

Proposed Merger of:

# Solihull College & University Centre and Stratford-upon-Avon College

## Consultation Document





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# Foreword

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Thank you for your interest in the proposed merger between Solihull College & University Centre and Stratford-upon-Avon College. The Governing Bodies of both colleges are excited to bring forward this proposal, which sets out our intentions to ensure that the merged college will be stronger combined than the existing colleges have been individually.

It is proposed that the College will retain the official name of Solihull College & University Centre but will continue to operate both existing college brands post-merger. The individual campuses in Solihull, Blossomfield and Woodlands, will retain their identity and the current Stratford-upon-Avon College site will continue to operate under that name and will use this brand to the fullest possible extent.

The merged College will retain and develop a broad, substantial and high quality offer on each of its sites, with sufficient autonomy to respond to the needs of local people and businesses and to engage with partners in the communities served by those sites, particularly those who make them really special.

Each site will retain the unique atmosphere; ethos and culture, which visitors, partners, new employees and prospective students feel when they first enter those sites, and which serves as a valuable asset to that site.

We will develop a single team approach covering all sites which will engender an ethos of togetherness, desire to support and caring professionalism. Staff in each college location will have a great pride of place and take real ownership for the College's students and its activities. Staff will be highly motivated to create a safe environment, where students and staff can feel confident, safe and secure.

The College will develop staff structures with the student experience and the importance of culture as key considerations, and posts will be filled through an open and transparent process, which will embrace the cultures of each of its sites and enable staff to demonstrate their skills, experience and potential.

The College will provide dedicated leadership in the Stratford-upon-Avon College site, in the form of a Senior Manager and sufficient other leaders, able to commit sufficient time to ensuring that this vision is achieved for the College, its staff, its students and the local community. These Leaders will be proactive in engaging with the wider community in order to promote the opportunities within the College along with the benefit for residents and the business community.

The governing body of the College will reflect, understand and embrace the unique character of each of the communities served by the College. It will have a clear vision and plan for such investment and will seek to use these assets to enhance partnerships which seek to further the economic prosperity of the local and regional communities.

We see the benefits of a merged college as:

- maintaining and further improving the already outstanding track record of each college supporting its students into successful outcomes, and by using its wider geographical base, assets and network of contacts it will continue to enhance the overall student experience;
- ensuring excellence in teaching and learning by disseminating best practice to achieve high quality and to retain and attract the best talent;
- developing the curriculum offer at all of its sites to respond to employer demand and the changing economic and political landscape, addressing the Skills Plan and the Industrial Strategy;
- providing a significant contribution to the local economy and the up-skilling and re-skilling of the workforce;
- developing a full cost and international offer to take advantage of Stratford's unique location and excellent residential facilities; and
- creating a strong and stable financial infrastructure which will permit investment in the fabric, facilities, equipment and staff at each of its sites, with an early focus on Stratford-upon-Avon College.

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All students at Stratford-upon-Avon College who have not completed their courses of study by the date of the proposed formal merger will continue with, and complete their studies in their current locations as part of the merged College.

We firmly believe this proposal will ensure and enhance the continuing provision of high quality education for our learners. We would therefore welcome your comments and views on our proposals before we finalise our plans. Please reply to the address at Appendix 6 by 29 September 2017.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. R. Bolt."

**John Bolt**  
Chair, Solihull College & University Centre



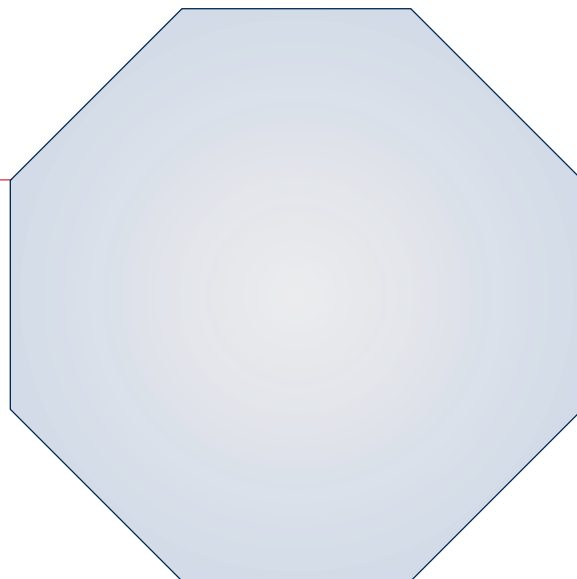
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "D. Jones".

