Report on the public consultation on the proposed merger between Swindon College and New College Swindon

APRIL 2020
Introduction

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the recent public consultation on the proposed merger between Swindon College and New College Swindon. All comments from individuals and organisations across our local community are important in helping to shape the future of further and higher education in Swindon.

We are satisfied that the consultation period provided opportunity for people to respond. We have received feedback from a wide range of interested parties, including staff, learners, employers, parents, universities, local government and the local community.

The feedback demonstrates a positive endorsement from our stakeholders, with the majority showing strong support for our merger proposal and our vision for ‘a future for world-class and sustainable Further and Higher Education for our region.’

We can now take this endorsement forward, and by building on our combined strengths and specialisms create a high-performing and sustainable institution, delivering high quality teaching, learning and skills training for everyone.

Thank you for your support.

Executive Summary

• This is a report on the statutory public consultation on the proposed merger of two further education (FE) corporations: Swindon College and New College Swindon.
• This report includes high-level summaries of the comments made by respondents. Comments have been grouped into themes to avoid any repetition and any comments deemed inappropriate have been excluded.
• The consultation took place between 12 March and 16 April 2020.
• Public notices were issued in line with legislative requirements, including in the local newspaper, a national newspaper and via emails to stakeholders.
• The proposal was described in a 12-page document called ‘Growing Together: A consultation on the proposed merger of Swindon College and New College Swindon to deliver exceptional and sustainable education and skills provision to the region’.
• Feedback and comments could be submitted via an online survey, paper form, by email or in writing.
• An online public consultation event was held on the 2 April 2020.
• The consultation asked respondents to comment on the proposed merger, to feed back on the benefits, their concerns and any improvements they would like to see.

Responses

In total there were 100 responses to the survey during the consultation - broken down as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online survey</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper form</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written responses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Registrations for the public consultation event: 37

As part of the survey, respondents were asked to identify their interest, with the results as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New College Swindon learner</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swindon College learner</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/carer</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New College Swindon staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swindon College staff</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>School</td>
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<td>FE or Sixth Form College</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private training provider</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Agency</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local community</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary:

• A significant majority (85.6%) SUPPORTED the aim that as a combined College, we plan to maintain and widen the range of opportunities for students and to expand our employer-focused provision and services.
• A significant majority (86.6%) SUPPORTED the plan to offer a responsive curriculum across both sites and further enhance the quality of teaching on offer to students.
• A significant majority (88.7%) SUPPORTED the plan to expand Higher Education provision to ensure that more students and employers within the community can benefit from improved knowledge and skills.
• The majority (63.3%) AGREED that the proposed merger of the two colleges provides the best solution and will ensure the best future provision of further education for Swindon.
Key benefits identified by respondents:

- Streamlined working practices and more efficient use of funding, resources, facilities and systems.
- It will raise quality and standards through the sharing of expertise and best practice.
- It will remove the element of competition between the two colleges, resulting in a more efficient use of marketing and recruitment resources.
- There will be a wider choice of courses for learners.
- It will remove any duplication of courses.
- There will be better outcomes and progression opportunities for students.
- A co-ordinated approach to the strategic direction of further education in Swindon and the curriculum offer.
- Development of the Institute of Technology (IoT) will go ahead, improving the quality and variety of higher education provision in the town.
- It will give learners and staff access to a wider range of facilities and resources.
- Able to better meet the training and skills needs of local businesses and industries.

Key disadvantages/concerns raised by respondents:

- There are likely to be redundancies and therefore a loss of expertise.
- There will be a negative impact on the reputation of a merged college due to the perceived poor reputation of Swindon College.
- There is a lot of uncertainty and lack of information regarding impact on staff and potential job losses.
- Current students’ study programmes may be disrupted if their courses are cancelled or moved to another campus.
- There will be less choice for the learner and community in terms of further education provision.
- Quality of provision in a larger institution will not be as good.
- This is just a cost cutting exercise at the expense of staff, resources, course choice and quality.
- The merging of two very different cultures, experiences and performances.
- The perceived poor financial position of Swindon College and the impact of taking on additional debt.
- Some learners have specifically chosen not to attend one of the colleges due to a bad experience.

Online consultation meeting

In total there were 37 attendees at the online consultation event, including:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New College staff</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swindon College staff</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the large majority of attendees being Swindon College staff, the questions were predominantly about the potential impact on current and prospective learners. In particular, there were concerns about what would happen in instances where a course is currently duplicated across both campuses. For example, would students be expected to move to a different campus or would their timetables be affected?

