



Derek Macnab
Acting Chief Executive
Epping Forest District Council

By email

19 June 2018

Dear Mr Macnab

Thank you for taking the time to respond to the consultation for the proposed merger of Epping Forest College and New City College. The public consultation period has now closed and all comments have been carefully considered. In response to some of the key points you raised, we would like to take this opportunity to note the following:

- We share your concerns about local reputation of the college and agree that this has been successfully challenged by the current management. Under our proposals, Epping Forest remains a college and will continue to maintain a local focus concentrating on the needs of local students and local businesses.
- It has been known since early 2017 that the college will need to merge in order to maintain provision within Epping Forest. The college's first proposal (to merge with Barnet and Southgate) failed largely because we did not believe that the proposals as submitted by Barnet and Southgate reflected our local needs.
- Before selecting New City College as our preferred partner, three colleges were interviewed (including Herts Regional College, which you specify in your letter). From that selection process, Epping Forest College governors unanimously agreed that New City College should be selected.
- The college will continue to deliver a curriculum from its current campus, that meets the needs of the local community and employers, making sure that our communities are equipped with the skills and qualifications they need to progress and succeed in their careers. Being part of a wider group will allow curriculum growth including the development of specialisms and enhanced opportunities for staff's professional development. While EFC students should not notice change in their day-to-day college experience, the merger will allow increased investment into their teaching and learning environment.
- Unfortunately, the timetable for merger is not within the control of the college. As you know, Epping Forest College, due to its financial situation, is in "administered status". In addition, the college has had to borrow money from our funding body in order to remain solvent. A merger for Epping Forest College was recommended by the college's Structure and Prospects Appraisal led by the Further Education Commissioner of which key stakeholders, including colleagues at EFDC, were aware. It was also noted in the Greater Essex Further Education Area-based Review, published in August 2017. The Department for Education has given a clear mandate for merger by 1 August 2018. Epping Forest College has been carefully exploring merger partners through this period.

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- Regarding your point about the potential merger with Havering colleges, as part of the preparation for merger, both Epping Forest and the Havering colleges need to carry out legal due diligence on NCC. The scrutiny covered by due diligence relating to college mergers is the same in all cases and rather than either engage two legal firms or the same firm twice to carry out the same work, it makes sense from a financial perspective to engage a firm to do this for both Epping Forest and the Havering Colleges. We can assure you that the due diligence process has been undertaken robustly.
- We can reassure EFDC that developments planned for other campuses in the New City College Group are being financed through existing assets and financial management of the group and do not need to be financed or underpinned by Epping Forest College assets as is suggested in your letter.
- We recognise that substantial capital would be received as a result of the sale of EFC land (at this stage the proposed sale relates only to the "middle site" and not the open land). It should be noted that there is a substantial loan outstanding and we also have to repay the ESFA loan, and capital investment is required for the Epping Forest campus in order to complete some of the work that has had to be postponed because of insufficient funding. We are aware of the wish of the council for a sports and well-being centre. We believe that sport is an area of delivery that can be developed at Epping Forest and that an appropriate centre attached to the college will be both attractive to the local community and for students. This can be explored as a positive outcome from the merger and we plan to review our options later this year and discuss with the council the best way to achieve your and our aspirations for the use of the site.
- We recognise that governance will be different post-merger and we will ensure that a close link remains between the college and its local community. It is important that the college continues to work with partners and to prepare students for the career opportunities of the Epping Forest District and local region.
- We believe that the college should develop its curriculum and build local support to make it the first choice in post-16 provision. We fully recognise the importance of developing and maintaining a course offer relevant to local needs. That is one of our priorities. At the moment, for example, the college is not allowed to deliver any new apprenticeships but, with the merger, we will again have this opportunity and it has been identified as a key priority for us. We recognise the value of the local employer links that EFDC has and we wish to play an active part in ensuring that the college can support the needs of employers across the area.

We hope that this response does provide the reassurances that you seek. We welcome your wish to work with us in a constructive way. Whilst we fully understand the concerns of the council in relation to the timescale, it has been necessary for us to act quickly to ensure the future of Epping Forest College.

Thank you once again for your detailed response to our consultation.

Yours sincerely,



Martin Rosner
Chair of Governors, Epping Forest College



Meena Chavda
Chair of Governors, New City College