**Lord Digby Jones**  
Chair, Stratford-upon-Avon College

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## The Need for Change

Having accepted the recommendation from the Further Education Commissioner<sup>1</sup> that it should merge before the end of 2017, Stratford-upon-Avon College chose Solihull College & University Centre as its partner following an open and transparent competition. The competition was led by the FE Commissioner's team and was supported by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Proposals were assessed against criteria which were developed from the "New Challenges, New Chances" document, published by the Government in 2011<sup>2</sup>, and the College's own Vision Document<sup>3</sup> which was created in partnership with staff, students and local stakeholders.



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<sup>1</sup> The FE Commissioner's Report can be found at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fe-commissioner-intervention-report-stratford-upon-avon-college>

<sup>2</sup> This document can be found at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/new-challenges-new-chances-next-steps-in-implementing-the-further-education-reform-programme>

<sup>3</sup> This document can be found at: <http://www.stratford.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/vision-for-the-merged-stratford-upon-avon-college.pdf>

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# Stratford-upon-Avon College's Choice of Partner

Five organisations submitted very strong proposals to partner Stratford-upon-Avon College. Supported by advisers from the Further Education Commissioner and the Education and Skills Funding Agency, Governors reviewed these proposals against these agreed criteria and considered the risks inherent in each proposal to achieve the merger in the set timescales.

In this review, Solihull clearly emerged as the potential partner who would most effectively meet the published criteria and who offered the highest degree of confidence that the merger would be completed in the recommended timescales. Each assessor, whether from the College, the ESFA or the FE Commissioner scored Solihull the highest of all bids. Overall, they scored 20% higher than any other bidder.

Solihull stood out from other bidders by making strong commitments to:

- retain the special status of Stratford-upon-Avon College as part of the merged structure;
- retaining substantial dedicated leadership and a range of services in Stratford;
- understand what makes the ethos and atmosphere in Stratford-upon-Avon College so special;
- develop a new shared vision, values and strategy; engaging staff students and stakeholders from both colleges;
- absorb the costs of some staffing capacity in order to create the opportunity to grow; and
- invest quickly in the estate, equipment and staff in order to enhance opportunities for students and employers.

They also put forward a proposal which was free from reliance on third parties (either for financial support or ministerial approval) for the timely achievement of the merger.

Solihull identified a number of opportunities to enhance the curriculum in both colleges through the sharing of expertise, equipment and external links, to benefit students, communities in both areas and provide new opportunities for staff. As a result, opportunities in Stratford-upon-Avon will increase over the coming years, not just for 16-18 year olds but for Higher Education, Adults returning to education and those looking to progress in their careers.

The Governors of Stratford-upon-Avon College are convinced that they have made the very best choice of merger partner in order to provide a thriving further education offer in the town.

Solihull College & University Centre are aware that much work needs to be done to make the merger a success, including building relationships with stakeholders locally and reinvigorating the international offer for Stratford-upon-Avon College, but they have the capacity to undertake this work and significant experience to draw upon from their success in the Greater Birmingham and Solihull area.

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# Solihull College & University Centre's desire to merge with Stratford-upon-Avon College

Solihull College & University Centre has had ambitions to expand since 2013 and had identified Stratford-upon-Avon College as an ideal partner due a similar socio economic demography and the complementary curriculum offer. The Colleges are located geographically close enough together to benefit from shared services, economies of scale and combined networks, but far enough apart to avoid the temptations of narrowing the curriculum offer or losing local identity. Solihull College & University Centre is therefore delighted to have been chosen as the preferred merger partner and has the staffing and financial resources to bring financial and curriculum stability. Solihull College & University Centre has had another very successful year. It is on target to generate a financial surplus and will see a significant boost to its cash reserves. The College's FE provision has also been recently inspected and graded "Good" across the board and has achieved the highest "Gold" award under the Teaching Excellence Framework for its HE work. Merger with Stratford-upon-Avon College will provide an opportunity to further develop this offer, building on local strengths and new market opportunities.





