

# Growing Together Achieving Together

**Consultation Feedback Report on the proposal for merger  
between John Ruskin College and East Surrey College**





**Growing Together, Achieving Together**

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**John Ruskin College, South Croydon**



**East Surrey College, Redhill**

## **FOREWORD FROM ANDREW BAIRD, CHAIR OF EAST SURREY COLLEGE AND ALEC STOW, CHAIR OF JOHN RUSKIN COLLEGE**

In September we were pleased to propose this partnership between East Surrey College and John Ruskin College and are delighted by the reception our proposal has received from the large majority of stakeholders who responded officially or unofficially.

They agreed with us that building on the strengths of both our Colleges to create a high-quality, sustainable learning community made excellent sense, appreciating our proposition that this presented an opportunity to be more able to budget for investment in learning facilities and quality improvement and to serve as a louder voice in support of education and training in our localities.

They also appreciated our intention to retain the heritage, character and identity of each organisation, while offering increased choice and more support services for students who live and study in the areas in which we overlap geographically as well as those in areas where we operate separately. Both existing campuses will be retained – Growing Together – Achieving Together.

The merged College will offer a comprehensive range of core skills, technical and professional qualifications and courses, as well as Apprenticeships ranging from Entry level up to Degree level courses including Degree Apprenticeships.

We will continue to work closely with employers in our local areas and beyond to collaborate in curriculum development and student employment, generating a wider range of career and training possibilities, greater access for employers to talented, well-trained potential employees and increased opportunities for our staff to develop their careers.

We therefore commend the results of our consultation, and look forward to working with you as we progress our merger.



**Andrew Baird**  
East Surrey College



**Alec Stow**  
John Ruskin College



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 7 September 2018, the consultation document, **‘Growing Together, Achieving Together’** was formally launched on behalf of the Corporations of John Ruskin College and East Surrey College, in order to consult on their proposed merger. The consultation document explained the rationale and how this would impact on students, staff and employers as well as the Colleges’ shared and separate communities. The overarching aim was for growth and sustainability, building on the synergies between the two organisations and safeguarding the heritage of each.

The merger proposed was a Type B merger in which the Corporation of John Ruskin College would dissolve with property, rights, assets and liabilities transferring to East Surrey College.

A jointly branded Consultation document was published on 7 September on both College websites and was sent out to stakeholders which included: schools, the Local Enterprise Partnership, local authorities, MPs, employers and key partners. It was shared with staff at both Colleges (along with continuing updates) and with the student representatives at both Colleges. Families of prospective students at both Colleges (as well as current at John Ruskin College) continue to be notified.



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (continued)**

### **Key findings:**

The majority of responses received were in support of the proposed merger.

Responses were received from a wide range of stakeholders. A total of 24 formal responses were received with 79% (19) supporting merger.

The majority of stakeholders chose to make comments which fell into broad themes as follows:

Supportive comments around:

- Merger benefiting smaller colleges, supporting their sustainability
- Wider range of quality education, supporting local business
- Growth and expansion of apprenticeship programmes
- Access to a wider, locally trained workforce
- More opportunities for students at higher levels
- Expanded partnership working

Concerns around:

- Potential for job losses and changes to working hours
- Clarity on TUPE process
- Curriculum offers at each site and concerns around travel between sites
- Move to becoming an HE college

## THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

The formal consultation period ran from 7 September 2018 to 7 October 2018, with agreement by the Shadow Governing Body (comprising members of both Corporations), for one response to be received slightly later (actual: 11 October), due to its significance.

A press release was sent to the Surrey Mirror and to the Croydon Advertiser who both printed information about the proposed merger including reference to the Consultation document and feedback process, as well as publishing this online.

A jointly branded consultation landing page was set up on both College websites with introductory text highlighting the purpose of the proposed merger, a link to the Consultation document and to the online Feedback form.

