



THE
BEDFORD
COLLEGE
GROUP

PARTICIPATE IN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND CONTRIBUTE TO LOCAL AGENDAS

Project: Redevelopment of Wellingborough Campus

By the time The Bedford College Group was established in 2017, the Wellingborough campus was considered unfit for purpose. It was the smallest of the Tresham campuses with only 60 Motor Vehicle students. Previously the campus had offered a range of courses including: Access to University; Construction; Computing; Engineering; Hairdressing and Health and Social Care.

The newly formed Group wanted to deliver on the historical promise made to the Wellingborough community to redevelop this Further Education (FE) provision. Extensive market research was quickly commissioned and consultations hosted to fully understand the local community's needs.

Research confirmed that Wellingborough was the only town of its size, out of 15 comparator authorities, that did not have a FE campus offering a variety of post-16 courses.

Additionally, research concluded that the community of Wellingborough had very low attainment levels and was below the averages for East Midlands and England from Level 1 to Level 4. Wellingborough also had four Lower layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the top 10% of most deprived LSOAs in England.



Picture shows Wellingborough campus of Tresham College

It was clear that the redevelopment of the Wellingborough campus was vital to support social mobility and educational progression within the area, but it would require a high level of financial investment. Closing the campus down was not a consideration and so the Finance Team quickly set about securing £7.5 million of funding from South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) to add to its own funding for the £11 million project.

By July 2018 – less than a year after the merger – building work was underway, with planned completion for September 2020. Despite further challenges in March 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Estates Team ensured that construction work continued safely around the central tower block and surrounding teaching areas with the campus opening on time and within budget.

The project team kept the local community up-to-date through excellent relations with the Borough Council and local media. 3D virtual tours were commissioned and online events held to enable potential students and local residents to experience the new campus from the safety of their own homes whilst encouraging hundreds of applications. In addition, the team attended community events, developed relationships with intermediaries, produced partnership marketing and competitions/awards.

Web pages were quickly developed and all social media, communication and marketing activities drove the local community to this dedicated site. This was particularly important during the COVID-19 restrictions. The website enabled the College to update potential students, parents and other stakeholders about the progress on the refurbishment project and encouraged two-way communication for useful feedback from the community.

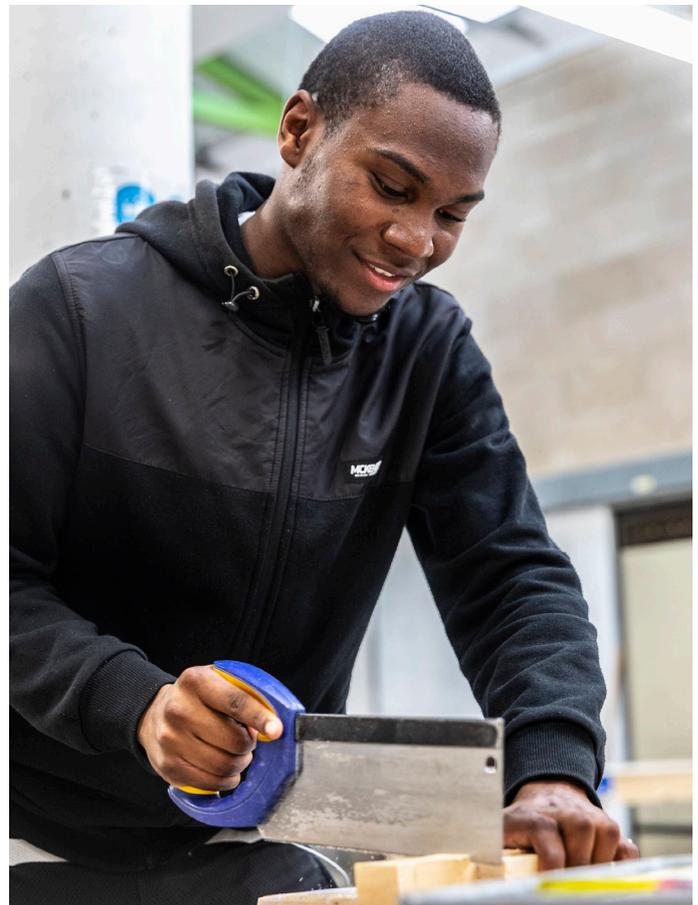
By September 2020, when the new campus opened, there were 480 students enrolled on courses – an incredible 93% increase compared to 2019.

A year later, in September 2021 the Wellingborough campus enrolled 508 on to courses and the provision at the town centre campus has grown to offer Motor Vehicle, Electrical Installation and Constuction.

The redevelopment of the town centre campus brought rejuvenation in to the buildings and opened up construction workshops, specialist classrooms, science laboratories, an industry standard motor vehicle workshop within the modern-look campus. A fully equipped Learning Resources Centre was also reinstated at the campus for all students to use during their studies.

Longer term, the Group will be monitoring progression rates and tailoring the wide-ranging support it provides to ensure students from the Wellingborough community receive the education opportunities they deserve.

Councillor Martin Griffiths, former Leader of Wellingborough Borough Council and a SEMLEP Board member, said: "This is one of the most significant developments to take place in Wellingborough for many years, which will provide young people and adults with access to further education... the College will play a crucial role in our economic recovery from the current pandemic, providing opportunities for our residents and encouraging visitors to our town."



Picture shows a construction student

Lucinda Young, from SEMLEP, added "We are working to tackle a big skills agenda for our area and The Bedford College Group has an important role in upskilling and re-skilling our workforces..."

Dan Barker, Head of Engineering and Motor Vehicle, who has worked at Tresham College for over twenty years said: "It feels as if the town is taking pride in the new Wellingborough Campus. The transformation is providing students with modern facilities, enabling them to gain valuable experience and develop their careers."

Ben Smith, a Bricklaying apprentice who progressed from a full-time bricklaying course last year, said: "The Wellingborough campus means I don't have to travel to Northampton or Corby to do my training, as it's local to me. The facilities are great and the staff are excellent at what they do and very friendly. It's a great asset to the town and surrounding area."

Emily Harmon, a Health and Social Care student at the Tresham College said: "I think Wellingborough Campus is a welcoming and caring place to be, the tutors are encouraging and inspiring and I always feel safe there."



Picture shows two Motor Vehicle students