# Benefits of Merger

## Benefits for Students

### The merger will benefit students by:

- combining complementary strengths, which will increase the range of education and training opportunities, progression routes and professional accreditation;
- sharing of current best-practices which will build on the established specialisms of both colleges;
- retaining, developing and attracting the specialist staff that are essential in the provision of high quality, relevant and vital learning services;
- providing greater access to existing and new specialist learning resources;
- increasing investment in estates and equipment including faster and more flexible access to virtual learning environments;
- increasing focus on learner outcomes and improving destinations into higher study and employment;
- greater access to employers through a stronger, larger, post-16 learning provider providing training, work experience, apprenticeships and employment opportunities;
- providing a consistently high quality experience for all learners starting with good quality initial information, advice and guidance; and
- promoting a strong and influential learner voice.



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## Benefits for Employers

### **The merger will benefit employers by:**

- increased ability to compete for national capital and revenue funding that will support Local Enterprise Partnerships' priority sectors;
- enhanced information, advice and guidance capacity to promote apprenticeships and other 'earn and learn' opportunities that are emerging;
- increased capacity to enter international markets to complement business and civic initiatives so that localities benefit from the overseas students and visitors;
- the College becoming a major local employer committed to working with local suppliers to support local 'open for business' agenda;
- increased ability of the College to support deeper relationships with organisations and learners and provide a talent pool of students for work experience, apprenticeships and other opportunities;
- increased ability to invest in facilities, equipment and experiences that will ensure employer needs are well met;
- having a louder voice for the skills needs of the communities served by the merged College; and
- providing a greater range of subjects, which will increase and improve the responsiveness of the training and skill needs of individual employees.

## Benefits for Our Communities

### **The Solihull and Stratford communities will benefit from the merger by:**

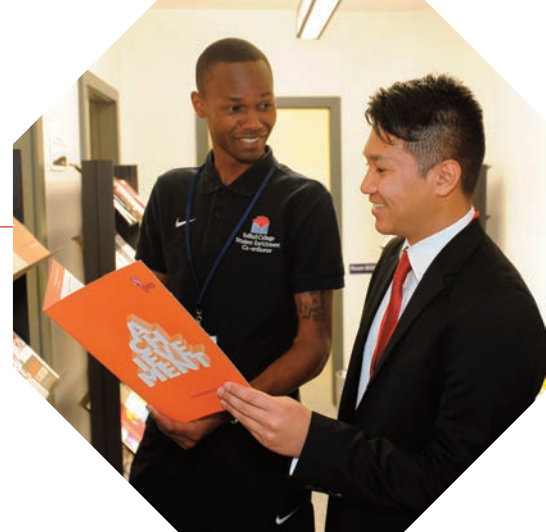
- a greater capacity to connect to community groups leading to a sustained delivery and presence across Solihull, Stratford and beyond;
- access to enhanced virtual and physical learning and social resources, which will enable local residents to engage more effectively with one another, with businesses and with key enabling agencies;
- a pro-active College, engaged in local issues and meeting local needs;
- enhanced opportunities for a more comprehensive community based curriculum offer;
- remaining a hub and beacon for community groups and local residents;
- upskilling people who have been unable to re-enter the employment market and actively support successful job-seeking;
- a College with the ability to say "yes" more often when asked to support community initiatives; and
- a College determined to use its wide network of school partners to ensure it can support engagement and inclusion initiatives more effectively and provide enhanced opportunities for high quality careers education.