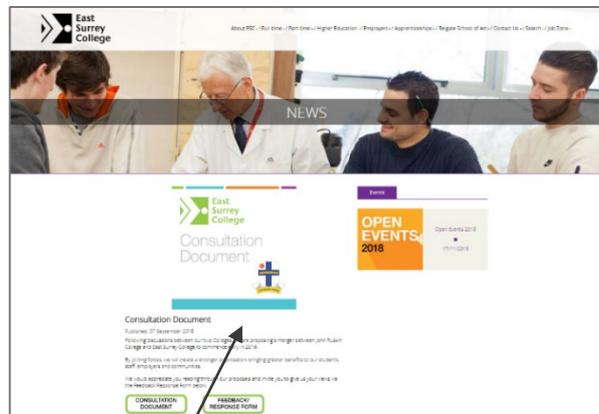
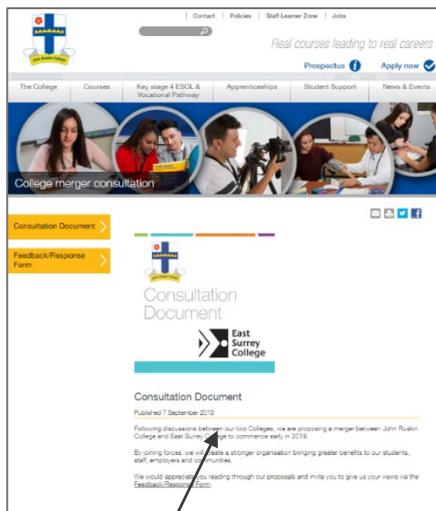


## THE CONSULTATION PROCESS (continued)

Formal responses to the consultation were invited from stakeholders. These could be submitted to either College utilising the Feedback form accessed through each College's website. Emailed responses, questions and comments were also invited. Most recipients chose to use the online Feedback form.

The Consultation document was highlighted to staff who were invited to comment and ask questions over the consultation period.

The Principal & Chief Executives met with many individual stakeholders/groups in order to answer questions about the proposed merger. These included: student representatives, headteachers, employee representative organisations, local authorities, councillors, MPs and employers.



The following text was included:

“Following discussions between our two Colleges, we are proposing a merger between John Ruskin College and East Surrey College to commence early in 2019.

By joining forces, we will create a stronger organisation bringing greater benefits to our students, staff, employers and communities.

We would appreciate you reading through our proposals and invite you to give us your views via the Feedback/Response Form below.”

## THE CONSULTATION PROCESS (continued)

Advertisements were placed in a national newspaper and a local newspaper by John Ruskin College, notifying the intention to dissolve the John Ruskin College Corporation:

The following advertisement was printed in two newspapers on 7 September 2018:

### The Telegraph

### The Croydon Advertiser

**Statutory Notice of the Proposed  
Dissolution of John Ruskin Sixth Form  
College in accordance with the Further  
and Higher Education Act Section 33N**

The Corporation of John Ruskin Sixth Form College, hereby gives notice, in accordance with the Sixth Form College Corporations' (Publication of Proposals) (England) Regulations 2012 and the provisions of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (the Act), as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 and the Education Act 2011, of the proposal that John Ruskin Sixth Form College (Selsdon Park Road, South Croydon, CR2 8JJ) be dissolved and the property, rights, assets and liabilities of the Corporation be transferred to East Surrey College registered address East Surrey College, Gatton Point, London Road, Redhill, Surrey RH1 2JX.

Dissolution of John Ruskin Sixth Form College is proposed at the request of the Corporation in order that John Ruskin Sixth Form College can merge with East Surrey College. The merger will provide the young people of Croydon and the surrounding boroughs with a more comprehensive and coherent range of education, training and progression opportunities.

The date proposed for the dissolution of John Ruskin College as a Sixth Form College and its merger with East Surrey College is 1st February 2019.

John Ruskin Sixth Form College delivers a range of provision to students from 14 years to adult and currently has 725 full time, and 896 part-time students. The College offers a wide range of Level 1, 2 and 3 courses, with subjects offered through vocational qualifications.

Provision will be made in the new merged College for all students currently attending John Ruskin Sixth Form College to continue their education at the John Ruskin College campus of the merged college, as well as for all current applicants.

Copies of letters and documents relating to this proposal are available free of charge at [www.johnruskin.ac.uk/consultation](http://www.johnruskin.ac.uk/consultation), or will be sent to any person who requests them by email.

