total of 503 students.

The majority of enrolments at the college were in the 16 – 18 age range.

The college offers a broad range of GCE AS and A levels and a small number of appropriate vocational courses meet the needs of most learners. The majority of students study at level 3.

REASON FOR PROPOSING DISSOLUTION OF THE CORPORATION:

The governing body of Bede Sixth Form College has agreed to merge with Stockton Riverside College.

This would be achieved by the dissolution of the existing Further Education Corporation of Bede Sixth Form College and the transfer of its property, rights and liabilities to the Further Education Corporation of Stockton Riverside College.

The principal reasons advanced by the governors of the colleges in support of the proposal are: to create a single cost effective, high quality General Further Education College, which builds on the strengths of the two institutions in order to further serve the community throughout their lives and careers, meet their changing needs, and support the developing local infrastructure and the regional economy; and to further extend participation in education, learning and training within the area - particularly where there is significant under representation amongst identifiable groups of potential students.

CRITERIA

The Learning and Skills Council will consider the proposal in the light of criteria shown below:

- the proposal is likely to extend participation, learning and training;
- the proposal is likely to result in raised learner achievement;
- the proposal is likely to result in raised standards of education and training delivered;
- the proposal is likely to address any issues of over and under provision in an area;
- adequate consultation has been undertaken and proper consideration has been given to alternative options;
- the proposal is likely to be financially viable, affordable, cost-effective and successfully managed;
- and
- the proposal is consistent with any area-wide inspection report published.

DATE PROPOSED FOR THE DISSOLUTION OF THE CORPORATION:

31 March 2008

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 Bede Sixth Form College who have not completed their courses by the date of the dissolution to complete their courses under the auspices of the joint institution.

Appendix B (ii)

Statutory Summary of the Draft Proposal (NOTICE)

Single Dissolution Merger

FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION ACT 1992 THE LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL

Bede Sixth Form College
Hale Road
Billingham,
TS23 3ER

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 Bede Sixth Form 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 Bede Sixth Form College, in order that the college may form a joint institution with Stockton Riverside College. It is proposed that the property, rights and liabilities of the corporations be transferred to the corporation of Stockton Riverside College.

The date proposed for the establishment of the corporation is 1 April 2008.

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

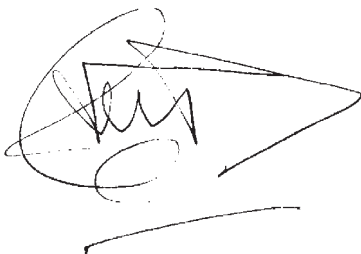
A copy of the draft proposal is available free of charge from the Council and will be sent to any person who requests it.

In accordance with the provisions of section 51 of the Act, representations may be made to the Council by 5 November 2007. Representations should be made in writing to:

Val Goodrum
Partnership Director - Stockton
Learning and Skills Council
Wynyard Park House
Wynard
Billingham
TS22 5TB

Date: 28 September 2007

Signed:



Tom Crompton
Director of County Durham and Tees Valley
Learning and Skills Council

Appendix C

CONSULTATION RESPONSE PRO-FORMA

Responses are invited by Monday 5 November 2007 to the following attached documents:

- a. Consultation document on the proposed reorganisation of Bede Sixth Form College and Stockton Riverside College.
- b. Statutory Draft Proposal for the reorganisation of Bede Sixth Form College.

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 by the Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley.

1. Please give your comments on the proposed re-organisation.

The above comments are directed to (please tick one box only)

- Bede Sixth Form College
- Stockton Riverside College
- Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley
- The Colleges and Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley

Name

Organisation (if applicable)

Address

.....

Signed Date

Please return this pro-forma to:
Val Goodrum
Partnership Director - Stockton
Learning and Skills Council
Wynyard Park House
Wynard
Billingham
TS22 5TB

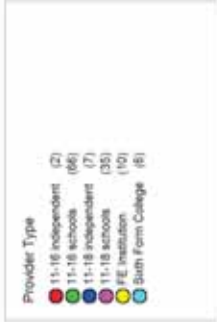
by Monday 5 November 2007.