Consultation Document

The proposal was described in a 12-page consultation document ‘Growing Together: A consultation on the proposed merger of Swindon College and New College Swindon to deliver exceptional and sustainable education and skills provision to the region’. The document was produced in collaboration with both institutions and endorsed by both of the governing bodies.

The consultation document provided an overview of the two Colleges, background to the proposal, included the statutory notice regarding the dissolution of Swindon College and set out the reasons for the merger and its benefits as viewed by the two governing bodies. It also included a copy of the paper feedback form.

Respondents were asked to respond via one of the following channels:

- **Online survey** - accessible from dedicated pages set up for the consultation on the websites of both institutions and sent out via email to stakeholders
- **Paper form** - in the ‘Growing Together’ consultation document – available in both institutions
- **By email** - to one of two specific addresses set up for the consultation
- **By writing** - to one of the two Clerks to the Corporations
- **A public consultation event** was also held on the 2 April 2020

Intended to be held in-person at Swindon College. However, due to the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent Government-directed closure of the Colleges, the event was hosted online.

A copy of the paper form and questions is included as Appendix 1. The questions were designed for the purpose of gauging stakeholder support of the proposed merger and to gain an understanding of what they felt were the potential benefits and/or disadvantages.

Notice of Consultation

Statutory Notices appeared in the 11 March 2020 editions of the Guardian and on the 12 March 2020 the Swindon Advertiser (local Swindon newspaper) See Appendix 2. Notice of the consultation, with information on how to respond and links to the consultation document and online survey, were available on both the Swindon College and New College Swindon websites for the whole of the consultation period. Paper copies of the Consultation Document were available in the receptions of both institutions.

Emails with a link to the notice of consultation and an invite to respond were also sent to stakeholders including all those identified as statutory consultees. The stakeholders identified were; leaders and representatives from Swindon Borough Council (SBC) and Wiltshire Council, Heads and Governing bodies of 6th form schools & colleges within the SBC area, Swindon and North Wiltshire MPs, the Secretary of State, Heads of external colleges and feeder schools, partner organisations (including universities), local employers, members of the IoT steering group, parents, students and applicants.

3 4
Analysis of the survey responses

A full analysis of all the written responses follows. The answers given for each question are displayed in chart and number format, along with conclusions from these answers. Where respondents were invited to provide open-ended answers, a summary of these has been provided. Comments have been grouped into themes to avoid any repetition and any comments deemed inappropriate have been excluded.

Q1
As a combined College, we plan to maintain and widen the range of opportunities for students and to expand our employer-focused provision and services. Do you support these aims?

Yes = 85.6% (83)
No = 9.3% (9)
Not sure = 5.2% (5)
(Two respondents skipped the question)

A significant majority (85.6%) SUPPORTED the aim that as a combined College, we plan to maintain and widen the range of opportunities for students and to expand our employer-focused provision and services.

Q2
We plan to offer a responsive curriculum across our sites and further enhance the quality of teaching on offer to our students. Do you support these aims?

Yes = 86.6% (84)
No = 7.2% (7)
Not sure = 6.2% (6)
(Two respondents skipped the question)

A significant majority (86.6%) SUPPORTED the plan to offer a responsive curriculum across both sites and further enhance the quality of teaching on offer to students.

Q3
We plan to expand Higher Education provision (courses at Level 4 and above) to ensure that more students and employers within our community can benefit from improved knowledge and skills. Do you support these aims?

Yes = 88.7% (86)
No = 6.2% (6)
Not sure = 5.2% (5)
(Two respondents skipped the question)

A significant majority (88.7%) SUPPORTED the plan to expand Higher Education provision to ensure that more students and employers within the community can benefit from improved knowledge and skills.

Q4
Do you agree the proposed merger of our two colleges provides the best solution and will ensure the best future provision of further education for Swindon?

Yes = 63.3% (62)
No = 19.4% (19)
Not sure = 17.3% (17)
(One respondents skipped the question)

The majority (63.3%) AGREED that the proposed merger of the two colleges provides the best solution and will ensure the best future provision of further education for Swindon.

Breakdown of responses by ‘Interest’ to Question 4

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<tr>
<td>Employer/Parent/carer</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>20</td>
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If yes, what advantages do you see from the merger of our two colleges?