Growing together - Achieving together

In accordance with the provisions of the Act, consultation on these proposals will run from 7th September 2018 to 7th October 2018. All responses and representations must be made by 7th October 2018. A summary of the consultation and its outcome will be published within two months, beginning on the date after the end of the consultation period and the summary will be available free of charge to anyone who requests it.

## **THE CONSULTATION PROCESS (continued)**

A letter co-signed by the Principal & Chief Executives of both Colleges was sent to identified stakeholders to heighten awareness of the proposed merger and inviting them to respond. These included:

- Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges
- Schools and academies
- Local Authorities
- Members of Parliament
- Local Enterprise Partnership
- Universities
- Employee representative groups
- Employers
- Sector representative groups
- Key partners and contractors

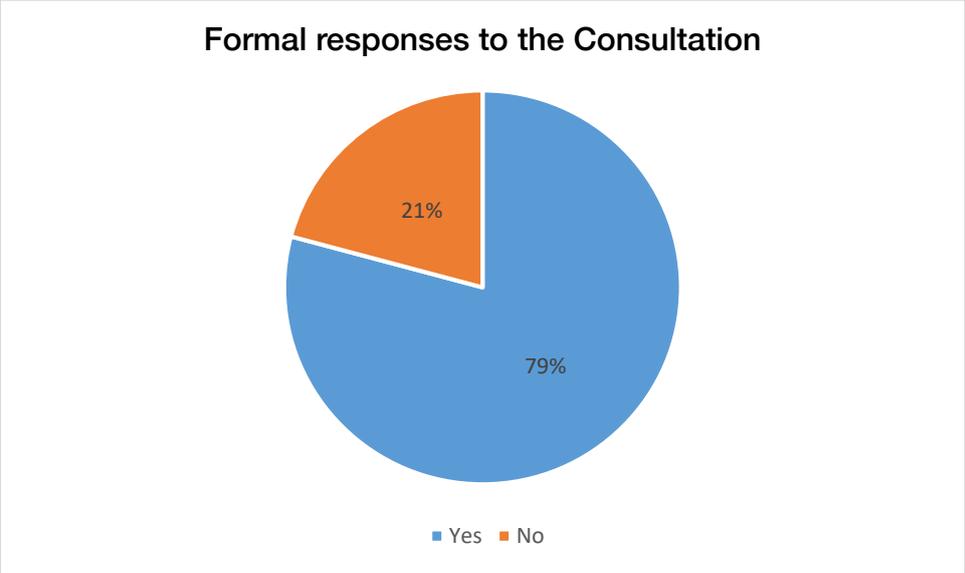
Other stakeholders were made aware of the potential merger and invited to respond:

- Sixth Form College Association
- Association of Colleges
- Banks
- Education and Skills Funding Agency
- FE Commissioner
- Office for Students
- Secretary of State for Education
- Ofsted