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## Benefits for Our Staff

### The merger will benefit staff by providing:

- the ability to specialise further and to develop wider curriculum interests;
- more specialist resource and scope for staff development;
- greater opportunities for internal career progression;
- a greater capacity to support strong core staffing teams across all main vocational areas;
- exposure to greater job enhancement and enrichment opportunities that will support development for future career progression within the learning sector;
- improved access to enabling technologies that will enhance our ability to provide a better service to learners;
- improved job security that will come with a stronger financial base, the opportunities to attract more funds and the ability to mitigate more effectively the risks associated with product and process innovation; and
- improved access to business partners that will support regular industrial updating opportunities for teaching and business support colleagues.



# Governance, Leadership and Management

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There will be a newly constituted Corporation for the merged college. Initially, the composition will be agreed by a steering group of governors and managers from the two former Corporations. New appointments will be made subsequently that reflect the geographic reach and diversity of the community served by the new College locations and the skills required to govern a more complex organisation.

The new members of the Corporation will set a clear vision and mission and oversee the creation of a shared global brand, recognising the need to maintain the highest quality provision for our learners during a period of significant change. There is a firm commitment to recognise the strengths and unique characteristics of the local areas and whilst the merged college will be known as Solihull College & University Centre there is a commitment to maintain the Stratford-upon-Avon College name and branding.

Solihull College & University Centre has an experienced senior team and outstanding financial health which will help to restore financial stability to Stratford-upon-Avon College and invest for the future. Solihull College & University Centre recognizes that reducing any uncertainty for staff and students is another significant factor in making the merger a success. The new members of the Corporation and Management Team will work with key stakeholders to develop an exciting and innovative curriculum based on growth achieved through meeting employer, student and community need.



# Equality and Diversity

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Both Colleges have a long tradition of valuing and promoting equality and celebrating diversity, not only in response to relevant legislation but in upholding the spirit of the law, reducing discrimination and raising participation, ensuring that under-represented groups are attracted to courses offered.

Both Colleges have an Equality Policy and an Equality Action Plan which are used to review existing practice and to develop approaches to Teaching, Learning and Assessment to further improve the learner experience. The merged College will continue to analyse all aspects of its provision to ensure that equality and diversity are embedded within its structures and build upon the already excellent achievements. The College will expand its use of innovative approaches, utilising the latest technologies to motivate dis-engaged young people and support many of them in achieving qualifications for the first time.

Equality and Diversity will be key facets of the College's vision and mission and the College will always endeavor to:

- ensure that equality and social inclusion is embedded into the curriculum and all aspects of the learner experience;
- promote equality and diversity amongst and within the staffing resource;

- consult with all communities and stakeholders to ensure representation and respond to those consultations in the spirit of equality and valuing diversity; and
- ensure that equality and diversity is embedded through its strategy and operations and include a range of impact analyses on College operation.

The merged College will be in a stronger position to contribute to the achievement of government targets for participation and success as the greater critical mass of provision would allow for a stronger focus on the needs of under-represented groups, building on the sound platform already in place.

A full Equality Impact Assessment of the proposed merger will be conducted by the Colleges prior to merger. Both Governing Bodies are determined that the merger will bring significantly positive outcomes across equality indicators. Mitigating actions will be developed and set out in the Equality Impact Assessment, wherever any less positive outcomes are identified. It is anticipated that there will be more learning opportunities and enhanced learner progression routes, particularly for those learners who are currently under-represented at higher skill levels.

## How to Respond

We welcome feedback and input from our stakeholders - if you have any questions, comments or suggestions on the merger, please let us know. There are a variety of ways to respond, by letter, questionnaire, and email or online as detailed at **Appendix 6**.

