



ABBEGATE

Sixth Form College

PUBLIC CONSULTATION



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Introduction

A new sixth form college is proposed for Bury St Edmunds, to open in September 2019.

Abbeygate Sixth Form College (Abbeygate) will be an academy of Suffolk Academies Trust (SAT), a partnership between West Suffolk College in Bury St Edmunds and One Sixth Form College in Ipswich.

The proposal for a new sixth form college was submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) in 2015, after SAT and four founding partner schools¹ raised concerns over the lack of Post-16 options in West Suffolk. The proposal sees the closure of small school sixth forms in favour of one dedicated sixth form college, specialising in A Level provision, with the ability to offer a broader range of subjects to students, in state of the art facilities.

More information about the need for a new sixth form college can be found later in this document.

The proposal received approval from the DfE and plans have now been drawn up to build a brand new sixth form college in the heart of Bury St Edmunds.

The consultation

SAT, as the Multi Academy Trust opening the new academy, is required to hold a public consultation in accordance with Section 10 of the [Academies Act 2010](#).

The purpose of the consultation is to share information about Abbeygate with stakeholders and members of the public and to seek opinion as to whether or not SAT should enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State to open the new free school academy.

The agreement is a contract, which sets out the conditions under which Abbeygate will be funded by the DfE. The terms of the agreement will be finalised once the consultation has completed. A draft agreement can be viewed on the DfE's [website](#).

The findings of the consultation will be summarised in a report and submitted to the DfE. The findings will help inform the Secretary of State for Education's decision as to whether to enter into a funding agreement with SAT.

The consultation will run from Friday 25th January to 5pm on Friday 8th March 2019.

We would like to seek your views through the completion of a short survey. The survey can be [completed and submitted online](#) or you can [download a Word version from our website](#) to complete and return via email to info@suffolkacademiestrust.ac.uk or by post to Public Consultation, Suffolk Academies Trust, c/o West Suffolk College, Out Risbygate, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3RL.

¹ King Edward VI School, Newmarket Academy, Stour Valley Community School and Sybil Andrews Academy

We will be holding a drop in session for stakeholders and members of the public on Wednesday 27th February from 17:00 to 20:00 at West Suffolk College. Please come along if you would like to talk to the Principal and members of the project team.

Please note this consultation relates solely to the educational vision of Abbeygate Sixth Form College. It does not relate to the location and building, the consultation for which formed part of the planning application process.

Why West Suffolk needs a new sixth form college

West Suffolk needs, and deserves, a world-class high performing Sixth Form College to provide outstanding A Level teaching in a wide range of subjects and exceptional pastoral support to the region's 16-19 year olds who should not have to travel further afield for their studies.

Abbeygate will follow in the footsteps of One Sixth Form College in Ipswich, which since its inception in 2010 has become a hugely successful outstanding (Ofsted, May 2015) 16-19 academy offering a diverse range of A Level and Vocational qualifications. It delivers exceptionally high outcomes and 'Value Added' score measures. Abbeygate will replicate this successful model in the west of Suffolk.

The average local School Sixth Form typically has c. 200² students, significantly lower than the average Sixth Form College which has in excess of 1000 students - a scale which allows them to offer a wider range of courses.

Reports by the DfE have noted that Sixth Forms with <200 students will:

- struggle to deliver a broad study programme
- struggle to deliver to a sufficiently high standard
- have high risk of closure
- not be financially viable (exemplified by recent school sixth form closures across the region after recent changes to post-16 funding which has declined significantly over the past five years)

Forecast data of 16-19 places provided by the Local Authority shows the number of students currently eligible for post-16 education, and those forecast by 2025 in the catchment area for Abbeygate. The number of planned post-16 places for West Suffolk will rise from 2,142 in 2018 to 2,510 by 2025. The number of planned post-16 places for South Norfolk, who might also attend Abbeygate, rises from 436 in 2018 to 604 in 2025.

Suffolk County Council also shared its Education and Learning Infrastructure Plan, which states in Section 3 – School Place Planning:

² At the time SAT submitted an application for a new academy to the DfE

“In contrast to Suffolk’s rural areas, the main urban areas and market towns are expected to accommodate major growth in the form of urban extensions or new communities.”

“The number of school aged children and young people is growing as the county sees spikes in local population growth, net increases in immigration and a large amount of new developments for the revitalised housing market. Our pupil forecasts show the total school population will increase by over 4,500 (5%) in the next 5 years (primary age increasing to over 6%; secondary starting to increase in the next couple of years and continuing for at least the next 10 years).” Forest Heath (catchment area for the new school is stated as a particular growth ‘hot spot’.

Without Abbeygate there will be insufficient A Level places to meet the increased demand that is being forecast.