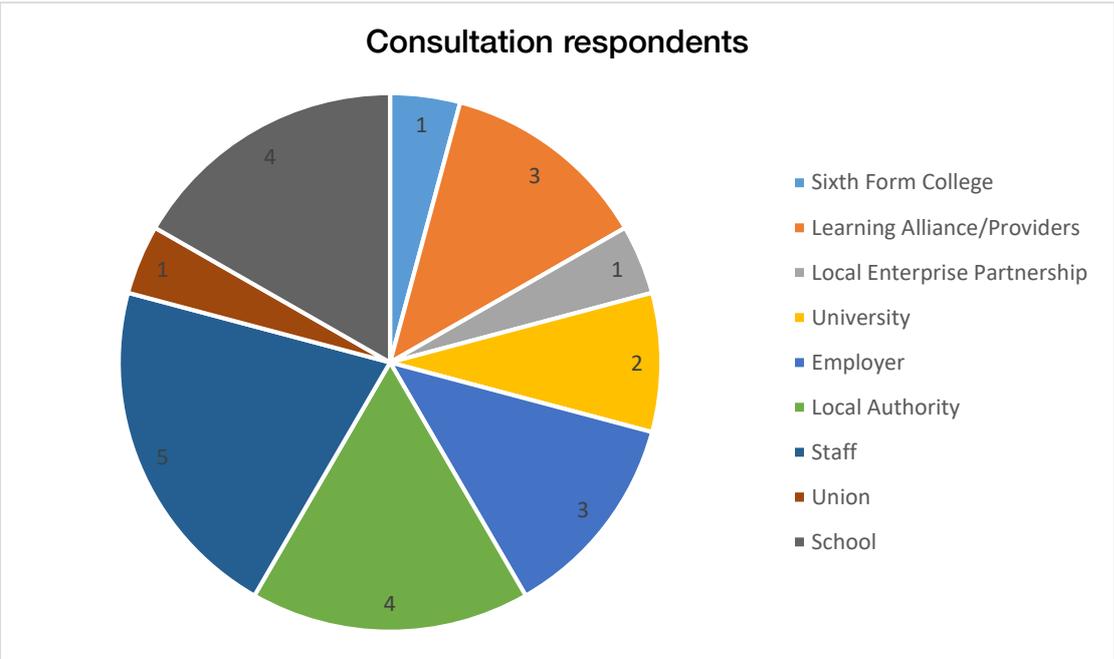


**STAKEHOLDER RESPONSES**

A total of 24 formal responses were received with 19 (79%) of these supporting the proposed merger.



The make-up of the 24 was as follows:



## STAKEHOLDER RESPONSES (CONTD)

The 19 who responded positively were from the following stakeholder groups:

- Employer
- School/college
- University
- Local government
- Local Enterprise Partnership
- Staff
- Union/Employee representative

The 21% (5) who did not support merger were from the following stakeholder groups:

- Local government
- Staff

Staff who responded negatively raised questions mainly around job assurances within mergers with no negative comment on the choice of the merger partner.

The one negative local government response still included comments on their respect for the proposed merger partner and intention to build on established relationships.

## OTHER RESPONSES:

In addition to the 24 formal responses:

- A further 5 emailed responses were received from stakeholders wishing to convey general support but not in a formal capacity.

These were noted by the Colleges but are not counted among the formal responses.

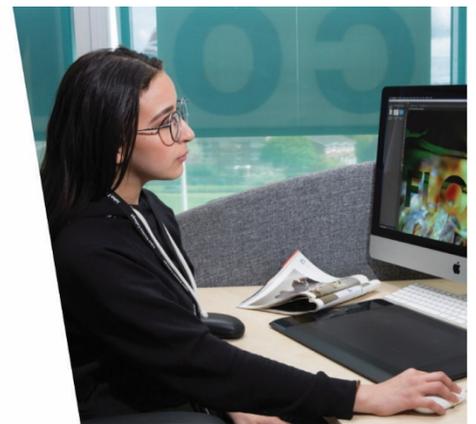


## POSITIVE COMMENTS

Positive comments and responses mentioned the following:

- The good match between the organisations
- The prospect of increased higher skills training in the area and greater access to a skilled workforce
- The focus on maintaining heritage and culture
- The increased opportunities for students, staff, employers and local communities from a wider curriculum – especially higher levels
- The wider availability of young people for work/apprenticeships
- The opportunities for adult engagement in learning
- The benefits to sustainability and continued quality improvement
- The growth prospects of two colleges dedicated to developing skills in their communities, working with universities and employers
- The increased partnership opportunities that merger will bring for local people especially 16-18s
- The ‘perfect’ timing as employers are looking for more local recruits to fill gaps

Some respondents used the word ‘exciting’ to describe the proposal.



## **SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS, CONCERNS AND RESPONSES**

During the course of the consultation, a series of questions and concerns were raised with responses which are summarised here under related headings. More specific questions were responded to directly with those who have raised these.

### **What will be the Governance structure?**

The John Ruskin College Board has selected East Surrey College as their preferred merger partner and the two Colleges are going through legal and financial Due Diligence processes to assess fit and to find out more about each other.

There will be one Board of Governors across the new, merged organisation with membership that will include governors from both Colleges. The current Shadow Governing Body comprises members from each College in equal numbers.