# Appendices

## APPENDIX 1

### Chronology and Proposed Time-scales for Merger



## APPENDIX 2

### College and Campus Addresses



Proposed merged college 'registered office' address:

Solihull College & University Centre  
 Blossomfield Road,  
 Solihull,  
 B91 1SB

Building	Address	Telephone
Solihull College & University Centre, Blossomfield Campus	Blossomfield Road, Solihull, B91 1SB.	0121 678 7000
Solihull College & University Centre, Woodlands Campus	Auckland Drive Smith's Wood, Solihull, B36 0NF.	0121 678 7000
Stratford-upon-Avon College	The Willows North, Alcester Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire CV37 9QR.	01789 266245



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# APPENDIX 3

## Notice of the Proposal

### **Statutory Notice - Further and Higher Education Act 1992**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN by the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon College, The Willows North, Alcester Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire CV37 9QR, in accordance with the Further Education Corporations (Publication of Proposals) (England) Regulations 2012, SI 2012 No. 1157, of the proposal for the transfer of its property, rights and liabilities to the Corporation of Solihull College & University Centre, Blossomfield Road, Solihull, B91 1SB, and the subsequent dissolution of the Further Education Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon College.

Solihull College & University Centre will continue to operate both existing college brands post-merger.

The date proposed for the dissolution of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon College is **19 December 2017**.

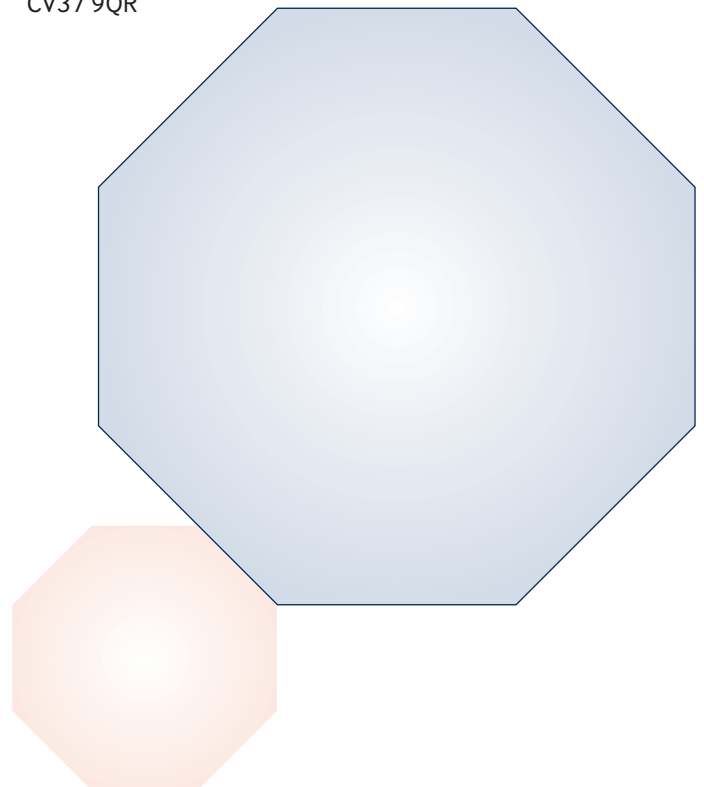
All students at Stratford-upon-Avon College who have not completed their courses of study by the date of the proposed dissolution will continue with and complete their studies in their current locations under the auspices of Solihull College & University Centre. A copy of the proposal is available free of charge via email [consultation@stratford.ac.uk](mailto:consultation@stratford.ac.uk) and will be sent to any person who requests it. Hard copies of the proposal will be available at reception in each of the colleges.

The consultation period runs from 09 August – 29 September 2017. All responses and representations must be received by the closing date. Stratford-upon-Avon College will publish a summary of the feedback and its outcome within two months of the closing date. The summary will be available on both college websites as follows:

**[www.stratford.ac.uk](http://www.stratford.ac.uk)**  
**[www.solihull.ac.uk](http://www.solihull.ac.uk)**

Responses to the consultation may be made by email to **[consultation@stratford.ac.uk](mailto:consultation@stratford.ac.uk)** or in writing to:

Consultation, c/o Maxine Bagshaw,  
Clerk to the Corporation,  
Stratford-upon-Avon College,  
The Willows North, Alcester Road,  
Stratford-upon-Avon,  
Warwickshire  
CV37 9QR





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# APPENDIX 4

## The Proposal

### **Information to be provided in accordance with The Further Education (Publication of Proposals) (England) Regulations 2012**

#### **The name of the Further Education Corporation and the name of the institution concerned:**

The Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon College

#### **The address of the institution:**

The Willows North, Alcester Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire CV37 9QR.

