

If Key Decision: Decision Ref. No.

B031/25

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>)

Subject:

Whether or not to agree the proposal, following the statutory notice period, to enlarge Amwell View School and Specialist Sports College, Stanstead Abbots, by 32 places via a satellite provision on the site of the former Tonwell St Mary's Primary School, Ware, from September 2025.

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

1. Decision

To agree the proposal to enlarge Amwell View School and Specialist Sports College, Station Road, Stanstead Abbots, SG12 8EH, by 32 places at the former Tonwell St Mary's Primary School site, Ware Road, Tonwell, Ware, SG12 0HN, from September 2025, for a minimum of three years.

Amwell View School and Specialist Sports College 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.

In March 2024, Cabinet agreed the closure of Tonwell St Mary’s Primary School due to very low pupil numbers and consequential financial and educational impacts. The school closed on 31 August 2024.

Following the closure of Tonwell St Mary’s Primary School, the county council worked with Amwell View School and Specialist Sports College to discuss opening an SLD satellite provision for up to 32 children, in order to meet the immediate demand for SLD places in the east of the county.

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 and Specialist Sports College had a capacity of 168 places, meaning the school could be enlarged by a maximum of 16 places without the need to undertake a public consultation, including proposals where the school would operate over a split site.

In January 2025, Amwell View School and Specialist Sports College opened the satellite provision at the former Tonwell St Mary’s Primary School for up to 16 pupils. This decision is to be made on whether the satellite provision should be increased from 16 places to 32.

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 was agreed that the usage could then be reassessed at that time to decide whether there is a continued need for this type of provision.

Consultation

¹ [Making significant changes \(‘prescribed alterations’\) to maintained schools](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/90424/making-significant-changes-to-maintained-schools.pdf)
(publishing.service.gov.uk)

A consultation on the above proposal took place between 9 September – 6 October 2024. A total of 12 responses were received; 9 (75%) of which agreed with the proposal and 3 (25%) disagreed.

Between 7 January – 3 February 2025, the county council published a statutory notice relating to the above proposal. The county council did not receive any responses to the proposal during the statutory notice period.

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: 17/03/2025

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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