All of the comments have been summarised into the following themes, with an indication of how many individual responses made reference to each.

- Streamlined working practices and more efficient use of funding, resources, facilities and systems
- It will raise quality and standards through the sharing of expertise and best practice
- It will remove the element of competition between the two colleges, resulting in more efficient use of marketing and recruitment resources
- There will be a wider choice of courses for learners
- It will remove any duplication of courses
- There will be better outcomes and progression opportunities for students
- A co-ordinated approach to the strategic direction of further education in Swindon and the curriculum offer
- Development of the IoT will go ahead, improving the quality and variety of higher education provision in the town
- It will give learners and staff access to a wider range of facilities and resources
- Able to better meet the training and skills needs of local businesses and industries
- There will be less confusion in the local community about the further education offer in Swindon and differences between the two colleges as separate providers
- There will be more opportunities for staff development
- It will be easier for employers to engage with one further education provider in the town
- There will be more opportunities for learners with complex needs to find a programme that suits them, increasing their chances for success
- There will be more scope for expansion in areas such as business training, apprenticeships and higher education

If no, what disadvantages do you see from the proposed merger and what alternative arrangements do you suggest?

All of the comments have been summarised into the following themes, with an indication of how many individual responses made reference to each.

- There are likely to be redundancies and therefore a loss of expertise
- There will be a negative impact on the reputation of a merged college due to the perceived poor reputation of Swindon College
- There is a lot of uncertainty and lack of information regarding impact on staff and potential job losses
- Current students’ study programmes may be disrupted if their courses are cancelled or moved to another campus
- There will be less choice for the learner and community in terms of further education provision
- Quality of provision in a larger institution will not be as good
- This is just a cost cutting exercise at the expense of staff, resources, course choice and quality
- The merging of two very different cultures, experiences and performances
- The perceived poor financial position of Swindon College and the impact of taking on additional debt
- Some learners have specifically chosen not to attend one of the colleges due to a bad experience
- Concern that study programmes will be split across two campuses
- It will be hard to manage the quality across such a wide curriculum offer
- There appears to be a lack of focus and information on the impact of merger on adult learners
- Transport issues if students have to attend a campus further away
- There is too much focus on higher education provision and the IoT
- Overstretching of resources with a detrimental effect on individual student outcomes

There were a number of people who supported the aims identified in questions 1-3 but yet still felt a merger was not the best solution to achieve these aims.

- 8 people responded ‘Yes’ to question 1 but disagreed with the merger
- 8 people responded ‘Yes’ to question 2 but disagreed with the merger
- 10 people responded ‘Yes’ to question 3 but disagreed with the merger
Local Employers and Organisations
Support was also strong from local organisations such as employers, businesses, charities and private training providers.

FOR
"Combining support functions will allow for more funds to be directed into delivery & facilities for education."

"A broader, more co-ordinated offer for students and local businesses."

"This is a good move - long overdue and puts learners at the centre of provision and curriculum planning and delivery."

"Financial advantages, sharing of expertise and a better deal for the students."

"Greater resources for students and more opportunity to build on our relationship with the college to offer more placements."

AGAINST
"Period of uncertainty for staff, merging services and job issues."

"Don't disagree with merger but it would be much fairer to let employees know sooner than later if you know the main issue. I think it would be much fairer to let employees know sooner than later if you know there is a real chance that redundancy may be an issue so they can better prepare for that happening and have longer to find a new position elsewhere."

PADDY BRADLEY
SWINDON AND WILTSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

Local Government Representatives
Both of Swindon’s MPs and representatives from Swindon Borough and Wiltshire Councils were unanimously in support of the merger.

In addition, a joint letter of support for the merger was sent from Justin Tomlinson MP and Robert Buckland MP. See Appendix 1.

FOR
"Financial advantages, sharing of expertise and a better deal for the students."

"Simplification of the offer to learners and clarity for employers about provision for post 16 skills and apprenticeships. The community will gain through co-ordination of provision and effort going into quality of teaching and learning rather than acquiring a competitive advantage over the “other” FE College in the town."

"Eliminate competition, focus delivery and provide a better service to our students and employers."

"The strengthening and ongoing security of the area requires to fulfil and enhance the business needs of the area."

"The problem of marrying together two colleges with very different cultures and performances; this will rely on strong and clear leadership and ensuring buy in from colleagues."

"Don’t disagree with merger but it would be much fairer to let employees know sooner than later if you know there is a real chance that redundancy may be an issue so they can better prepare for that happening and have longer to find a new position elsewhere."