#### **A general description of the education provided by the institution:**

Stratford-upon-Avon College is a General Further Education College, which delivers vocational education and skills training in Stratford-upon-Avon. The current curriculum encompasses a sizable creative arts and performing arts provision, which has an excellent reputation, a significant hospitality and catering provision and a range of other vocational offers. It also includes an A Level offer a range of apprenticeships and a small Higher Education provision. At the end of the 2016/17 academic year the College had 1219 full-time students, 590 part-time students and 326 apprentices giving a total of 2135 students.

#### **The reason for proposing the dissolution of the Further Education Corporation:**

The Further Education Commissioner recommended that Stratford-upon-Avon College merges, following his intervention in March 2017, after the College had experienced financial difficulties. Dissolution of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon College is proposed in order that it may merge with Solihull College & University Centre. This will allow the combined organisation to harness the strengths of both institutions, their resources, expertise and quality, and their equally strong reputations and standing with employers, stakeholders and their communities.

Utilising these, it will be strongly placed to offer an increased range of outstanding educational and training opportunities to individuals and employers, and serve as a contributor to the local economy, and to do so in an efficient way that provides good value to paying students and clients, to funding organisations and to tax payers.

The date proposed for the dissolution of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon College is **19 December 2017.**

All students at Stratford-upon-Avon College who have not completed their courses of study by the date of the proposed dissolution will continue with and complete their studies in their current locations under the auspices of Solihull College & University Centre.

#### **The proposed arrangements for the transfer of the property, rights and liabilities of the further education institution:**

The merger will be effected by Stratford-upon-Avon College transferring its property, rights and liabilities to the Corporation of Solihull College & University Centre, before dissolving itself.



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# APPENDIX 5

## Indicative List of Stakeholders to be consulted

The following is an indicative list of stakeholders to whom a copy of this consultation document has been sent. It does not preclude any person or organisation not listed below from submitting comments or replies.

### Colleges:

Activate Learning  
Birmingham Metropolitan College  
Gloucestershire College  
Heart of Worcestershire College  
Kidderminster College  
Solihull Sixth Form College  
South and City College  
Warwickshire College  
North Warwickshire & South Leicestershire College  
Coventry College

### Education and Skills:

Association of Colleges  
Association of Employment and Learning Providers  
Education and Training Foundation  
National Institute of Adult Continuing Education  
National Union of Students  
Ofsted  
Sixth Form Colleges' Association

### Employer Bodies:

GBS Chamber of Commerce  
Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce  
Confederation of British Industry  
Institute of Directors  
Federation of Small Businesses

### Government Departments, Agencies and Funding Bodies:

The Secretary of State for Education  
Department for Education  
Education and Skills Funding Agency/Chief Executive of Skills Funding  
Higher Education Funding Council for England  
British Council  
Companies House  
Emergency services  
Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership  
Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership

### Local Authorities:

Birmingham City Council  
Bromsgrove District Council  
Cotswold District Council  
Coventry City Council  
Gloucestershire County Council  
North Warwickshire Borough Council  
Redditch Borough Council  
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council  
Stratford-on-Avon District Council  
Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council  
Warwick District Council  
Warwickshire County Council  
West Midlands Combined Authority  
Worcestershire County Council  
Wychavon District Council



### **Members of Parliament for the constituencies of:**

Birmingham Edgbaston  
Birmingham Erdington  
Birmingham Hall Green  
Birmingham Hodge Hill  
Birmingham Ladywood  
Birmingham Northfield  
Birmingham Perry Barr  
Birmingham Selly Oak  
Birmingham Yardley  
Bromsgrove –  
Kenilworth and Southam  
Meriden  
Mid-Worcestershire  
Redditch  
Rugby  
Solihull  
Stratford-upon-Avon  
Sutton Coldfield  
The Cotswolds  
Warwick and Leamington

Head Teachers of all schools where students regularly progress to either college

Head Teachers of any other maintained school or Academy in Warwickshire and Solihull which provides full-time education suitable to the requirements of persons over compulsory school age.

