



**School Planning
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Dear Consultee

Consultation on the proposal to enlarge Amwell View School, a community special school in Stanstead Abbots for children aged 2 – 19 years old with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), by 32 places through the opening of a satellite provision at the former Tonwell St Mary’s Primary School from September 2025, for a minimum of three years.

What is the proposal?

Hertfordshire County Council is writing to consult on the proposal to enlarge Amwell View School and Specialist Sport College, Station Road, Stanstead Abbots, SG12 8EH by 32 places via a satellite provision at the former Tonwell St Mary’s Primary School, Ware Road, Tonwell, Ware, SG12 0HN, from September 2025 for a minimum of three years. The proposal will enlarge Amwell View School from 168 to 200 special school places for children and young people with SLD.

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 a statutory process in order to do so.

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

Amwell View School currently has a capacity of 168 places. This means that the school can be enlarged by 16 places without the need to undertake a statutory process.

As you may be aware, on 18 March 2024, the county council made the decision to close Tonwell St Mary's Primary School on 31 August 2024 due to very low pupil numbers on the school roll. There is an immediate need to provide additional SLD places in the east of the county as the number of pupils awaiting an SLD placement exceeds supply. As a result, the county council will be working with Amwell View School to open a satellite provision for up to 16 SLD pupils at the former Tonwell St Mary's Primary School from January 2025. These pupils would be on the roll of Amwell View School, which would be responsible for delivering the provision and for the safeguarding of the pupils.

In order to fully utilise the former Tonwell school building, the county council is proposing to offer up to 32 SLD places. As this is above the DfE's threshold, the county council will need to consult on the proposal to increase the number of available places at the satellite provision from 16 to 32 from September 2025.

The use of the former Tonwell school site for this purpose would come ahead of a larger proposal to create a 100-place satellite provision of Amwell View School in Buntingford, which is subject to a separate consultation.

Why is this being proposed?

In December 2020, Cabinet² approved the Special School Place Planning Strategy 2020-2023³ which articulates that demand for special school places is growing sharply and that demand continues to exceed supply.

Priority 1 of the Strategy is building capacity in SLD/Physical and Neurological Impairment (PNI) sectors. Since 2018/19, 270 additional places have been made available across these two sectors, however, there remains a growing deficit of places, particularly in the SLD sector. These children and young people generally have complex needs and therefore require a specialist placement. All of Hertfordshire's existing SLD schools are currently full, meaning children and young people either remain unplaced or are being placed in costly independent schools, often at a significant distance from their homes.

Why has Amwell View School been chosen for an increase in pupils?

Amwell View School is rated as Outstanding⁴ (April 2024) and has a strong leadership team along with skilled staff. The school provides high quality provision for pupils with SLD. With the demand for local SLD places continuing to grow, there is a need to create additional high quality places within the SLD sector.

² [Agenda for Cabinet on Monday, 14 December 2020, 2.00 pm | Hertfordshire County Council](#)

³ [SEND Special School Place Planning Strategy 2020-2023 \(hertfordshire.gov.uk\)](#)

⁴ [Amwell View School - Open - Find an Inspection Report - Ofsted](#)

Why has the former Tonwell St Mary's School building been chosen as the site for the proposed satellite provision of Amwell View School?

On 18 March 2024, Cabinet⁵ approved the closure of Tonwell St Mary's School from 31 August 2024. The ownership of the school building and land is split between the county council (playing fields) and the Anglican Diocese of St Albans (buildings and hard standing).

The Diocesan Board of Education has agreed that the county council is able to utilise the former Tonwell St Mary's School site to provide the much-needed SLD places. The site is approximately 5 miles from Amwell View's main school site and is an ideal setting for the satellite provision.

The majority of pupils will arrive by minibus, minimising the number of journeys to the new site. Pupils would be eligible for transport support to Amwell View School if they meet the criteria, as set out in Hertfordshire's statutory school transport policy⁶.

Why couldn't Tonwell St Mary's School run the SEND provision instead of closing the school?

Before the decision was taken to consult on the closure of Tonwell St Mary's School, the county council considered whether the school could provide SEND provision without needing to close the school. Because Tonwell School was a mainstream primary school there was no legal mechanism to convert Tonwell School to a special school without closing it first.

The pupils who would attend the proposed satellite provision of Amwell View School have needs that cannot be met in a mainstream setting. SLD pupils often require a specialist placement where they are cared for by staff with particular skill sets. It is for this reason that the county council is looking to expand an existing, outstanding SLD special school that is well versed in meeting the needs of SLD pupils.

What will be the impact on existing pupils?

Necessary minor adaptations will be made to the existing accommodation to make sure it is fit for purpose for the children and young people who will attend the new site. Additional revenue funding would be provided to support the enlargement of Amwell View School. Places at this provision would be made available to secondary age pupils and these pupils will be closely supported by the school in terms of managing the impact of this change.

What will be the impact on staff?

Additional staff would be employed to support this proposal. The additional school places would not be made available until sufficient staffing is in place.

⁵ [Agenda for Cabinet on Monday, 18 March 2024, 2.00 pm | Hertfordshire County Council](#)

⁶ [hometoschooltransportpolicy \(hertfordshire.gov.uk\)](http://hometoschooltransportpolicy.hertfordshire.gov.uk)

How will this proposal be funded?

If a decision is made to enlarge Amwell View School, additional accommodation would be provided by the county council and would be designed to meet the needs of the pupils. The capital cost of the enlargement would be met by the county council. The school would also receive additional revenue funding to support the enlargement.

Have your say.

You have until **6 October 2024** to let the county council know your views on the proposal. The easiest way you can do this is by completing the online form at: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/consultations>

If you do not have access to the internet, you can visit your local library where free access is available to all Hertfordshire residents. Should you wish to request a hard copy of the response form or need help understanding this information you can email education.planning@hertfordshire.gov.uk or alternatively please call the number above. An interpreting service is available for those who need it.

Your response must be received by **6 October 2024**. The county council will not be able to acknowledge or respond individually to your comments but they will be taken into account, as explained below.

How the decision will be taken.

This is a consultation and no decision has been made yet. All responses received will be made available to elected members who will make the final decision. All responses may be made available in public reports, although personal details will be removed to respect individual privacy.

The following timetable outlines the decision-making process. Please note that meetings marked with * will be open to the public. Although it will not be possible to inform everyone individually of the decisions made, you will be able to access this information throughout the process at: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/committees

Process	Date
Public consultation (4 weeks)	09 September – 06 October 2024
Education, Libraries & Lifelong Learning Cabinet Panel*	06 November 2024
Cabinet*	02 December 2024
Subject to approval:	
Statutory notice period (6 weeks)	18 December 2024 – 28 January 2025
Delegated decision (for final approval if no objections are received)	February 2025

Process	Date
Cabinet* (for final approval if any objections are received)	17 March 2025
Implementation	01 September 2025

Yours faithfully



Jo Fisher,
Executive Director of Children's Services