Appendix D

TIMELINE FOR MERGER - STOCKTON RIVERSIDE COLLEGE AND BEDE SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

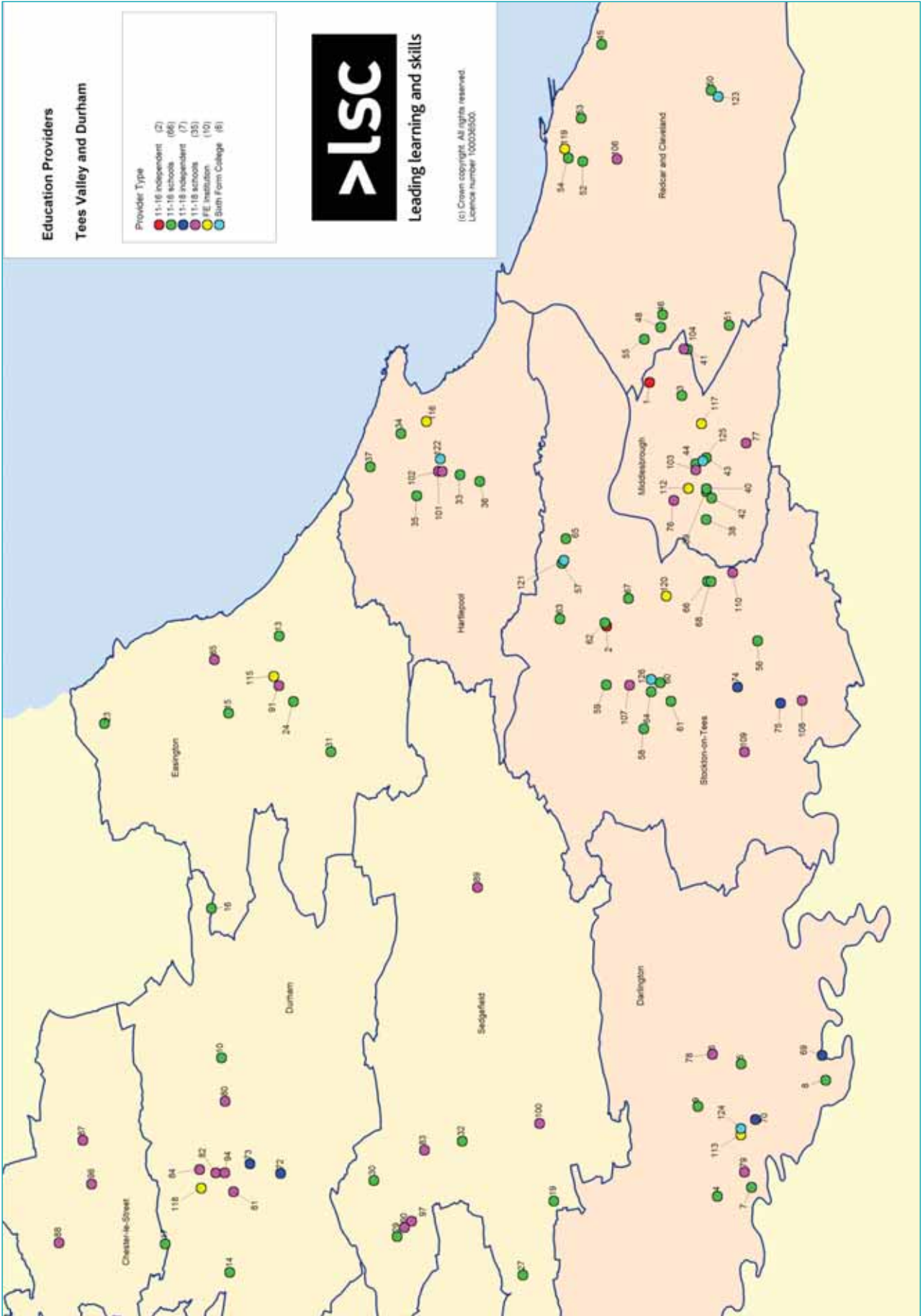
Action	Timescale
Initial discussion between local LSC and college(s)	March
Strategic options appraisal undertaken	27 March
Due diligence/feasibility tender documents prepared by	31 May
Feasibility study on the preferred option undertaken by	31 July
Local LSC staff/College Corporations consider outcome of feasibility study and agree action	by 14 August
Outline proposal submitted	by 3 September
Consultation documents prepared	by 8 September
Outline proposal produced for local LSC members' consideration	by 17 September
Local LSC members consider outline proposal	24 September
Due diligence/public consultation commences	28 September
Due diligence/public consultation ends	5 November
Outcome of consultation and due diligence considered by college corporations and local LSC	by 19 November
Consideration of the financial implications for the Council by the Finance/Operations Moderation Panel	by 21 November
Full proposal produced and agreed by College Corporations	6 December
Full proposal submitted to local LSC	by 17 December
Local LSC produce report on full proposal for local LSC members' consideration	by 18 January
Formal proposal considered by local LSC members	w/c 22 January
If supported, proposal sent to Secretary of State	31 January
Consideration, approval and laying of orders by Secretary of State (2 months notice for single dissolution)	31 March