### **How will Culture and Heritage be maintained?**

The two Colleges see great synergy in their values and vision. Both prioritise inclusivity and supporting students to help them achieve their best. Both Colleges offer a wholly vocational further education offer and deliver courses for young people and adults, although the adult offer and apprenticeship offer at East Surrey College is far more extensive.

The proposal is that each College will retain its local identity and name. No overarching name has yet been decided for the group structure and suggestions continue to be invited. The new College group will comprise East Surrey College, John Ruskin College and also the Reigate School of Art which merged with East Surrey College many years ago and has continued to retain its own identity.

The merger proposal does not assume that staff or students will travel across sites as this is usually not an efficient use of time or resource, however, there would be opportunities for events such as Conferences, Job Fairs or even Continuing Professional Development to be held at one site.

## **How will Quality continue to improve and what is the current Ofsted Inspection status of the Colleges?**

East Surrey College was subject to a full Ofsted inspection in December 2014 achieving a Good outcome with many curriculum areas graded Outstanding. This position was confirmed at Short Inspection in October 2017. John Ruskin College was inspected in October 2017 and graded Requires Improvement. Subsequent monitoring indicates that progress is being made. This is confirmed with College achievement rates in 2017/18 now being above the national average which evidences the College will self-assess as at least Good.

With increased capacity, the merged College will focus heavily on continued quality improvement to enhance the learning experience for all students across the College group. A major benefit will be opportunities for staff to share best practice and experience.

## **What are the prospects for Growth?**

For sustainability, it is vital that student numbers and income continue to grow at both Colleges. This may mean new curriculum being introduced, mainly at the John Ruskin College site, with a wider range of levels and apprenticeships being introduced and promoted. The impact of government policy and funding changes is more easily absorbed across a larger organisation. The merger proposal supports that the same curriculum can be sustained at both sites due to the distance between the two Colleges, assuming applications support the decision. Demographic growth of 16-18s is predicted which will benefit both Colleges.

## **How will Employment be affected?**

Staff transferring from John Ruskin College to East Surrey College are protected under TUPE arrangements which gives protection on terms, conditions and contracts. Job assurances are hard to give nowadays in any employment sector and in the post-16 sector as elsewhere, it is always dependent on funding, recruitment and the need for financial viability. The merger proposal does not set out plans for job reductions as it is focused on growth and sustainability, offering these as the

best way forward for both Colleges. It is therefore important that the structure sufficiently supports this position.

### **How will the merged College work with partners?**

Both Colleges work with a variety of partners: education, employer, university, local authority and community. These will continue to be enhanced by new partnerships that will benefit student recruitment and progression. Working with local authorities includes ensuring a relevant and accessible offer for students with high support needs. Both Colleges wish to work productively with education partners to ensure the locally available offer meets student and employment expectations and the needs of a future workforce in the region.

### **What are the Timescales for merger?**

The target date for completion of the merger is as stated in the Dissolution notice for the John Ruskin College Board – on or before 1<sup>st</sup> February 2019. Currently, the Colleges are on track to achieve this although there is always a possibility that an aspect of the Due Diligence work may hold up the process.



## CONSULTATION FOLLOW-UP

The consultation feedback was considered by the Shadow Governing Body comprising members from both Colleges during October and November 2018. Members were pleased to see that a variety of stakeholders chose to respond formally and to give their views.

As a result, both Corporations remain committed to progressing with the merger subject to satisfactory completion of the Due Diligence processes.

The Corporations are appreciative of the time and care that respondents have taken in formulating responses which in many cases included discussions within their own organisations in order to present a considered, coordinated response. All respondents are being contacted in person and/or by email by the Principals & Chief Executives of the respective Colleges to thank them for their participation and to address any further points raised specific to their organisation.



**John Ruskin College  
Selsdon Park Road  
South Croydon  
CR2 8JJ**

**020 8651 1131  
[www.johnruskin.ac.uk](http://www.johnruskin.ac.uk)**

**East Surrey College  
Gatton Point  
London Road  
Redhill  
Surrey  
RH1 2JX**

**01737 772611  
[www.esc.ac.uk](http://www.esc.ac.uk)**