

If Key Decision: Decision Ref. No.

B087/24

If not a Key Decision write n/a above

OFFICER DECISION RECORD ⁱ

Officer Key Decisions are subject to the Council’s Call-In Procedure (Annex 9 of the Council’s Constitution <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/freedom-of-information-and-council-data/open-data-statistics-about-hertfordshire/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/who-we-are-and-what-we-do.aspx>)

Type of Decision: Executive

Key Decision: Yes

Executive Member: Caroline Clapper

Portfolio: Education, Libraries & Lifelong Learning

Officer Contact: Kate Leahy, Head of School Planning
Tel: 01992 555864

Subject: Whether or not to initiate public consultation on the proposal to enlarge Amwell View School, Stanstead Abbots, via a satellite provision (on the site of Tonwell St Mary’s Primary), from September 2025.

1. Decision

Whether or not to initiate public consultation on the proposal to enlarge Amwell View School (“The School”) by 32 places at the former Tonwell St Mary’s Primary School from September 2025, for a minimum of three years.

The School is a community special school for children aged 2 – 19 with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD).

2. Reasons for the decision

In December 2020, the Cabinet of Hertfordshire County Council (“the county council”) approved the Special School Place Planning Strategy 2020-2023, which sets out that demand for special school places has grown sharply in recent years and is forecast to continue to grow at a

rate that will exceed the current supply of places. As the majority of Hertfordshire's special schools are now at capacity, the strategy sets out longer-term priorities which will deliver the additional school places required. However, in the short term, it identifies that additional capacity will be needed to meet the immediate demand for special school places.

Currently there are 153 children in Hertfordshire awaiting an SLD school place, 16 of whom have been waiting over three terms. The county council's Ofsted Action Plan sets out that the county council should have no pupils waiting over three terms by January 2025.

In March 2024, Cabinet decided to close Tonwell St Mary's Primary School because of very low pupil numbers and consequential financial and educational impacts. The school will legally close on 31 August 2024.

Having consulted with the Headteacher of Amwell View School, it would be an ideal setting to provide a satellite provision of that School for up to 32 children with SLD, in order to meet the immediate demand for SLD places in the east of the county. Amwell View's main school site is 5.5 miles from Tonwell St Mary's and therefore pupils can easily be transported from the main site to the proposed satellite.

In line with the Department for Education's (DfE's) guidance Making Significant Changes ('prescribed alterations') to Maintained Schools¹, if the county council wish to enlarge a community special school by 10% or 20 pupils, whichever is the smaller number, the county council must follow the statutory process in order to do so.

Amwell View School in Stanstead Abbots has a current capacity of 168 places. This means that the school can be enlarged by a maximum of 16 places without the need to undertake a public consultation. This includes proposals where the school would operate over a split site.

There is an immediate need to provide additional SLD places to the east of the county. Currently the county council cannot place pupils in a suitable Hertfordshire school. Amwell View School has indicated it would support opening a provision at the former Tonwell Primary School for up to 16 pupils as early as January 2025, provided the necessary, relatively minor, works are undertaken to make the buildings appropriate for its pupils.

Officers have written to the Diocese of St Albans and its Board has given in principle support for the use of the former school building to support SEND education until a larger scheme is completed, delivering additional SLD places in Hertfordshire. It has agreed that the usage could then be reassessed at that time to decide whether there is a continued need for this type of provision.

¹ [Making significant changes \('prescribed alterations'\) to maintained schools \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

The county council can open provision at Tonwell for up to 16 pupils without the need for a public consultation. However, it would need to consult to enlarge the provision from 16 to 32 places, as this would meet the DfE's statutory trigger.

3. Alternative options considered and rejected

None

4. Consultation *(see Summary of Requirements below)*

Was any Councillor consulted? Yes

If yes:

(a) Comments of Executive Member

The Executive Member has no comments other than to concur with the Executive Director's intention to agree the proposal.

(b) Comments of other consultees

None

5. Any conflict of interest declared by a councillor who has been consulted in relation to the decision

None

6. Following consultation with the Executive Member, I am proceeding with the proposed decision.

Signed: Jo Fisher

Title: Executive Director of Children's Services

Date: 30/08/2024

Copies of record to:

- All consultees
 - Electronic copy (if required to be made available for public inspection) to Democratic Services Manager - Room 213 County Hall.
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