AGAINST
"“The disadvantages could be redundancies when aligning our offer and combining programmes. However, this could also be an advantage as noted above, in looking at skill sets and offering other programmes not yet considered.”"

"The strengthening and ongoing security of the area requires to fulfil and enhance the business needs of the area."

"Don’t disagree with merger but it would be much fairer to let employees know sooner than later if you know there is a real chance that redundancy may be an issue so they can better prepare for that happening and have longer to find a new position elsewhere."

JUSTIN TOMLINSON
MP FOR NORTH SWINDON

Cllr DAVID RENARD
LEADER OF SWINDON BOROUGH COUNCIL

National Government Representative

"Thank you for sending the Secretary of State your consultation proposals for the merger of New College Swindon with Swindon College. I am responding on behalf of the Department."

"Pleasing of resources and greater combined strength to allow to adapt to the changing demands (and competition) within Swindon and surrounding areas."

"A harmonised approach to a full range of education needs that Swindon and the surrounding area requires to fulfil and enhance the business needs of the area."

"A broader, more co-ordinated offer for students and local businesses."

"The strengthening and ongoing security of the area requires to fulfil and enhance the business needs of the area."

"The problem of marrying together two colleges with very different cultures and performances; this will rely on strong and clear leadership and ensuring buy in from colleagues."

"Managing perceptions of the new college; parents who would have preferred one existing college over the other may now turn to other providers."

"Don’t disagree with merger but it would be much fairer to let employees know sooner than later if you know there is a real chance that redundancy may be an issue so they can better prepare for that happening and have longer to find a new position elsewhere."

BRIAN HUMPHREYS
SENIOR MANAGER, FE DIRECTORATE TERRITORIAL TEAM
(OXFORDSHIRE, SWINDON, WILTSHIRE, SOUTH WALES)
FURTHER EDUCATION DIRECTORATE
EDUCATION AND SKILLS FUNDING AGENCY

Responses by key interest groups

Swindon College and New College Swindon Staff

The majority of staff who responded from both Swindon College (100%) and New College Swindon (66.7%) agreed that the merger provides the best solution.

Example comments from staff:

FOR
"A harmonised approach to a full range of education needs that Swindon and the surrounding area requires to fulfil and enhance the business needs of the area."

"The strengthening and ongoing security of the colleges is important in an ever changing industry with its challenges."

"Improved offer and potential outcomes for students in a better funded and resourced single institution."

"Eliminate competition, focus delivery and provide a better service to our students and employers."

"This merger is long overdue and I feel this will benefit Swindon, students and staff alike."

"A single, responsive point of contact for all local employers for apprenticeships will avoid duplication and unnecessary competition. Students will benefit from increased range of courses at Level 1 and the more opportunities to study H1 Level courses locally."

"The merger is a positive step for Swindon. It will ensure we offer residents a strong post 16 offer, encouraging more to stay in education and by successfully building a relationship at 16, we can look to increase the town’s uptake on higher education."

AGAINST
"The disadvantages could be redundancies when aligning our offer and combining programmes. However, this could also be an advantage as noted above, in looking at skill sets and offering other programmes not yet considered."

"The strengthening and ongoing security of the colleges is important in an ever changing industry with its challenges."

"The problem of marrying together two colleges with very different cultures and performances; this will rely on strong and clear leadership and ensuring buy in from colleagues."

"Managing perceptions of the new college; parents who would have preferred one existing college over the other may now turn to other providers."

"Don’t disagree with merger but it would be much fairer to let employees know sooner than later if you know there is a real chance that redundancy may be an issue so they can better prepare for that happening and have longer to find a new position elsewhere."

PADDY BRADLEY
SWINDON AND WILTSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

Representative

National Government

BRIAN HUMPHREYS
SENIOR MANAGER, FE DIRECTORATE TERRITORIAL TEAM
(OXFORDSHIRE, SWINDON, WILTSHIRE, SOUTH WALES)
FURTHER EDUCATION DIRECTORATE
EDUCATION AND SKILLS FUNDING AGENCY

FOR
"Managing perceptions of the new college; parents who would have preferred one existing college over the other may now turn to other providers."

"Don’t disagree with merger but it would be much fairer to let employees know sooner than later if you know there is a real chance that redundancy may be an issue so they can better prepare for that happening and have longer to find a new position elsewhere."

