

**SIGNIFICANT CHANGE CONSULTATION**

**The proposal is to expand the 6th form at Thomas Gainsborough School, Great Cornard, Sudbury, CO10 0NH to meet the demographic need for school places in the Local Authority District of Babergh and specifically at Thomas Gainsborough School.**

1. **Background**

Thomas Gainsborough School, formerly Great Cornard Upper School, is a secondary school and sixth form in the village of Great Cornard. The school was formerly a technology college which converted to academy status in January 2015. The school is now part of the Unity Schools Partnership which is a partnership of schools located on the Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire borders. The school has an Ofsted ‘Good’ rating.

Prior to converting to academy status, the school undertook a complete rebuild of the site replacing the main teaching complex but retaining the Sports Centre and former Great Cornard Middle School. The former middle school is now used as a Sixth Form and Media Centre.

Currently, the school’s Published Admission Number (PAN) in Year 7 is:

* Year 7 240 (1200 in years 7-11)
* Year 12 100 (200 in Years 12/13)

Population projections are predicting the need to provide an additional 180 places by 2024. To respond to this demand, the school is proposing to expand pupil numbers in its 6th form.

1. **Significant Change Consultation**

Under Department for Education ‘Making significant changes to an open academy’ guidance, multi-academy trusts must consult with their community when proposing to make significant changes to the operation of an open Academy.

Unity Schools Partnership and Thomas Gainsborough School now wants to hear the views of its stakeholders on this significant change proposal.

1. **Details of the Proposal**

The proposal would enable school’s pupil numbers to increase as follows:

* From 1200 in Years 7-11 and 200 in Years 12/13
* To 1200 in Years 7-11 and 350 in Years 12/13

In summary, this would require an expansion of the current accommodation to provide **150 additional 6th form places.**

The proposed increase in pupil numbers would require a remodelling of the present 6th Form and Media Centre to provide:

* 2x Science Labs
* 1x Drama Studio
* 1x 6th form common room
* 1x 6th form study area
* 1x new library
* Light refurbishment of classrooms, toilets and communal spaces

**4. Rationale**

Demand for school places arising from new housing will not be able to be met locally if Thomas Gainsborough is unable to expand. Ormiston Sudbury Academy has recently closed its 6th form and we know that more students will apply to Thomas Gainsborough as the local population grows through new housing. Rated ‘Good’ by Ofsted, the school is in an ideal position to offer high standards of academic learning and progression opportunities for students with appropriate GCSE qualifications.

**5. Funding**

The total anticipated cost of the building project is expected to be in excess of £2 million. A Post – 16 Capacity Fund application has been submitted to the Department for Education to fund the cost of the works.

**6. How can I take part in the consultation?**

The consultation runs from 14th December 2022 until 25 January 2023.

You can:

* Attend the public meeting being held at Thomas Gainsborough School (6th Form Block) at 6 pm on Wednesday 11 January 2023
* Send your comments by email to projects@unitysp.co.uk

**7. What are the next steps?**

The Trust will consider the outcome of the consultation, addressing concerns where appropriate and apply to the Regional Schools Commissioner for approval.

**8. How can I find out about the outcome of the application to the Regional Schools Commissioner?**

Please continue to refer to our website for an update: <http://www.unitysp.co.uk/>

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