### **Staff and Students of both colleges**

### **Employer partners of each College**

#### **Trades Unions:**

Association of Teachers and Lecturers  
Association for College Management  
NASUWT  
National Union of Teachers  
Trade Union Congress  
University and College Union  
UNISON

#### **Universities:**

Aston University  
Birmingham City University  
Coventry University  
University College Birmingham  
University of Birmingham  
University of Gloucestershire  
University of South Wales  
University of Warwick  
University of Worcester  
Oxford Brookes University  
Northampton University  
Newman University

#### **Other Partners**

Sub-contractors  
Sanctuary Housing

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## APPENDIX 6

### How to Respond to the Consultation

A copy of the proposal is available free of charge via email [consultation@stratford.ac.uk](mailto:consultation@stratford.ac.uk) and will be sent to any person who requests it. Hard copies of the proposal will be available at reception in each of the colleges.

The formal consultation period runs from 09 August – 29 September 2017. The formal Statutory Notice can be found at Appendix 3. You can respond by completing and returning the questionnaire overleaf or online on the Colleges' websites (see below).

[www.stratford.ac.uk](http://www.stratford.ac.uk)

[www.solihull.ac.uk](http://www.solihull.ac.uk)

You can also give a longer response in writing. All responses and representations must be received by the closing date, **29 September 2017**.

If you have any questions relating to this consultation you can make them in writing or by email. In order to give us time to respond, these should be submitted by **15 September 2017**.

Responses to the consultation may be made by email to:

**[consultation@stratford.ac.uk](mailto:consultation@stratford.ac.uk)**

or in writing to:

Consultation, c/o Maxine Bagshaw,  
Clerk to the Corporation,  
Stratford-upon-Avon College,  
The Willows North, Alcester Road,  
Stratford-upon-Avon,  
Warwickshire  
CV37 9QR.

The Corporations of Stratford-upon-Avon College and Solihull College & University Centre will publish a summary of the feedback and its outcome within two months of the closing date. The summary will be available on both college websites as above.



# WE WANT YOUR VIEWS



## Proposed Merger of Solihull College & University Centre and Stratford-upon-Avon College

The above colleges are proposing to merge in order to further the ambitions we both have for the communities we serve. Details of the proposed merger are outlined in the Merger Consultation Document which is available online on both college's websites. Once you have read the proposal, please answer the following questions:

### ABOUT YOU

Name:

Email:  Postcode:

Which of the following best describes you or your organisation?

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> College Staff            | <input type="checkbox"/> HE Institution   | <input type="checkbox"/> Parent            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employer                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Local Business   | <input type="checkbox"/> School/University |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FE or Sixth Form College | <input type="checkbox"/> Local Community  | <input type="checkbox"/> Student           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government Body/Agency   | <input type="checkbox"/> Local Government | <input type="checkbox"/> Other             |

Please specify:

Please use this space to tell us a little about yourself (optional)

Please tell us your preferred contact details (such as address, contact number or email address)

If you represent an organisation, please tell us about your role



## HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT THE PROPOSED MERGER

Do you support the proposal for the merger?

Yes

Please use this space to provide any further details on the reasons for your answer.

No

Not sure

If you do not support the proposed merger, are there any alternative options which you wish to suggest to be considered?

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

Please give details of the provision or services you would like to see prioritised.

No

Not sure

We plan to share good practice across our campuses in order to further enhance the quality of the student and customer experience. Do you agree that the Proposed Merger would meet this aim?

Yes

Please give details of any areas, services or provision you would like to see prioritised.

No

Not sure

Do you think any group, including students and staff, would be adversely affected by the merger plans?

Yes

Please use this space to provide any further details on the reasons for your answer.

No

Not sure

Please use this space to make any comments relevant to the plans in the Merger Consultation document or to expand on any of your previous answers.





Consultation on the proposed merger of

**Solihull College & University Centre**  
and  
**Stratford-upon-Avon College**

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August 2017



**Solihull College**  
& University Centre