AGAINST
"The disadvantages could be redundancies when aligning our offer and combining programmes. However, this could also be an advantage as noted above, in looking at skill sets and offering other programmes not yet considered."

"The strengthening and ongoing security of the area requires to fulfil and enhance the business needs of the area."

"Don’t disagree with merger but it would be much fairer to let employees know sooner than later if you know there is a real chance that redundancy may be an issue so they can better prepare for that happening and have longer to find a new position elsewhere."

PADDY BRADLEY
SWINDON AND WILTSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP
Current Students and Parents

The interest groups that showed the greatest opposition to the merger were current learners at New College and parents/carers.

• Parents/carers = 50% of those who responded DISAGREE (4 people)
• New College Swindon learners = 35% of those who responded DISAGREE (7 people) (Local community also had 50% disagree with the merger but this represents just one response from this interest group.)

Example comments from students and parents:

FOR

“More choice, better quality teachers, more sharing of good practice.”

“Possibly offering more courses on a wider range of subjects and being able to access facilities at both sites is a big bonus.”

“Less competition between the colleges and more concentration on providing excellence for students. Expanded resources.”

“The Merger will mean that Swindon College can adopt the Ofsted Grade required to meet the IoT requirements. Which may have been lost to the Town of Swindon had this not gone ahead.”

“I think it’s a good idea, merging the two will give students and teachers plenty of opportunities to grow.”

AGAINST

“Swindon College perceived poorer academic data and financial management will impact New College. The perceived poor reputation of Swindon College within the community may harm the reputation of NC something so very carefully built up over decades of hard work.”

“Some courses will only be available at one location this may mean that taking a range of courses is not possible as it would involve traveling to different campuses.”

“There doesn’t seem to be much focus on the older student / re training. All I read about is how it will benefit the 16yr - 19yr age group.”

“Poor, one size fits all, overstretched resources with little attention left for individual students is the usual outcome from these mergers.”

“I think a merger is a great idea, however I do not want people from New College coming onto our course and thinking they are better which could be a problem due to the perceived reputation that Swindon college has.”

“The two colleges currently offer different experiences and have different strengths and I do not believe there is a benefit to students from the proposed merger.”

Universities

We received responses from two universities. Both were highly supportive of the merger and reiterated their desire to build on the existing strong partnerships with Swindon College and New College Swindon.

FOR

“The provision of a comprehensive, better integrated offer of HE courses for the community of Swindon, with better progression to a wider range of HE courses delivered with partners. The merged college will be better able to meet the needs of young people, adult learners, employers and the wider community.”

STEPHEN MARSTON
VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE

“Oxford Brookes University supports the merger of Swindon College and New College Swindon as set out in the published outline proposal, and is keen to help deliver the proposed aim ‘to expand Higher Education provision to ensure that more students and employers within the local community can benefit from improved knowledge and skills’. The University has a long track record of delivering HE in Swindon, both at our own Swindon campus, and in partnership with Swindon College and would like to continue to develop and deliver HE with the proposed merged college. Swindon College delivers a range of Oxford Brookes Foundation and Bachelor degree courses which aligns with the University’s strategy to widen access to higher education through the provision of locally delivered, high quality degree programmes. There are currently 212 Brookes enrolled students at Swindon College across courses in Engineering, Art, Education, and Health and Social Care.

We would seek to work with the merged college to manage any proposed move of Oxford Brookes programmes to the merged college and would wish to work with the college to manage the communication and support of both existing and prospective students during this transition. Oxford Brookes is an active partner in Swindon College’s institute of Technology and is committed to continuing to work with the merged college as part of this project to develop technical provision that supports local skills needs. The University looks forward to continuing to build on its existing partnerships and provision and would welcome the opportunity to develop and deliver a future vision for HE in Swindon.”

SARAH CULLIMORE
HEAD OF UK PARTNERSHIPS AND APPRENTICESHIPS AT OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY

Against

“Oxford Brookes University does not believe there is a benefit to students from the proposed merger.”

“In the usual outcome from these mergers.”

Online consultation event

An online consultation event was held on the 2 April 2020 from 6pm. Individuals had to pre-register for the event in order to receive an invite to the online video conference.

The meeting was hosted by Steve Wain, Principal of Swindon College. Other panel members included:

• Carole Kitching (CK), Principal Designate of the merged college
• Charlotte Mannion (CM), Chair of New College Swindon Governing Body
• Rob Beale (RB), Chair of Swindon College Corporation

Attendees could ask questions either live or by sending them through via a chat mechanism.