Abbeygate is an exciting collaboration between the Suffolk Academies Trust and four local secondary schools (our founder schools):

1. King Edward VI School
2. Newmarket Academy
3. Stour Valley Community School
4. Sybil Andrews Academy

The unique, forward-thinking support of the founder schools adds momentum to create an outstanding sixth form college in Bury St Edmunds and give our young people access to a full range of excellent post-16 provision (A Levels at Abbeygate and Vocational learning at West Suffolk College).

By collaborating in a similar way to the School Sixth Forms in south west Ipswich, (which all closed their small Sixth Form Centres and reformed in 2010 as a combined Sixth Form Centre – One Sixth Form College), the founder schools will remove the current limitation of A Level choice for their students and be able to refocus as 11-16 school providers to achieve the best outcomes for Year 7-11 students.

This will provide the region with sustainable post-16 provision that is both financially viable, exceptionally high quality, convenient and desirable as well as the best value for the community.

About Abbeygate Sixth Form College

Abbeygate will offer a broad and balanced curriculum, including A Level subjects that have previously been available only to students who are able and willing to travel outside of Suffolk.

Abbeygate will open in September 2019 with a Year 12 cohort only and will be accommodated in a dedicated and distinct space within West Suffolk College, the third best college in the

country³.

In September 2020, Abbeygate will move into a brand new £31m state of the art building and will accommodate both a Year 12 and Year 13 cohort.

Student numbers will continue to grow year on year, to reach full capacity of 1700 students.

The building will include ten purpose-built science laboratories, naturally-lit art studios, a full suite of music practice rooms, carefully designed classrooms and more than £1million invested in information and communication technology.

Images and a 3D flythrough showing the planned designs for the building can be found on our [website](#).

The Principal

David Gartland was appointed as the founding Principal of Abbeygate SFC in September 2018 and comes with an impressive track record. David was the Vice Principal in an outstanding Sixth Form College in London before moving to Suffolk to oversee the establishment of Lowestoft Sixth Form College. Under David's leadership, firstly as Deputy Principal and later as the Principal, the college established a stunning record of excellence; being judged to be the top performing sixth form college in the country for academic attainment and A Level performance⁴ for two consecutive years. David partly attributes the success to the hugely dedicated staff who inspired and motivated students through delivering outstanding, interesting and engaging lessons, whilst providing exceptional pastoral care, which will be replicated at Abbeygate.

Curriculum offer

Abbeygate will deliver a varied A Level curriculum including subjects many students will not have had the opportunity to study at GCSE; these include Psychology, Government and Politics, Sociology and Law to name a few. Over 30 different A Levels will be delivered and taught by subject specialists who have a real passion for their subject. Students will also have the opportunity to study the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), a well-respected and valued qualification within Higher Education. The Extended project is a standalone qualification that carries UCAS points but also enables students to deepen their knowledge and understanding of a subject area that really interests them. They will carry out their own research and develop their independent learning skills whilst being supported by their tutor.

Beyond the curriculum

Abbeygate is committed to delivering a well-rounded educational experience. There will be extensive pastoral support provided by the Student Services Manager and a team of Student

³ <https://feweek.co.uk/2018/11/20/nicdex-2018/>

⁴ DfE performance tables

Our vision and values

Our vision is to develop an inclusive and inspirational Sixth Form College that sits at the heart of a collaborative learning community where all talents and achievements are equally valued. This proposal also meets the vision of Suffolk County Council's Children and Young People's Service to encourage and enable all children and young people in Suffolk to aspire to and achieve their potential.

We aim to inspire every student to achieve excellent outcomes, by placing their success and happiness at the heart of everything we do.

Our values:

- We are student focused
- We are inclusive
- We are innovative and creative
- We are aspirational
- We have integrity, always
- We are a highly effective team
- We celebrate success

We are passionate about our mission – we believe that our local community needs and deserves the very best education we can provide. Consequently, our standards for our students and for ourselves are extremely high.

We want our students to leave with great results, but also ready to progress and make a contribution to the society in which they live. Our students will leave College proud of their contributions and achievements, ready to do more.

Admissions policy

The full admissions policy, including details of the college's over subscription criteria, is available on the Abbeygate [website](#)⁵

All Abbeygate students will study a minimum of three A Levels on a full time basis. Students applying to Abbeygate will have achieved a minimum of five GCSEs grade 4-9 with specific subject requirements as detailed in the prospectus and on the website. For instance, to study a STEM based programme, students are required to achieve a minimum of a grade 6 in the subject(s) they wish to study and have an average GCSE score of 5.5 and above. Students are encouraged to apply online and all students will receive a 1:1 admissions interview with a member of the management team prior to being offered a place at the College.

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https://www.abbeygatesfc.ac.uk/files/6815/3936/2373/Abbeygate_SFC_Admission_Policy_FINAL_v1.0_12.10.18.pdf