**Education Providers
Tees Valley and Durham**



Leading learning and skills

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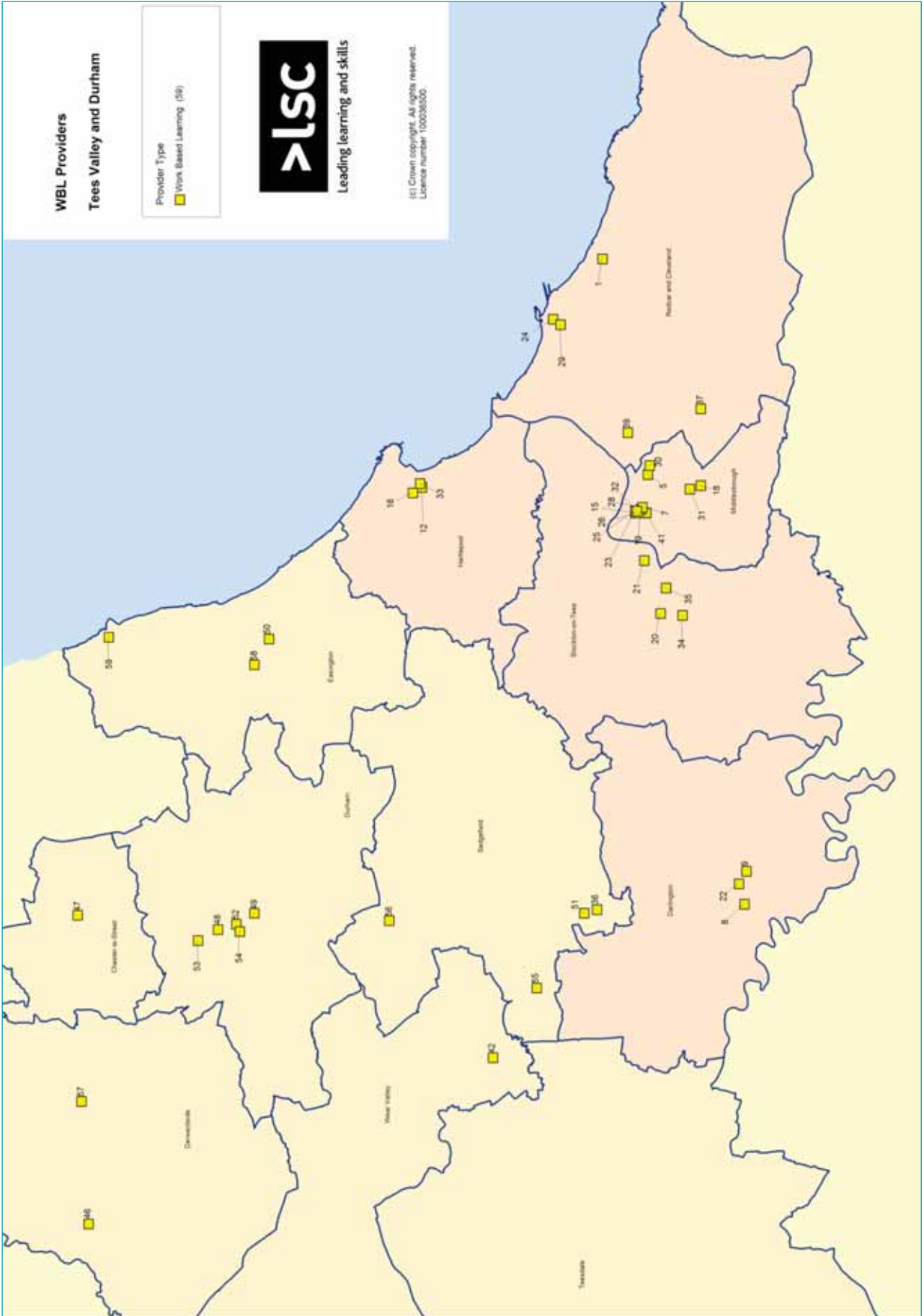
**WBL Providers
Tees Valley and Durham**

Provider Type

Work Based Learning (59)



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**Learning and Skills Council
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