In total there were 37 attendees at the online consultation event, including:

4 New College staff
28 Swindon College staff
1 Employer
2 New College students
1 Swindon College student
1 Parent

Despite the large majority being Swindon College staff, the questions were predominantly about the potential impact on current and prospective learners.

Attendees raised the following questions and discussion points:

• There was concern that timetables would change or that current learners may have to move to another campus to continue their studies in certain subject areas.
• It is likely that some subject areas may have to move from one campus to another due to duplication of courses or availability of resources. When this would happen, which areas may be affected and if/how current students would be affected?
• Will students have access to facilities across both campuses, such as the 3G Pitch at New College?
• How comfortable will students be with the merger when there are perceptions about the different cultures and experiences at the two colleges?
• Had the consultation group considered moving all students and resources to one site (Swindon College)?
• What will happen where two different partner universities are offering the same course at both colleges?
• Would the merged college (and the IoT in particular) be offering more degree courses in construction?
Responses to common concerns raised during the consultation period

Possible job losses for staff
Understandably, a major concern for staff is whether a merger will result in job losses. Our intention is to minimise any loss of jobs through efficient recruitment and redeployment of existing staff where possible. We are committed to maintaining a consultative approach with staff throughout all stages of the planning and communication processes. We want the College to be a great place to work and study; our people are key to the merger success.

Disruption to students already at New College or Swindon College
We’ve promised that all students studying with either College will continue with courses which they are already on. Students who have applied for courses will study the courses at one campus; they will not be required to attend two campuses.

Taking on financial debt(s)
Both corporations are undertaking extensive due diligence work to understand and mitigate any financial risks going forward with the merger. Increasing pressures within the FE sector due to underfunding and restrictions on use of this funding would inevitably lead to both colleges struggling financially if they were to continue as separate entities.

Merging of two different cultures and environments
We recognise that one of the hardest things in a merger is bringing together staff and students from different cultures. In our experience with previous mergers, people are able to adapt quickly. Within one to two years people cease to have an allegiance with the old colleges and buy in to the new vision and goals of the merged institution. To help with this, the intention is to create a new name and branding for the merged college that will be developed and consulted upon in the coming months for implementation post-merger.

Lower choice of courses
A merged college will have the single largest offer of Entry/Level 1 to Level 6 courses in Swindon, providing learners a choice beyond the ‘core’ subjects often seen in sixth forms. Moving to a single ‘Swindon curriculum’ aligned to learners’ aspirations, skills needs and employment opportunities in the region will enable more efficient use of funds and keep investment directed to the frontline.

Lower quality of provision in a larger institution
Building on our combined strengths, specialisms and resources will encourage the sharing of best practice and staff expertise. We believe that by developing a culture of improvement within the newly merged College, this would drive up standards.

Thank you!
Swindon College and New College Swindon corporations are grateful to everyone who took the time to respond and provide feedback during the consultation period. Your responses confirmed that the merger is supported by stakeholders and provided valuable information that will be taken into consideration during the next stages of the merger process.

Both Corporations continue to work on a range of issues associated with the merger such as due diligence exercises. On the day of merger, Swindon College Corporation of North Star Avenue, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN2 1DY will be dissolved and its property, rights and liabilities be transferred to New College Swindon Corporation, a further education corporation, of New College Drive, Swindon SN3 1AH.

The date proposed for the dissolution of Swindon College Corporation is 31 July 2020. Provision will be made for all 5,606 students currently attending Swindon College (1,306 full-time and 4,300 part-time) who have not yet completed their courses of study by the date of the dissolution to complete their studies within the new merged corporation.

Keep up to date with the latest merger news
College websites will be updated with information about progress, key dates and implementation and the email addresses: merger@swindon.ac.uk or merger@newcollege.ac.uk can be used to contact the colleges about the merger.
2. Statutory Notice

STATUTORY NOTICE - FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION ACT 1992

Swindon College Corporation, a further education corporation, hereby gives notice in accordance with the provisions of the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 and the Further Education Corporations (Publication of Proposals) (England) Regulations 2012 SI 2012 No 1157 of the proposal that Swindon College Corporation of North Star Avenue, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN2 1DY be dissolved and its property, rights and liabilities be transferred to New College Swindon Corporation, a further education corporation, of New College Drive, Swindon SN3 1AH immediately prior to such dissolution. Dissolution of Swindon College Corporation is proposed in order that it may merge with New College Swindon Corporation.

The date proposed for the dissolution of Swindon College Corporation is 31 July 2020. Provision will be made for all 5,606 students currently attending Swindon College (1,306 full-time and 4,300 part-time) who have not yet completed their courses of study by the date of the dissolution to complete their studies within the new merged corporation.

A consultation document setting out our full proposal is available online at www.swindon.ac.uk and www.newcollege.ac.uk or a copy of the full proposal is available free of charge via the contact details below and will be sent to any person who requests it. The consultation period runs from 12 March to 16 April 2020. All responses and representations must be received by the closing date by email or by writing to the Clerk to the Corporation of either College as detailed below:

Clerk to the Corporation, Swindon College, North Star Avenue, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN2 1DY
Email: merger@swindon.ac.uk

Clerk to the Corporation, New College, Swindon, New College Drive, Swindon SN3 1AH
Email: merger@newcollege.ac.uk

A summary of the feedback and its outcome will be published within two months of the closing date on the Swindon College Corporation's website and also the New College website.

1. Letter from Justin Tomlinson MP and Robert Buckland MP

Dear Ceri Yvonne,

Many thanks for your letter dated 16th March regarding the proposed college merger.

We are writing to let you know that we are fully supportive of this merger, which would bring together both of the colleges in Swindon to create a single institution. This will enable future students in the town to benefit from comprehensive, academic, technical and professional education at all levels under a single "Swindon Curriculum".

We are further pleased that following this merger, a full commitment would be made to the development of the new institute of Technology at the Swindon College North Star Campus.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Buckland

Itt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP

Justin Tomlinson MP
Your Views

We have highlighted a number of key benefits of the merger for students, employers, staff and the wider community. Please tell us your thoughts by answering the questions below and returning the form to one of the colleges either in person to Reception or by post to the relevant address. Alternatively, you can provide your response online by completing a questionnaire at – bit.ly/SwindonMergerFeedback

Name:

Preferred contact details: email or post

I am (tick as appropriate)

- New College Swindon learner
- Swindon College learner
- Employer
- Parent/carer
- New College Swindon staff
- Swindon College staff
- School
- FE or Sixth Form college
- Other (please state)

As a combined college, we plan to maintain and widen the range of opportunities for students and to expand our employer-focused provision and services. Do you support these aims?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

We plan to offer a responsive curriculum across our sites and further enhance the quality of teaching on offer to our students. Do you support these aims?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

We plan to expand Higher Education provision (courses at Level 4 and above) to ensure that more students and employers within our community can benefit from improved knowledge and skills. Do you support these aims?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Do you agree the proposed merger of our two colleges provides the best solution and will ensure the best future provision of further education for Swindon?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

If yes, what advantages do you see from the merger of our two colleges?

If no, what disadvantages do you see from the proposed merger and what alternative arrangements do you suggest?

Please use the space below to make any comments relevant to the objectives detailed within this document.

I am happy that quotes from my opinions are used in the report findings and I provide my consent

Merger Consultation
New College Swindon
New College Drive, Swindon SN3 1AH
merger@newcollege.ac.uk

Merger Consultation
Swindon College
North Star Ave, Swindon, SN2 1DY
merger@swindoncollege.ac.uk

The deadline for responses is 12:00 midday on Thursday 16TH April 2020

We will be holding a joint public consultation event at Swindon College on Thursday 2ND April at 6pm. If you would like to find out more before responding, you are welcome to attend this event – please register in advance for a place online via Eventbrite at bit.ly/MergerEvent

IMPORTANT - PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS:
HOW WE USE YOUR INFORMATION
New College Swindon and Swindon College are committed to protecting your privacy. The information collected on this form will be used to analyse report findings on the merger consultation. It will be stored securely and not shared with any other organisation, except as required by law. By providing us with your personal information, you consent to us collecting it and using it for the above purposes. Your information will be retained for 6 months after the closing date of this exercise and then destroyed.

YOUR RIGHTS
You have the right to ask for a copy of the information held on you in an electronic format and to have any inaccuracies corrected. You also have the right to request that your information is removed from our records; however we are required to retain certain information to comply with financial and audit regulations and the Limitation Act 1980. If your personal details change, need correcting, or you have any concerns about how we are handling your information, please contact info@newcollege.ac.uk. You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioners Office at https://ico.org.uk